



**November 29, 2011**

# Lessons Learned from the AT Reuse Demonstration Projects: *Sustainability*

# Get CEUs or CRCs

- **CEUs** - Visit the AAC Institute  
[www.aac institute.org](http://www.aac institute.org)
- **CRCs** – To receive your verification form, send an e-mail with your name, organization, city, state and e-mail address to  
[Liz@passitoncenter.org](mailto:Liz@passitoncenter.org)

# Help us to improve

At the end of today's Webinar, we'll ask you to complete a brief evaluation of our performance.

The link to the evaluation is:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/R325KJX>

# Lessons learned – or to be learned

**In 2006, part of the Rehabilitation Act made grants to:**

**12 AT Reuse Programs as  
Demonstration Projects (3-year grants)**

**1 National Technical Assistance Center –  
now the Pass It On Center**

# **Demonstration Projects: The purpose and nature of the projects were varied**

- Delaware: Delaware AT Initiative
- District of Columbia: DC Shares
- Georgia: STAR Network
- Idaho: AT for All
- Kansas: Expanding Reuse, AT for Kansans
- Mississippi: Project START

# Demonstration Projects

- Missouri/Illinois: Paraquad, AT Reuse for Independent Living
- New Mexico: AT Reutilization Model
- Oklahoma: AMBUCS Share4Life Computers (ASK) Project
- Texas: Project MEND
- Virginia: VATnet
- Wisconsin: Agricultural AT Equipment Reuse (AATER), WI Easter Seals

# Sustainability

...is the ability, at its most basic, to survive in perpetuity.

**Can you imagine the need for safe, appropriate and affordable AT disappearing?**

**No? Then, shouldn't your reuse program operate as long as the need persists?**

# Objectives

- To identify key factors in program sustainability
- To learn successful strategies to address sustainability challenges
- To assess consequences when sustainability planning is not a priority
- To reiterate need for strategic planning

# Key Factors in Sustainability

- Ensuring that practices are safe, effective and appropriate
- Strong leadership and management that understands the business case for AT reuse
- Engaging stakeholders to serve customers and build community support
- Diversifying sources of funding to promote financial stability
- Expanding capacity to serve customers and to demonstrate the value of the program
- Resilience in being prepared to shift priorities or adopt new models of operations

# Plan for Sustainability

**A goal without a plan is just a wish.**

-- Antoine de St. Exupery

# Our first responsibility: To ensure safe, effective and appropriate AT reuse

## Demonstration projects:

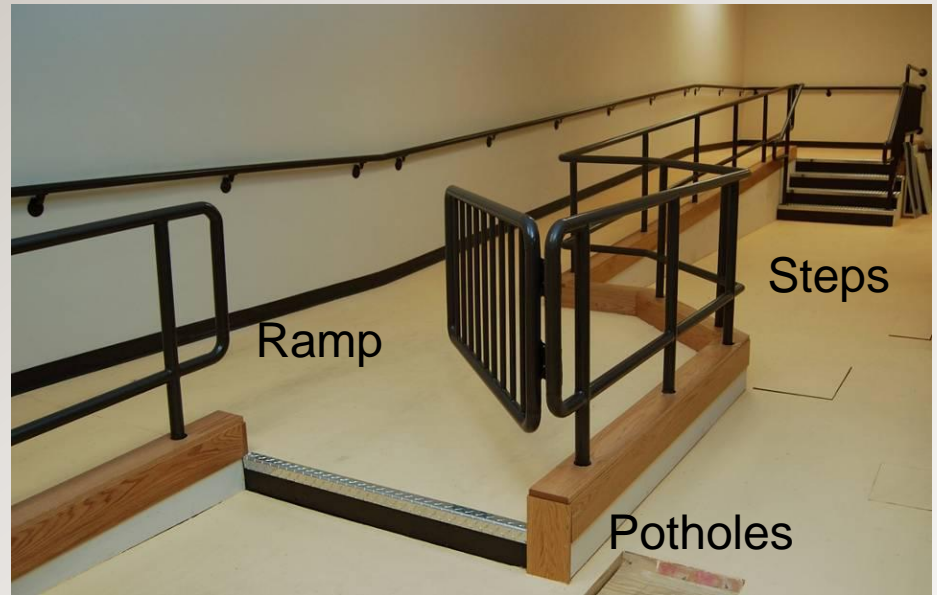
- ▣ Shared their expertise in Reuse Conferences, PIOC webinars and ATIA Conference sessions
- ▣ Hosted first-hand visits to educate others
- ▣ With others, helped the Pass It On Center to develop the Indicators of Quality for AT Reuse
- ▣ Donated many models, examples, presentations, forms, etc. toward the PIOC Knowledge Base that now holds about 750 objects.

