



A Guide for Developing Strategic Objectives to Expand Self-Direction

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Self-direction gives people with disabilities and older adults the ability to manage the long-term services and supports that they need to live lives of their choosing. Over the past more than 25 years, the option to self-direct has become an increasing component of human services systems. The virtue of self-direction as a more flexible and agile support option became apparent during the pandemic when many traditional day and other programs were forced to close. While self-direction is an option in virtually every state, it is still a relatively small component of most public systems. In order to grow the number of people who can take advantage of self-direction, many public managers and advocacy organizations are looking for specific steps they can take to make the option more available and accessible.

This resource offers a road map to strategic targets that are linked to the key drivers of a robust self-direction option within public programs. It lays out a series of decision points beginning with the selection of overarching goal(s) to pursue, aspects of the goal to tackle, and action steps to pursue. The road map is based on a self-direction Change Package, which includes:

1. A strategy diagram that identifies strategies that will support the overarching global aim of enhancing the availability and quality of self-direction.
2. Descriptions and action steps for each strategy.
3. Resources and examples of best practice.

How to Use the Strategic Objectives Template

Conduct Environmental Scan

To mount an initiative to expand self-direction it will be important to involve key partners, including public managers, people who are self-directing, family members, support brokers and case managers in a coalition. The first step is to do an environmental review of the current self-direction program in the state. How many people are self-directing? What are the characteristics of people who are self-directing? What are the barriers to people self-directing? Is the process easy to understand and transparent? What services and supports can people self-direct? Are materials regarding the program broadly available and in plain language? The environmental scan will enable the coalition to identify gaps and areas of the program that can be enhanced.

Select One or More Strategies

Based on the environmental scan, coalition members can then identify the strategy that most closely aligns with the gaps and enhancements identified. The four major strategies are:

1. **Disseminate information regarding self-direction, its benefits and how it works.** Choose [this strategy](#) if the scan indicated that there is insufficient information available regarding the self-direction option in the state.
2. **Develop self-direction policies and procedures that are equitable, transparent, flexible, and easily understood and implemented.** Choose [this strategy](#) if the scan indicated that people were challenged by the complexity and opaqueness of the self-directing of the self-direction process.
3. **Enhance infrastructure to support self-direction.** Choose [this strategy](#) if the scan indicated that there was insufficient input from advocates and people self-directing and or the policy and budget framework was not sufficient ensure that self-direction is managed efficiently.
4. **Recruit and train Direct Support Professionals, support brokers, and peer mentors to support self-direction.** Choose [this strategy](#) if the scan indicates that workforce is an issue with respect to people finding staff to hire and/or that support brokers/case managers require more training on the principles and processes of self-direction.

When choosing a strategy and subsequent action steps, the coalition should take into account a number of factors that may determine whether the initiative(s) will be successful including:

- Is there commitment from state leadership to ensure that any policy, regulatory and/or other reforms will be implemented
- Is there a consensus among members of the coalition including families, people with disabilities and support brokers regarding the direction selected
- Is the initiative selected feasible in terms of available resources and political support
- Is the initiative likely to result in the desired outcome

Chose a Secondary Strategy

Once an overall strategy has been selected, the coalition should select one or more secondary strategies. To narrow down the choices, leaders of the coalition may want to ask members of the group to rank order the secondary objectives.

**Strategy 1: Disseminate information regarding self-direction,
its benefits, and how it works**

Secondary Strategy	Description	Rank Order 1-high priority; 5-low priority
Develop an outreach strategy to educate participants and families regarding self-direction	Information about self-direction opportunities must be broadly available. Such information should be available in a range of formats and languages to ensure accessibility for all potential participants regardless of race, ethnicity, income level or place of residence. To spread the word, people who enjoy the benefits of self-direction are the best ambassadors.	
Educate state and local public managers regarding the values of self-direction	It is public managers at the state and local level who have the responsibility to develop policies and procedures for self-direction. To ensure that those policies and procedures embody the values of choice and self-determination, it is important that these managers are introduced to, embrace, and understand the benefits of self-direction.	
Create accessible guides and supports to participants and families	Policies and procedures surrounding self-direction must be transparent and accessible to people with disabilities and their families. Materials describing the process should be culturally sensitive, written in plain language, and publicly available. People need to be aware of the components of self-direction such as the nature of the planning process, participant responsibilities, how to work with an agency with choice, how to access information and assistance and/or how to work with the fiscal intermediary.	

