

# Self-Determination & Seeking Employment with Autistic/Neurodiverse Individuals in Community Living

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## INTRODUCTION

- **Benefits of employment include:** increase in meaningful participation, development of skills, financial gains, opportunities for social connection, & a sense of belonging [1].
- Neurodiverse populations spend disproportionate length of time searching for jobs due to lack of guidance, support, & limited opportunities, ultimately deterring population from sustained efforts to seek employment [2].
- Department of Developmental Services (DDS) & federal laws contribute to need for careful attention to nuances & difficulty navigating the work & career realm [3].

**3LPlace:** Non-profit organization with mission of empowering young adults with neurodiversity to reach their potential & live meaningful lives [4]

- **Population:** young adults with autism (ASD) & other intellectual & developmental disabilities
- **Interdisciplinary team:** staff at 3LPlace include OT, SLP, LMHC, developmental educators, social workers, expressive art therapists & administrative staff
- **Programming:** strives to promote self-determination [5] through life skills training, vocational exploration, social skills training, community integration, & various therapeutic groups.
- **Gap:** lack of tangible resources & processes to create & work toward vocational goals (including accessible goal setting & resume templates, readily accessible group materials, DDS regulation compliant community connections)
- **Importance:** honoring principles of self-determination when forming & working towards vocational goals increases client motivation & engagement in vocational pursuits/employment

## AIMS

1. Gather **stakeholder input** regarding vocational program/resources (parents/families/caregivers, 3LPlace staff).
2. Identify members' vocational **interests/goals**.
3. Develop systematic, reproducible **vocational resources** (accessible goal setting template, progressive work curriculum & adaptable resume template) to facilitate vocational goal setting/obtainment.
4. Form **vocational relationships** with Tufts community & surrounding nonprofits in the Somerville community to explore potential collaboration related to member vocational interests/goals.

## METHODS-STAKEHOLDER INPUT

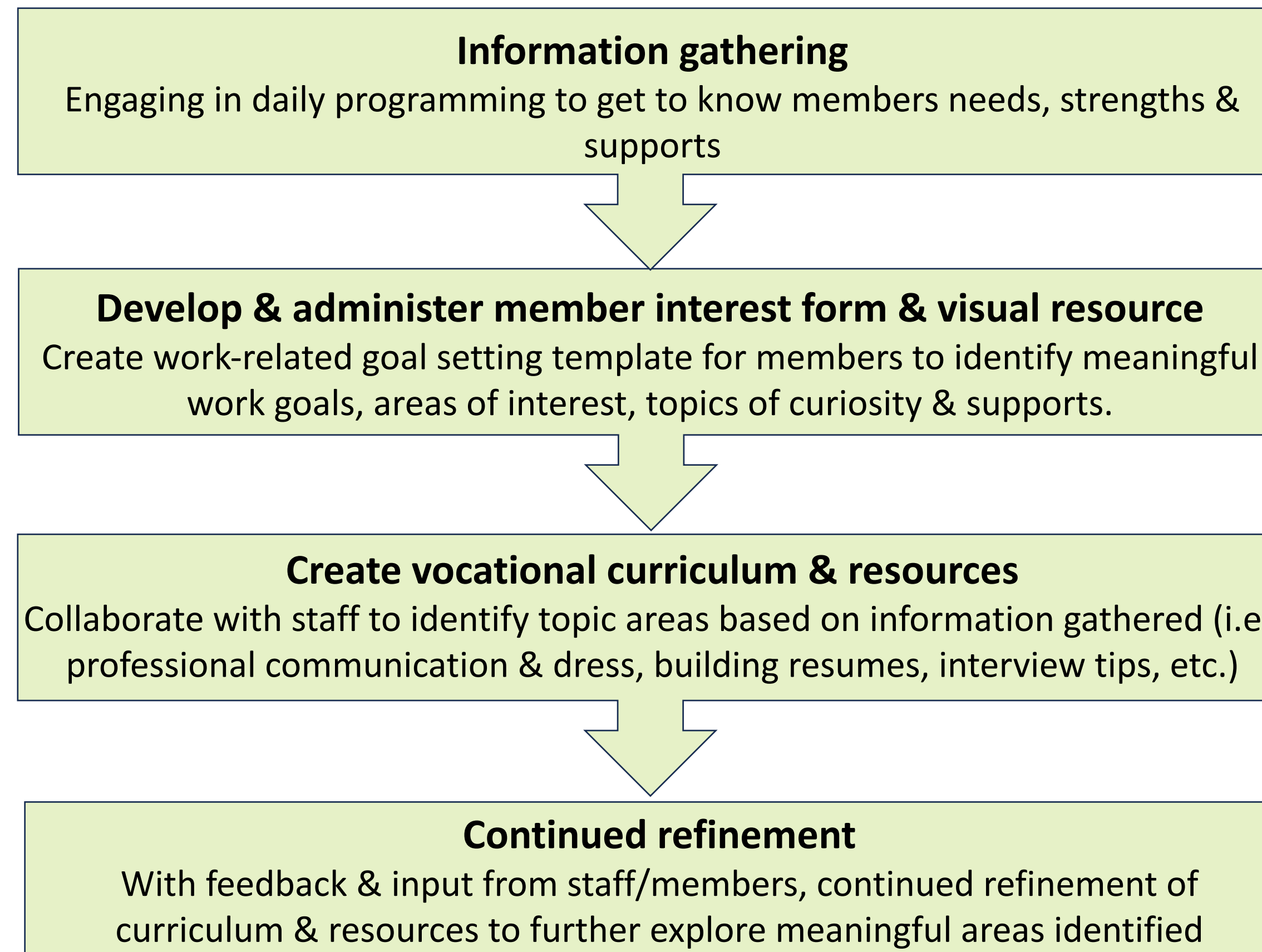
### Develop & administer parent/family/caregiver survey