# Safe: A focus on sanitization practices, device tracking

- Sanitization: policies and procedures, tile rooms (Paraquad and FODAC), automated cleaning devices, worker training
- Tracking devices for warnings, recalls



# Appropriate: Right device, training for proper use



Paraquad's Mobility Training Course

- Functional design of reuse centers (Paraquad, FODAC, Project MEND)
- Engaging AT professionals for matching devices (FREE, Paraquad, etc.)

# Survival requires planning

- **Financial resources:**

- Sources of program funding and revenue
- Long-range financial plan (three years)
- Strategic plan for growth and operations

- **Human resources:**

- Succession planning for management, key roles
- Development plans for employees and volunteers

- **Inventory of lightly-used equipment**

- Expanding recovery of unused devices

# Global change is upon us

- Many governments (national, city) have created support models that are unsustainable and now face citizen expectations of expansive services with limited resources.
- We live in a society that is litigious with an entitlement mentality.
- Fear of litigation is a barrier to full-scale adoption of safe, appropriate reuse as a cost-cutting alternative.

# Is expanded reuse a slippery slope?

- As we promote AT reuse to meet needs in the face of increasing economic pressure, would an aggressive increase in reuse:
  - ▣ Limit consumer choice?
  - ▣ Curtail the supply of lightly-used devices available for reuse?

# Strong leadership

- Stable program infrastructure is essential to survival
  - Develop a succession plan for leaders and key roles
  - Cross-train staff in key roles
- All-volunteer operations are risky
  - AMBUCS Share4Life Komputers (ASK)  
experience: Burned out volunteers; issues with transition to partial paid staff

# Project leaders became major contributors to AT Reuse

- Chris Brand and Joanne Willis, STAR Network
- Sara Sack, KS
- Sonja Schaible and Barclay Shepard, VA
- Ron Seiler and Sarah Johnnes, ID
- Cathy Valdez, TX
- Carla Walker and Lindsey Bean, Paraquad
- Dorothy Young, MS

**In addition to leading projects, these people made major contributions to the field of AT reuse by sharing their knowledge and experiences in conferences, webinars and direct consultation.**

# Engage Stakeholders

**Plans are only good intentions unless they immediately degenerate into hard work.**

**Peter Drucker**

**All hard work brings profit; but mere talk leads only to poverty.**

**Warren Buffet**

# Who are the stakeholders?

- Uninsured, underinsured or individuals waiting for AT: Prospective customers for reuse
- Professionals who encounter customers with an unmet need for AT
- Agencies and organizations who serve people with disabilities
- Healthcare providers
- People with unused AT
- Manufacturers and suppliers of AT
- Board or Advisory Council
- Private insurance companies

# Build community support

- Collaborate with all agencies and organizations that serve the same populations for similar needs
- Work with community organizations to create awareness of the reuse program
- Become a recognized contributor to the community

# Develop a strong Board:

## One example of rebuilding

### Why?

- Information, expertise in special areas or access to resources in their corporations or organizations
- Financial support
- Connections to potential donors

### Ideas from Project MEND

- Develop generic descriptions for board and officer roles
- Recruit from leadership training programs in the community, United Way, Chamber of Commerce, college nonprofit leadership programs 22

# Build relationships in the healthcare community

- Tap into the medical services of the largest healthcare providers in the area
  - Requires a lot of networking, weaving
  - Takes time to build awareness
  - Medical group gets access to devices to improve outcomes
- FREE Foundation, VA, has space donated at three healthcare facilities
- Project MEND works closely with county, city and University
- FODAC assists Atlanta's largest public hospital

# Partner with programs that train AT professionals

- Paraquad
  - Washington Univ. OT program
- FREE Foundation:
  - Partnerships with five college or university PT, OT or PTA programs
- Students get
  - On-site training in sanitization, repair and matching of AT
  - Experience with patients and devices
  - Awareness of reuse resources