Strategy 2: Develop self-direction policies and procedures that are equitable, transparent, flexible, and are easily understood and implemented

Secondary Strategy	Description	Rank Order 1-high priority; 5-low priority
Seek consultation from participants and family members to develop equitable policies and procedures	To ensure policies and procedures are responsive to real-life situations, preferences, and needs of people self-directing and their families, public managers should seek feedback from participants, families, and support brokers who do the “work” of self-direction. Those providing consultation should reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of the community.	
Ensure everyone has the option to self-direct	During the person-centered planning process, all individuals should be offered the possibility of self-directing and avoid prejudging a person’s ability to participate. The choice to enroll should lie with the person and their family or other close supporters. Research on the demographics of people who self-direct suggests that participants are more likely to be White and to come from middle/upper income families. To promote equal access, it is necessary to identify and correct barriers to people from different cultures, races, linguistic backgrounds, and socioeconomic statuses. Robust support brokerage will be necessary to improve access to these groups.	
Reduce complexity of the process	One of the reasons that people with disabilities, family members, case managers, and others give for the slow uptake in self-direction is the complexity of the process. Such complexity potentially limits those who chose to self-direct to those who have more natural supports	

Strategy 3: Enhance infrastructure to support self-direction

Secondary Strategy	Description	Rank Order 1-high priority; 5- low priority
Establish a participant-led advisory committee to monitor and improve the self-direction program	There are a range of stakeholders involved in self-direction – most importantly those who are self-directing. Public managers need to hear from these stakeholders on a regular basis to identify areas for improvement. In addition to self-direction participants, stakeholders include family members, providers, support brokers, DSPs, and the fiscal intermediary(s).	
Review, assess, and modify programmatic, budgetary and infrastructure needs	Self-direction should give the participant the flexibility to design an array of services and supports that meet their needs and preferences. Fully supporting participants requires a robust program with well-developed infrastructure. There must be a reliable, predictable, and streamlined budget process that minimizes subjectivity and inequity across the state. There must be a person-centered plan in place to allow the person to spend their budget along with guidance for both participants and support brokers/case managers. Finally, there must be sufficient safeguards in place to ensure that participants have real options to choose their supports and that they can remain self-directing.	
Establish a performance measurement system	To engage in continual improvement of self-direction, it is necessary to first define what successful implementation of self-direction looks like in the state, then develop a performance measurement system that includes specific benchmarks/metrics and outcomes as well as oversight of key demographic factors such as race, gender, age, income level, and geographic distribution.	
Design strategies to help participants hire and manage staff	Many participants require assistance in recruiting staff – especially given the current staffing crisis. Assistance should include finding compatible staff and supporting people to hire and direct their staff. FMS provide a critical backroom function including paying staff, reimbursing goods and services, and – in some cases—providing training and assistance to participants.	