Gather perspectives & further information re: work history, realistic goal setting & support areas

### Develop & Administer 3LPlace staff survey

Feedback re: satisfaction, user friendliness & accessibility of resources & development of vocational pathways

## METHODS-VOCATIONAL RESOURCES



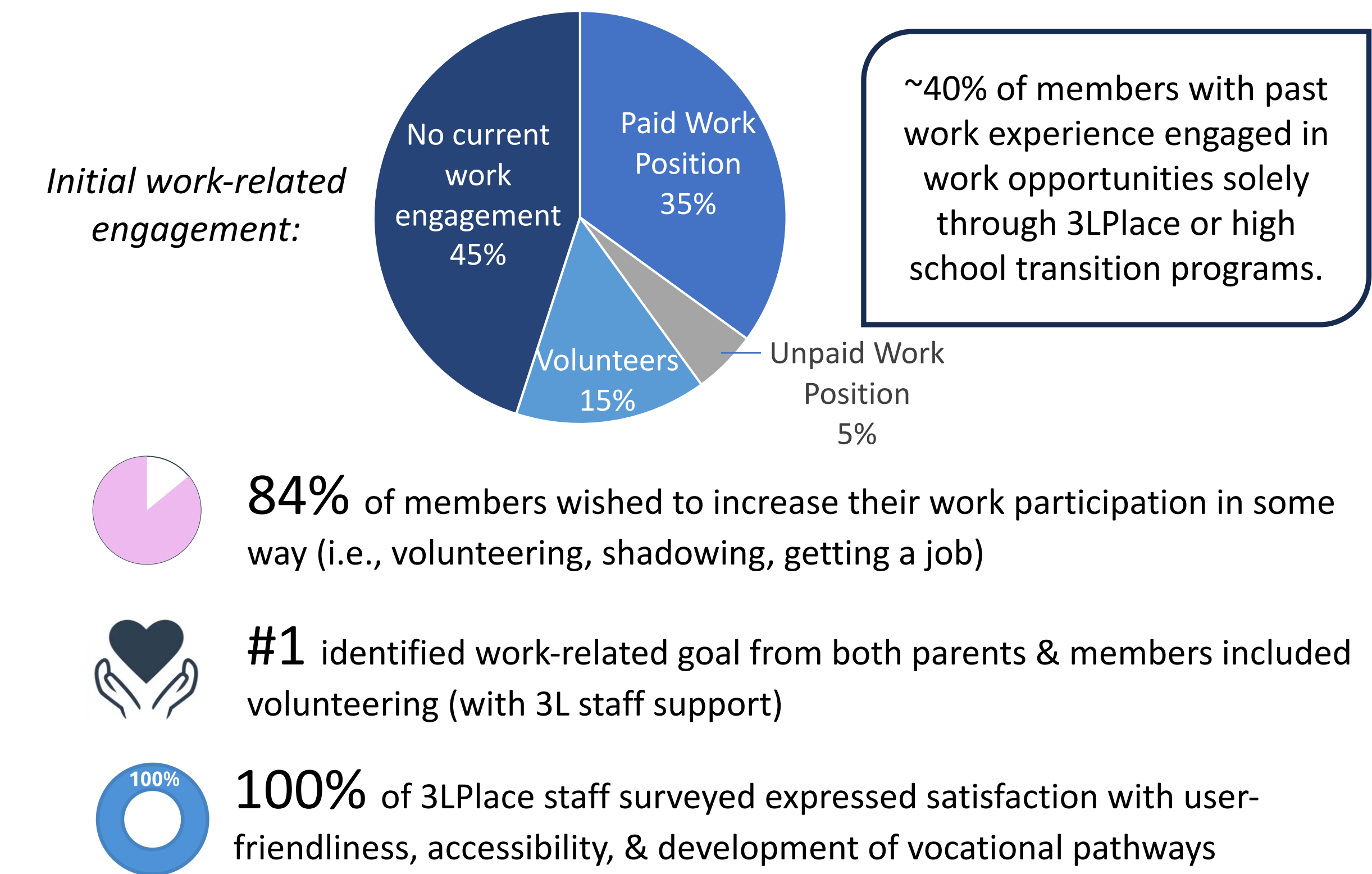
## METHODS-COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- ✓ **Gather resources for DDS Laws**  
Read information pertaining to laws regarding unpaid work, volunteering & unpaid internship for individuals with disabilities
- ✓ **Create accessible infographic**  
Synthesize all DDS regulations into digestible content for myself, staff & interested community stakeholders
- ✓ **Network with organizations & expert individuals**  
Create spreadsheet of contacts & meeting discussion notes for 3L Place as a resource
- ✓ **Build sustainable community connections**  
Reach out to local establishments for volunteer & employment opportunities

## DELIVERABLES

Stakeholder & Member Input	Vocational Resources	Community Outreach
Development of parent survey & response summary	Topic specific PowerPoints (interviewing, resume, etc.)	Networking & community connections spreadsheet
Member work-related goal setting & interest form	Accompanying worksheets & outing-focused goals	Synthesized & relevant DDS & federal laws infographic
Member visual resume template	Social stories for established volunteer connections	Member volunteer contracts

## FINDINGS



## OUTCOMES & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Using data gathered from parents & members, 3 groups created:

Group A	Group B	Group C
Past work experience, obtaining/maintaining work curriculum, goals of independent employment	Pre-vocational skill building curriculum, higher support needs (in-house groups & volunteering)	Aspiring or current entrepreneurs, supporting personal passions & goals

- Prior to advancing through vocational pathways, careful consideration of DDS regulations & SSDI benefits is essential.
- Compliance with laws & regulations enables 3LPlace to offer optional volunteer opportunities, facilitate independent employment through curriculum development & host in-house groups for pre-vocational skill building.
- Comprehensive program revamp planned to address varying needs will support group development in work & career
- Established sustainable connections with volunteer opportunities across five sites in response to staff, parent & member input.
- Maintain open communication with all stakeholders, including members & families, regarding work-related goals.

## REFERENCES & CONTACT INFO

### References & Resources:



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