

The Administration on Disabilities (AoD) provides grants to support independent living (IL) services through the IL network—which includes Centers for Independent Living (CILs), Statewide Independent Living Councils (SILCs), and Designated State Entities (DSEs)—as part of its mission to give individuals with disabilities of all ages the opportunities, tools, and supports to lead lives of their choice in their community. Under two cooperative agreements with AoD, the Independent Living Research Utilization (ILRU), along with its partners, provides training and technical assistance (TA) to support the CILs, SILCs, and DSEs. TA, such as one-on-one TA, peer-to-peer mentoring, and webinars, can support IL grantees in creating and maintaining effective organizations and services.

Under contract with AoD, RTI International evaluated the current TA strategy to understand how it is currently meeting the needs of grantees and areas that might be improved to better meet the needs of IL grantees.

Study Methods

- **Key Informant Interviews (KIs):** Interviewed IL grantees, TA providers, and AoD staff in 2022 to learn about their experiences and help inform survey question development
- **Document Review:** Reviewed documents to better understand the current TA approach
- **Literature Review:** Reviewed available literature and various organizations’ resources to learn about what works well in TA delivery
- **Program Performance Report (PPR) Data Analysis:** Reviewed IL grantee PPR 2019-2021 data to identify IL grantees’ TA needs
- **IL Grantee Survey:** Surveyed IL grantees in 2023 about their TA experiences

What makes TA effective?



What TA are the IL grantees getting?

- IL grantees get TA from a mix of TA providers.
- IL grantees most commonly get TA through webinars and on-demand publications and resources.
- The following were the top five topics for which grantees reported getting TA:
 - Other (e.g., state plans for IL, legal advice, and strategic partnerships)
 - COVID-19 and emergency preparedness resources
 - Disability, diversity, intersectionality, and outreach to underserved groups
 - Youth transitions
 - Independent living history and philosophy

What are the IL grantees' TA needs?

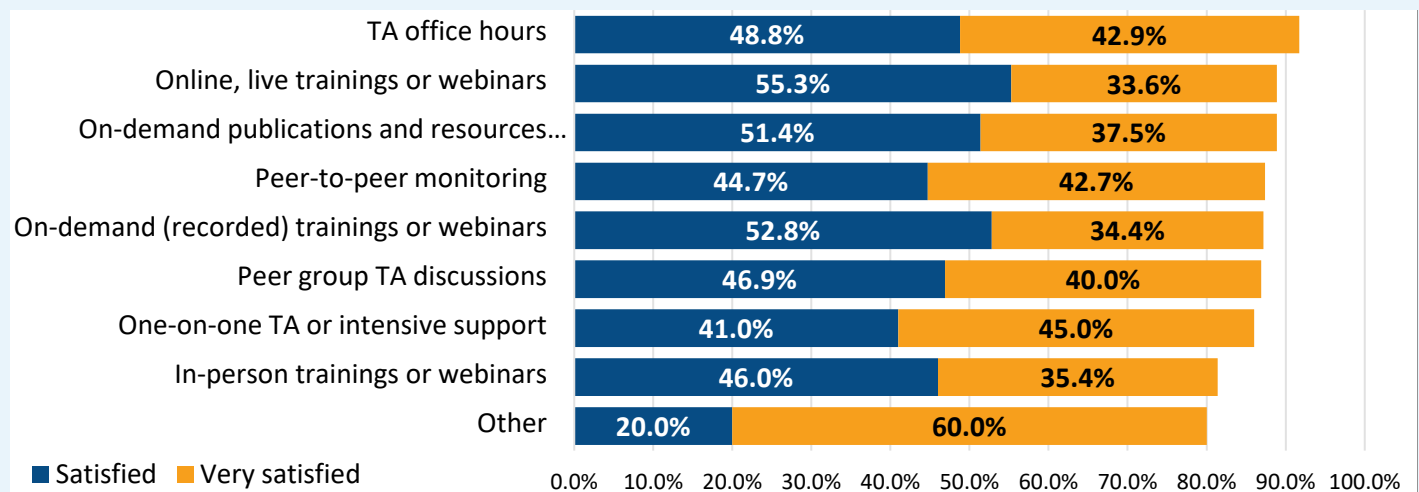
- The top TA needs reported by CILs in the 2021 PPR include:
 - financial resource development related to fee-for-service approaches;
 - Financial resource development related to diversification of funding base; and
 - advocacy/leadership development related to systems advocacy.
- The top TA needs reported by SILCs and DSEs in 2021 PPR include:
 - advocacy/leadership development related to systems advocacy;
 - SILC roles/relationship to CILs, specifically development of a State Plan for IL; and
 - data collecting and reporting related to performance measures in the PPRs.

How is the current TA approach meeting IL grantees' needs?

- KII participants shared an overall positive experience with TA, particularly for newer grantee staff, and satisfaction with ILRU's responsiveness, but reported mixed experiences with the timeliness of TA topics and uncertainty about how to ask for TA.
- Close to two-thirds of surveyed IL grantees rated TA providers as very good or excellent in terms of helping grantee organizations fulfill their missions.
- Most surveyed IL grantees reported that the benefits of TA for their organization were (1) improved operational efficiency and (2) performance on key outcomes.

IL Grantees' Reported Satisfaction with TA Received by TA Type

Most IL grantees surveyed are satisfied or very satisfied with the types of TA they get.



How is the TA approach not meeting grantees' needs? What else is needed?

- Many IL grantees reported no need for additional TA. Other grantees reported that having limited organizational staff meant that they could not participate in TA, the TA did not occur frequently enough or at times in which staff could participate, or they did not know about available TA.
- Among KII participants, some recommended TA improvements, such as directing a greater portion of available funds to direct support and peer-to-peer TA and better identifying IL grantees' TA needs.

Areas of opportunity may include:

- Providing TA offerings more frequently and with more flexibility to allow greater participation among grantees with limited staff availability.
- Increasing grantees' awareness of and engagement in TA.
- Identifying grantees' TA needs and tailoring TA accordingly.