Strategy 4: Recruit and train DSPs, support brokers and peer mentors to support self-direction

Secondary Strategy	Description	Rank Order 1-high priority; 5-low priority
Create and implement a DSP recruitment and retention plan	The direct support staff workforce is critical to the success of the overall self-direction program. Easing the burden of staff recruitment offers a significant support for people who self-direct, creating stronger overall self-direction program.	
Identify support broker competencies and training	Self-direction is a significant departure from the way that conventional services and supports have been planned, funded and allocated. Therefore, providing supports to people who are self-directing requires a unique set of competencies. These include supporting informed decisions, practicing cultural humility, explaining the process in an accessible way, and developing trust. Support brokers should receive training firsthand from people who are self-directing.	
Ensure that support brokerage (AKA: Information and Assistance) peer mentorship is widely available	A key to a successful self-direction program is the presence of support brokers or guides who can help people with disabilities to craft their plans and hire staff, and to stay beside them as they implement their vision. Support brokers are also critical to helping people work through challenges and changes in their circumstances. Additionally, peer mentors—working as support brokers or alongside the support broker —can provide “inside” knowledge and help participants to understand and navigate the experience and responsibilities. Peer mentors may or may not be people who are self-directing and may be paid or volunteers	
Recruit peer mentors to work with people who enroll in self-direction	Regardless of the endeavor, it’s always helpful to seek assistance from someone who has been there before. The same is true for people with disabilities contemplating self-direction. Peer mentors, therefore, can provide that “inside” knowledge and help potential participants to understand the experience and responsibilities.	

Identify Action Steps

At this point, the coalition members have agreed to one or more secondary strategies to pursue. The next step is to select the actions that the group wants to take to implement the strategy. The group may elect to do some or all steps that align with secondary strategy(ies) they have selected or to prioritize some steps for immediate action and others to address at a later date. To determine which step or steps should move to the top of the agenda, the group can again be canvassed to rank order the initiatives.

**Strategy 1: Disseminate information regarding self-direction,
its benefits, and how it works**

Secondary Strategy	Action Steps/ Rank Order 1-high priority; 5-low priority
<p>Develop an outreach strategy to educate participants and families regarding self-direction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create culturally appropriate videos and written materials that highlight participant experiences with self-direction, in multiple language formats ____ • Engage organizations and groups including state legislators, Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs), Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), Centers for Independent Living (CILs), and Public Education Early Intervention and Transition Programs through presentations and materials about self-direction ____ • Identify priority target groups (e.g., young adults making transition to adulthood, people with autism, etc.) ____ • Identify self-direction participants who can serve as “ambassadors” to a range of constituencies and who help to champion self-direction ____ • Train self-direction ambassadors on existing policies and procedures and work with them to create talking points to share with participants, families, case managers and providers ____ • Create a publicly available and accessible website to house outreach material ____
<p>Educate state and local public managers regarding the values of self-direction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop trainings for managers that compare and contrast the benefits/outcomes of self-direction to conventional services/and supports ____ • Emphasize that anyone can self-direct with individually tailored supports ____ • Address misconceptions about self-direction (e.g., potential for fraud) ____ • Ensure managers seek public input and learn from the experiences of participants ____
<p>Create accessible guides and supports to participants and families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create plain language guides accessible to self-directing participants and families that include step-by-step directions ____ • Translate materials into commonly spoken languages that are culturally competent and that reflect cultural practices of target populations ____ • Provide guides and directions on an easy-to-navigate, publicly accessible website ____ • For those who need more support, provide support through independent facilitators ____

Ensure case managers are prepared to embrace self-direction

- Survey case managers to determine their level of familiarity with benefits of self-direction and solicit their input on obstacles to self-direction (e.g., caseload size, complexity, etc.) ____
- Conduct trainings with case managers underscoring that self-direction is a priority ____
- Create a learning community for case managers to grow and enhance their approach to administering self-direction programs ____

Strategy 2: Develop self-direction policies and procedures that are equitable, transparent, flexible, and are easily understood and implemented

