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Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Collaborative for Citizen Direct Supports Wins ACL's DSP National Innovative Challenge Grand Prize

(Trenton) – The Collaborative for Citizen Direct Supports NJ (The Collaborative NJ) won the Administration for Community Living (ACL) Blazing New Trails for Community-Based Direct Support Professionals Challenge grand prize.

The Collaborative NJ was awarded the \$120,000 grand prize for developing an interactive map that identifies where self-directed employees (SDEs) and direct support professionals (DSPs) are located so they can be contacted about their services.

“The Collaborative created a way for the people using services, and those wanting to provide services to exercise informed choice, thereby enabling authentic connections and the potential for real system change,” said Marian Frattarola-Saulino, board chair, The Collaborative NJ.

[The Collaborative NJ](#) built a network of over 700 people who can share and promote the map and DSP support solutions. DSP agencies can submit lists of available staff to the map, and SDEs can submit information about their staffing preferences.

Funding from the [New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities'](#) (NJCDD) Community Innovation Projects provided startup money for the interactive map. “We were able to hire a self-advocate and a map facilitator with the initial funding from NJCDD,” said Amy Jedele, resource and development director, Values Into Action (NJ).

The interactive map was developed in response to COVID-19 so people in need of support could be connected with those who provide support during the pandemic. “Congratulations to The Collaborative for this well-deserved recognition,” said Mercedes Witowsky, executive director, NJCDD.

The official announcement is available [here](#).

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The Collaborative for Citizen Directed Supports NJ is a membership organization that promotes and expands citizen-directed services and supports in New Jersey.