# Diversify Sources of Income

- **Never depend on a single source of income.**
- **Accounting: It's no use carrying an umbrella, if your shoes are leaking.**

Warren Buffet

# Grant added credibility

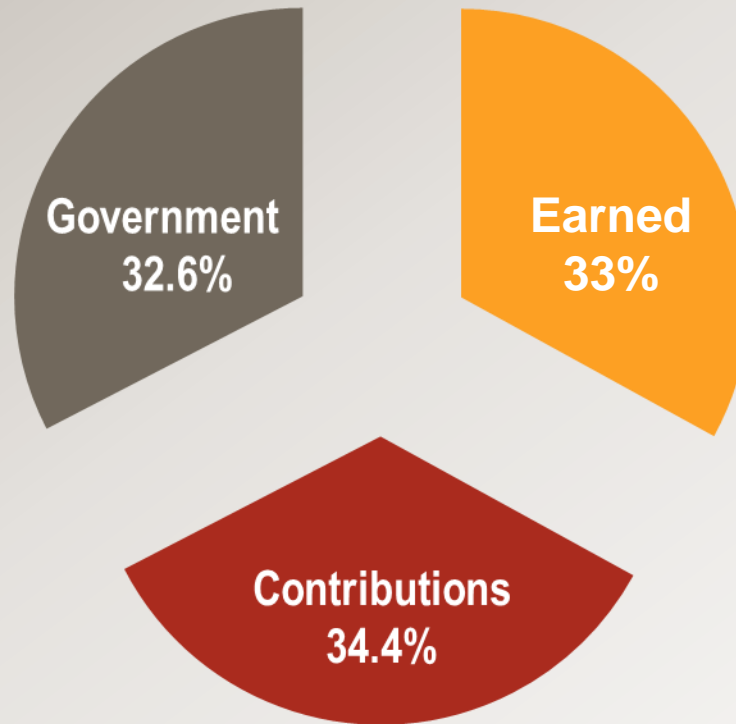
- Some of the grantees found that receiving the demonstration grant added credibility to their requests for support from foundations or corporations.