Secondary Strategy	Action Steps / Rank Order 1-high priority; 5-low priority
Seek consultation from participants and family members to develop equitable policies and procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene groups of participants and family members to review self-direction policies and procedures _____ • Enter into a co-creation process to review and enhance self-direction policies and procedures _____ • Conduct periodic surveys or other data collection from self-direction participants and family members to identify what’s working and what isn’t working _____
Ensure everyone has the option to self-direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require affirmative documentation (i.e., a signature) from people who are receiving support that they were offered understandable materials about self-direction and their options to self-direct _____ • Provide guidance within the planning protocol to aid case managers to present opportunities for self-direction and ensure that all participants get the same information _____ • Convene focus groups of low-income participants and families living in diverse socioeconomic communities as well as those from racially and ethnically diverse groups to advise on responsive policies _____ • Connect people interested in self-direction to peers, families, or groups familiar with self-direction _____ • Routinely review the characteristics of people who self-direct to ensure equity across select demographics (gender, race, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, urban/rural, disability) _____ • Develop targeted outreach to increase knowledge about self-direction in underserved areas _____
Reduce complexity of the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek consultation from support brokers/case managers and fiscal intermediaries regarding the ways in which the process can be streamlined _____ • Review service and support menu to make sure that offerings are easily understood and provide a range of choices _____ • Include representation of support brokers/case managers in the development of policies and procedures _____ • Identify promising practices from other self-directed programs to adopt streamlined and expedited enrollment strategies _____

Strategy 3: Enhance infrastructure to support self-direction

Secondary Strategy	Action Steps / Rank Order 1-high priority; 5-low priority
Establish a participant-led advisory committee to monitor and improve the self-direction program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene an advisory committee to oversee the self-direction program whose membership includes a major of people self-directing ____ • Work with self-directing participants ahead of meetings to ensure they understand the nature of the agenda and can contribute in a robust way ____
Review, assess, and modify programmatic, budgetary and infrastructure needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that budget methodology and rates are standardized and equitable across the state and afford the person the same standard of care they would receive in choosing traditional services ____ • Develop materials to make the budgeting process transparent to participants ____ • Explore tiers or rates for self-direction based on a reliable assessment of support need ____ • Develop accessible, publicly available tools for people who self-direct (e.g., budget planners, rate development tools, calendars, staff sharing agreements) ____ • In programs that include Budget Authority, develop guidance for support brokers/case managers to understand which goods and services will be approved and which will not ____
Establish a performance measurement system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish performance metrics for ongoing system evaluation based on guidance from the Advisory Committee ____ • Conduct routine evaluation of the self-direction program to ensure sustainability and to implement improvements ____ • Develop an annual survey of participants and families to gather information on the participant experience and feedback on how well the program is working ____ • Track enrollment, disenrollment, geographic distribution, and participant demographics to ensure equitable access and to resolve disparities ____ • Use existing performance data (e.g., National Core Indicators – Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (NCI-IDD) or Aging and Disability (NCI-AD) to track the outcomes of people self-directing ____

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply performance results to continuous quality improvement ____
<p>Design strategies to help participants hire and manage staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop training for participants regarding hiring, training, supervising, and firing staff ____ • Review existing contracts with fiscal intermediary(s) to ensure that they spell out specific measures of responsive customer service and other ways of supporting participants (e.g., response times, user friendly materials, etc.) ____ • Include requirements in fiscal intermediary contracts to provide data on potential workers with hours available ____

Strategy 4: Recruit and train DSPs, support brokers and peer mentors to support self-direction

Secondary Driver	Action Steps / Rank Order 1-high priority; 5-low priority
<p>Create and implement a DSP recruitment and retention plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the participant is supported to develop a plan for recruiting support staff ____ • Create realistic job preview videos and other promotional materials highlighting roles of DSPs in self-direction ____ • Develop a recruitment plan that targets potential DSPs at likely venues (high schools, community colleges, employment fairs, university employment services) and introduces innovative ways to introduce them to the self-direction program ____ • Assist people to identify staff within their own social networks ____ • Create a directory or “match” service or use existing and emerging tools of to link participants with compatible staff ____
<p>Identify support broker competencies and training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create minimum standards for Information and Assistance (aka: support brokers) (e.g., minimum training requirements) ____ • Engage people who are self-directing (through the advisory committee or otherwise) in the identification support broker competencies ____ • Train brokers in shared and supported decision-making models ____ • Use available materials on competencies helpful in facilitating choice (e.g., NCAPPS resources) ____ • Ensure that training includes cultural humility and culturally competent approaches ____ • Include people who are self-directing as paid trainers ____
<p>Ensure that support brokerage (AKA: Information and Assistance) peer mentorship is widely available</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In states with traditional case management, explore pluses and minuses of creating independent support brokerage ____ • Need to clarify that supports brokers and case managers are different roles, support coordination being most similar to case management ____ • Identify optimal case load size for support brokers to ensure robust support ____ • Identify areas of high need and develop approaches to ensure adequacy of the support brokerage network (funding for travel, potential for remote support) ____ • Create a learning community for support brokers so that they can share lessons learned ____

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish or enhance peer support/mentorship training programs to increase numbers of peer mentors _____ • Develop training materials for peer mentors _____
<p>Recruit peer mentors to work with people who enroll in self-direction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with support brokers to identify individuals in their caseloads who might be interested in becoming peer mentors _____ • Canvass members of the self-direction advisory committee to identify possible peer mentors _____ • Develop training materials for peer mentors based on feedback from people who are self-directing _____ • Fund stipends for peer mentors _____

Create a Measurement Strategy

After the coalition has chosen the strategies and action steps to work on, it will be important for the group to measure their progress. In addition to measuring progress, the coalition should consider adopting Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) cycles to accelerate change. Using PDSA cycles will enable the coalition to test the effectiveness of their actions and alter them as needed to keep making progress towards their aims.

In the [table](#) that follows, there are examples of strategies, action steps, and measures the coalition might use.

Definitions

Aims	<p>A written statement of the accomplishments expected by the coalition. Aims may also be referred to as goals and are linked to the primary and secondary strategies selected. Each team develops measures to assess their progress towards their aims.</p>	Institute for Healthcare Improvement Setting Aims
Measures	<p>Measures are a way of knowing if what you did resulted in what you wanted. We use measures to make decisions about what to do next. They could be numeric or descriptive. Measures are a critical part of testing and implementing changes. The coalition should decide on which measure(s) will be used to assess progress on the aims they select.</p>	Institute for Healthcare Improvement Establishing Measures
Plan Do Study Act (PDSA)	<p>PDSA is shorthand for testing a change by developing a plan (Plan), carrying out the test (Do), observing and learning from the consequences (Study), and determining what modifications should be made to the test (Act).</p> <div data-bbox="982 881 1291 1307" style="text-align: center;"> <p>Model for Improvement</p> </div> <p>Picture credit: Institute for Healthcare Improvement</p>	Institute for Healthcare Improvement Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Worksheet
SMARTIE Goals	<p>Strategic, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic, Time-bound, Inclusive, and Equitable. Using SMARTIE goals can help teams to create actionable changes.</p>	The Management Center SMARTIE Goals Worksheet

Table: Examples teams can refer to when identifying their action steps and measures.

Example Strategies	Example Action Step	Example Output	Example Measures
<p>Strategy 1: Disseminate information regarding self-direction, its benefits and how it works</p> <p>Secondary Strategy: Create accessible guides and supports to participants and families</p>	<p>Translate materials into commonly spoken languages that are culturally competent and that reflect cultural practices of target populations</p>	<p>The team brings informational self-direction materials (webpage and video) before diverse groups representing the cultural/racial/ethnic make-up of the state and modifies them to incorporate culturally relevant self-direction concepts, examples, and language. The team also translates the modified materials into the languages most commonly used in the state.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percent of people newly self-directing who say they have reviewed the materials. • Percent of calls, e-mails, or other communications received related to self-direction in alternate languages (the team expects an increase in outreach in selected languages). • Percent of people self-directing by identified cultural/racial/ethnic or linguistic group who report that the guide was a helpful explanation of the process. • Percent of participants by cultural/racial/ethnic or linguistic group that start self-direction following the introduction of modified materials (the team expects increases in targeted groups). • Percent of support brokers who report that people are better prepared to participate in self-direction when they have viewed the materials.