# Balance of sources?

Chris Brand of FODAC suggests a three-way split as an appropriate target

FODAC, 2008 Actual

## Sources of Income



- Earned Income
- Contributions
- Government

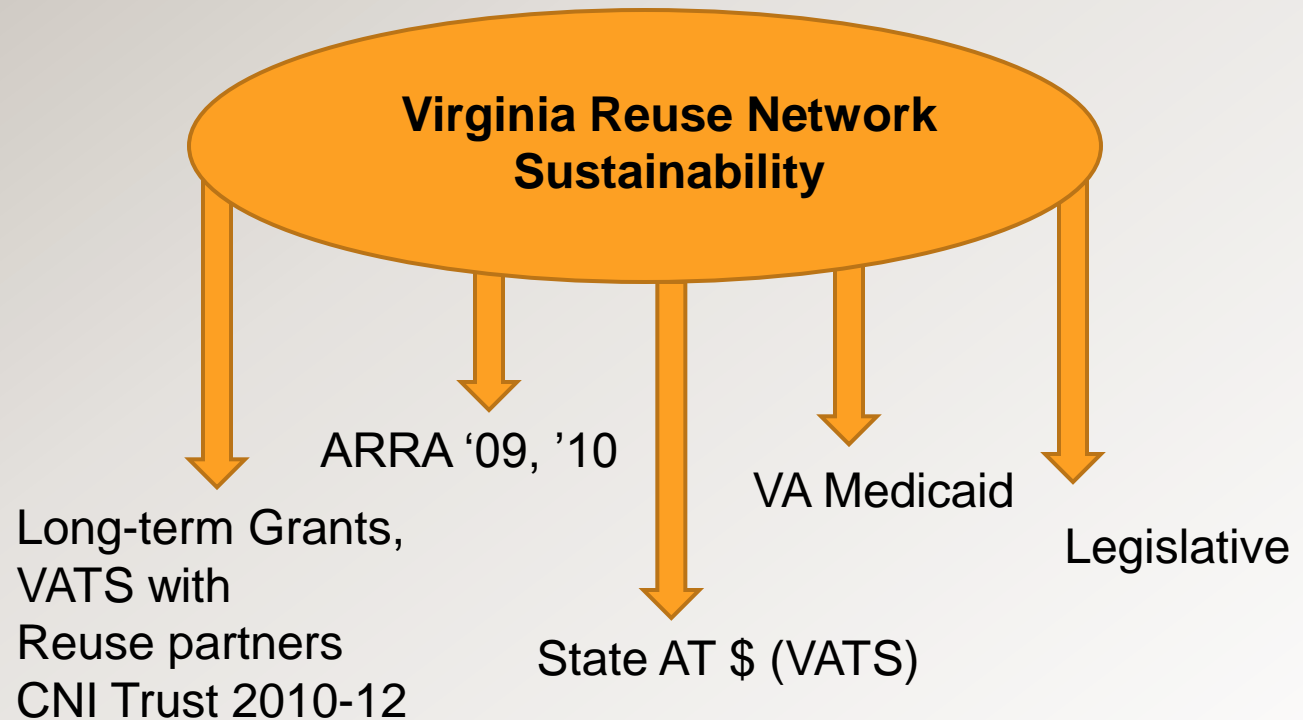
Fees 12.8  
Thrift Store Sales 19.2

Churches 2.2  
Corporations 6.8  
Foundations 12.4  
Individuals 10.6  
Organizations 2.1

# Virginia's "5-Legged Stool"

A diversity  
of grants  
and  
government  
sources

## Sources of Income



# Partners add financial stability

- Even small partnerships often contribute to financial sustainability:
  - ▣ Provide storage space
  - ▣ Share professional expertise (legal, financial)
  - ▣ Share space or services (office, copier, utilities)
  - ▣ Pay specific expenses (repair, refurbishing)
  - ▣ Provide services (pickup/delivery; assessment)

# Fee-for-service revenue

Several programs have fees for services. Some fees can be waived if customer cannot afford to pay. Some examples:

Service	Fee
Processing/application	\$20 - \$65
Wheelchair repair	\$25 plus parts \$50 \$15 for each 15-minute increment
Device delivery	\$25 - \$75 depending on distance and whether a truck is in the area
Wheelchair battery sales	Discounted 35-40% below retail
Donation/recycling fee	\$10 per item, or suggested fee by device
Network membership (one-time)	\$1,000 in state, \$2,500 out-of-state
Refurbished equipment	Based on device type, value

# Collaborate with local hospitals and healthcare systems

- Project MEND
  - Agreements with city and county to provide services
  - Relationship with County Hospital System, University Health Systems
- FODAC
  - Provides DME to public hospitals

# Assign responsibility for ongoing pursuit of revenue

- Use outcomes to demonstrate value for investment of public dollars at local or state level (VATS, FODAC). More on that in Dec.
- Pursue grants to explore new forms of AT reuse or new populations to serve (ATK)
- Institutionalize fundraising as an ongoing role (Program leader active in community affairs, marketing manager, development manager). FODAC and Project MEND added development managers.

# Working with Medicaid

- Kansas: Medicaid pays fees for tracking equipment and those fees are used to cover cost of refurbishing DME. Unneeded devices are labeled for recovery for reuse. Sara Sack led the way in successful Medicaid relationships and has consulted with 18 states.
- Idaho: Created billable Medicaid service for reuse that allows up to 75% of cost of new equipment
- Paraquad: Bills Medicaid-eligible repair services

# Optimize use of human resources

- Volunteers
  - Project MEND uses seniors who are paid through an AARP work program.
  - ASK Project used unpaid volunteers from the local AMBUCS chapter.
  - Screen, train and review volunteers.
- Assign a value to volunteer hours
  - Kansas taught us that volunteers can be a cost or a benefit, depending on your assumptions. To find what volunteers are worth in your state, see [http://independent sector.org/volunteer\\_time](http://independent sector.org/volunteer_time)

# Establish relationships with local corporate and foundation donors

## Paraquad, Inc.

- Anheuser-Busch
- Emerson Electric
- AT&T
- Newman's Own
- Graybar Foundation
- Macy's

## Project MEND

- Gordon Hartman Family Foundation
- WellMed Charitable Foundation
- Kronkosky Charitable Foundation
- Alcoa Foundation
- Orsinger Foundation

# Establish relationships within the community

- A local foundation built a new office building for Project MEND!
- County government allocated ARRA funds for the FODAC expansion



The Gordon Hartman Family Foundation built new offices for Project MEND and freed up more space for the AT reuse operations.

# Serve unique populations

- Spinal cord and traumatic brain injury patients
  - ▣ VATS received funds from Commonwealth Neurotrauma Initiative
- Veterans
  - ▣ Project MEND: grant from Texas Veterans Commission; involved with S.A. Coalition for Veterans, Wounded Warriors, and VA Outpatient Clinics; First civilian org. to receive Military Officers of America Asso. Community Hero Award

# Be entrepreneurial

- Start a thrift shop with volunteer staff (FODAC earned \$184K in one year)
- Provide services to other organizations if you have capacity (repairs, software for program mgt., sanitization)
- Rent DME for temporary use: e.g., wheelchairs for hotel guests, for people attending events, or to individuals with a short-term need who don't want to buy

# Sponsor fundraising events

- Create an annual event that increases public awareness of the program and raises money for operations.

## **FODAC's Annual**

### **Run, Walk 'n' Roll at Stone Mountain Park**

**\$50 per person gets you an event T-shirt and an all-attractions pass to the park**

**\$20 gets you into the event**

**12<sup>th</sup> year in 2012**

# Expand Capacity

**Beware of little expenses; a small leak can sink a large ship.**

***Risk-taking:* Never test the depth of the river with both feet.**

**Warren Buffet**

# An academic term for reuse: *Reverse supply chain logistics*

It's about knowing how to recover a product for a variety of reasons: for reuse, for partial replacement (recalls), for parts, or to repurpose.

**Kansas:** Labels and tracks new DME purchased by Medicaid for reuse;

**VATnet** stickers DME



# Devices: Consider the source

## □ **Who buys DME?**

□ Medicare	29%
□ Medicaid	28%
□ Private insurers	21%
□ Veterans Administration	7%
□ Vocational Rehabilitation	3%
□ Others	12%

Source: Sara Sack, Rita Hostak, 2009

# Partner to expand capacity

- Work with established organizations to serve more people
  - DC Shares partners with Washington Area Wheelchair Society to repair wheelchairs
  - STAR Network expands service area as existing organizations (ATRCs, CILs, even a library) affiliate as outreach centers
  - Virginia: Goodwill Industries donates all DME received to FREE Foundation

# Partner to expand capacity, cont.'

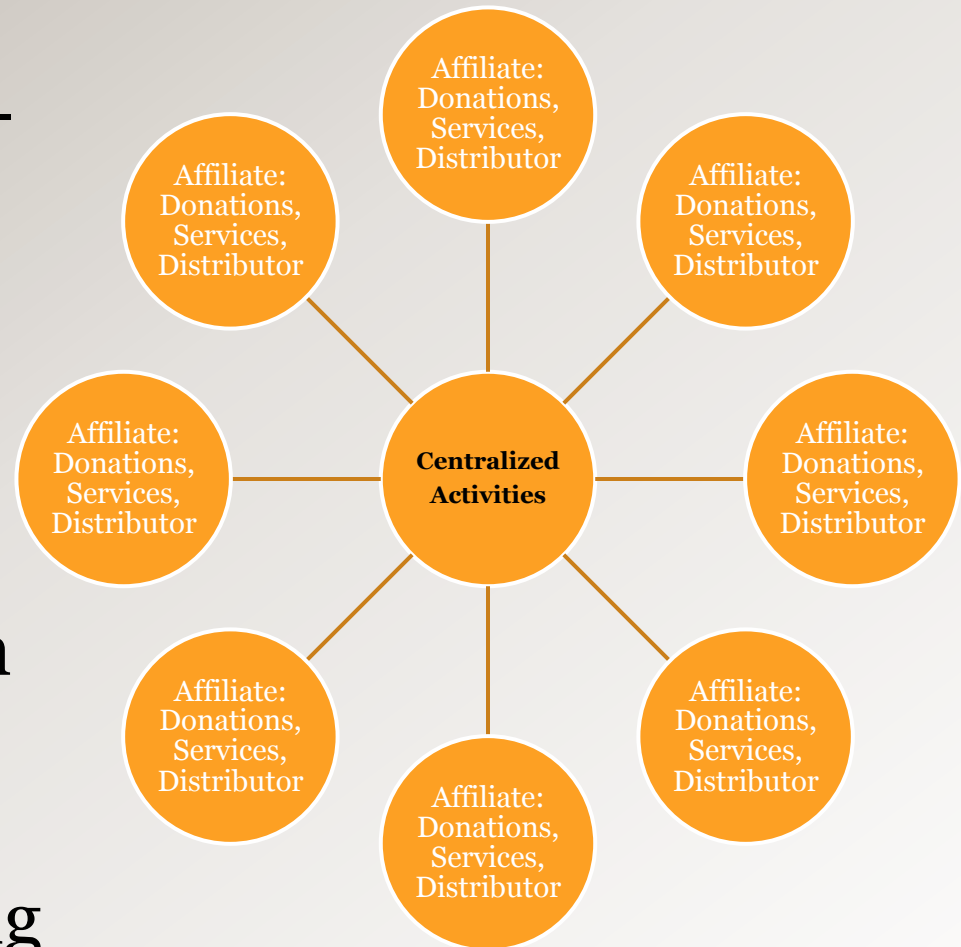
- Develop strategies to increase the number of devices available for reuse
  - KS:
    - Tracks Medicaid-purchased DME
    - Joint collection drives with Red Cross blood donation drives
    - Maintains items in inventory 90 days; sends excess to affiliates
  - MS: Partners with community organizations and churches