Example Strategies	Example Action Step	Example Output	Example Measures
<p>Strategy 2: Develop self-direction policies and procedures that are equitable, transparent, flexible, and are easily understood and implemented</p> <p>Secondary Strategy: Seek consultation from participants and family members to develop equitable policies and procedures</p>	<p>Enter into a co-creation process to review and enhance self-direction policies and procedures</p>	<p>The team updates its guide on allowable goods and services. To develop the new guidance, the team convenes focus groups with participants who have successfully and unsuccessfully purchased needed items and services using the existing guidance. Using this information, the team drafts new guidance and tests it with a group of service users and their desired person-centered plans. The team finalizes the guidance and publishes it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percent of people self-directing who report that they know what they can and cannot purchase with their budget. • Percent of people self-directing who report that they used the guidance to determine what goods and services to include in their person-centered plan. • Percent of people self-directing who report that they can purchase what they need to meet their person-centered plan goals. • The proportion of goods and services that are approved and those not approved (the team expects that approved will increase and not approved will decline). • People self-directing follow appropriate processes X% of the time to seek remediation for goods or services that are not approved.

Example Strategies	Example Action Step	Example Output	Example Measures
<p>Strategy 3: Enhance infrastructure to support self-direction</p> <p>Secondary Strategy: Establish a performance measurement system</p>	<p>Establish performance metrics for ongoing system evaluation based on guidance from the Advisory Committee</p>	<p>Building on the work of an advisory committee, the team develops a data collection strategy using its administrative billing processes to produce a routine report to better understand the self-direction program and how it changes over-time. The report includes metrics on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Numbers of people participating in self-direction, with the ability to view by region, race and ethnicity, primary language - Types of services people are self-directing, with associated range of costs. - Funds spent on self-directed vs. traditional services from individual budgets - Average (range of) staff wages - Goods purchased with individual budgets - Amount of individual budget used - Length of time participants are in the self-direction program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percent of FMS payments that are reported to the state within the required time period. • Percent of records which include accurate race, ethnicity, and primary language information. • Percent of claims that are accurately coded as determined through an auditing process. • Percent of stakeholder advisory committee members who report that the information contained in the report is valuable to help keep them informed. • Reports track and trend changes in the self-direction program over time, and people who access them report that they understand how self-direction has changed (the team anticipates that reports will change from baseline as additional reports are produced). • Leadership reports that the reports are valuable in supporting decision-making about the program.

Example Strategies	Example Action Step	Example Output	Example Measures
<p>Strategy 4: Recruit and train DSPs, support brokers and peer mentors to support self-direction</p> <p>Secondary Strategy: Ensure that support brokerage (AKA: Information and Assistance) and peer mentorship are widely available</p>	<p>Ensure that support brokerage and peer mentorship are widely available</p>	<p>The team wants to expand its peer mentorship program. In order to expand the program, the team decides to fund stipends for peer mentors. The team advertises the new peer mentorship program stipends available and does targeted outreach to community organizations. The team also does targeted outreach to develop peer mentorship in rural communities. The team shares information about the availability of peer mentorship on its website and with support brokers throughout the team.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of paid peer mentors (the team expects that the number of peer mentors will increase). • The number of paid mentors in each county (the team expects that the number of peer mentors in rural counties will increase). • The proportion of people who are self-directing who are working with paid peer mentors (the team expects that the proportion of people working with peer mentors will increase). • The proportion of people who are self-directing in rural communities who are working with paid peer mentors (the team expects that the proportion of people working with peer mentors will increase). • Percent of support brokers who report that they know about and offer peer mentorship to people self-directing who could benefit from such support. • Percent of people working with paid peer mentors who report that the support of the paid member helped them to navigate the self-direction program.