# Network the resources

Widely used hub-and-spoke service model has many variations. Centralized activities may be:

- Administration
- Fiscal coordination
- Inventory management
- Repair/refurbishing



# STAR Network regional model

- A regional model build on outward expansion from the Georgia network
- Centralized refurbishing for DME (at FODAC) and computers (at ReBoot)
- Outreach centers (affiliated organizations) collect donated equipment for repair and refurbishment
- Centers and affiliates request equipment for customers as needed



# Virtual networks: KS and VA

## **KANSAS**

- Centralized inventory management of Medicaid-purchased DME on indefinite loan; labeled, tracked and recovered when no longer need; inventory includes other donated items
- Contracted refurbishing with DME vendors
- Equipment exchange focuses on lightly used, high value items; items over 90 days in inventory are dispersed to loan programs throughout the state

## **VIRGINIA REUSE NETWORK**

- Virginia Assistive Technology System (VATS), Foundation for Rehabilitation Equipment Endowment (FREE), and Dept. of Rehabilitation Services comprise virtual network with locations throughout the state

# Resilience

**The capability to anticipate risk, limit impact, and bounce back rapidly through survival, adaptability, evolution, and growth in the face of turbulent change.**



# Be prepared to shift focus

- Idaho learned that the greatest needs were for laptops for secondary transition and updated computers for rural special education classrooms. They focused resources and partnered to serve those needs. Doing so built stronger relationships with ISDE and IDVR and gained a source of ongoing funding.
- Technology convergence redirected the Kansas plan for handheld devices.

# Recommendations

- If you haven't done so, host a meeting of stakeholders to discuss what can be done to enhance the sustainability of your program. This could be a local, state or regional Summit. Pass It On Center can facilitate.
- If you don't have a sustainability plan, write one. What lessons can you incorporate?
- If you have a sustainability plan, review and update it. Did you hear some good ideas?

Coming Dec. 13, 2 p.m. EST

More lessons learned (or to learn)  
from the Demonstration Projects  
**OUTCOMES**

# Evaluate us, Please

- Please complete a brief evaluation of today's Pass It On Center Webinar at:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/R325KJX>



Pass It On  
C E N T E R

... the National AT Reuse Center

Joy Kniskern  
Trish Redmon  
Liz Persaud

[Joy@passitoncenter.org](mailto:Joy@passitoncenter.org)  
[Trish@passitoncenter.org](mailto:Trish@passitoncenter.org)  
[Liz@passitoncenter.org](mailto:Liz@passitoncenter.org)

**DISCLAIMER**

This work is supported under cooperative agreement #H235V060016 awarded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, and administered by the Pass It On Center of the Georgia Department of Labor – Tools for Life. However, the contents of this publication do not necessarily represent the policy or opinions of the Department of Education, or the Georgia Department of Labor, and the reader should not assume endorsements of this document by the Federal government or the Georgia Department of Labor.