

## Transcript

### **WIOA Vision: Vocational Rehabilitation Service Integration in the Job Center**

#### **Before You Get Started**

Welcome to “WIOA Vision: Vocational Rehabilitation Service Integration in the Job Center.” Before you get started, here are a few things that will help you navigate the training. There are several ways to advance slides. Select the **Next** or **Previous** buttons at the bottom right of the screen. Use the **right arrow** or **left arrow** on the number pad of your keyboard. Or wait 3 seconds after the end of the narration and the slide will advance automatically. If you are viewing this course via phone or tablet, **swipe left** for the previous slide and **swipe right** for the next slide.

To pause the slide and the narration, select pause on the **progress bar** OR use the **space bar**. To resume narration, select play on the **progress bar** or hit the **Enter** key.

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Enjoy!

#### **WIOA Vision: Vocational Rehabilitation Service Integration in the Job Center**

WIOA is the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, remarkable for its focus on customer service for job seekers and businesses. Joint guidance from our Federal partners directs the many partner agencies to respond to customers in a single voice, so that our focus shifts from who we are separately to who we are together. Let's take a look at the law itself.

#### **An Act**

WIOA is known as Public Law 113-128 and amends the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. From an historical perspective, the purpose of the Workforce Investment Act was to coordinate and improve employment, training, literacy and vocational rehabilitation programs in the United States. With the passage of WIOA, State and Federal agencies continue to evolve and respond to the needs of the 21st century. The purpose of WIOA is to strengthen the workforce development system through innovation in, and alignment and improvement of, employment, training and education programs, and to promote individual and national economic growth.

Let's stop here and take a moment to look at this evolution and some of the values that come with it.

#### **A Shift**

From the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) to WIOA, we see a shift from coordinating to aligning, and a movement beyond improving to strengthening and innovating. We're still talking about employment and training -- but now we're going beyond literacy and vocational rehabilitation to multiple types of education across the lifespan, which may include literacy, numeracy, financial literacy and other 21st century skills. Surrounding the passage of WIOA, President Obama called for a job-driven workforce system with career pathways that will ultimately lead to family-sustaining wages.

## **Common Vision**

Under the Workforce Investment Act, there were some who felt that different agencies may have been working in silos or at cross purposes. When WIOA was passed, in a nearly unprecedented show of coordination, three agencies released the same vision at the same time. The Rehabilitation Services Administration published TAC-15-01; the Department of Labor published TEG 04-15; and the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education published OCTAE15-3. On August 13, 2015, everyone got the same memo.

### **Common Vision (continued)**

The common vision says that under WIOA, partner programs and entities that are jointly responsible for workforce and economic development, educational and other human resource programs collaborate to create a seamless, customer-focused, one-stop delivery system that **integrates service** delivery across all programs and enhances access to those programs' services.

The one-stop delivery system may be a physical building, a set of buildings, virtual or remote services, or any combination of these. This system is what we know as the One-Stop Center or, now, the American Job Center. From a customer service standpoint, the creation of a seamless, customer-focused system with integrated service delivery has incredible implications.

### **Common Vision (cont.)**

The common vision also states that the one-stop delivery system includes six core programs: Title I: Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs; Title II: Adult Education and Literacy programs; the Title III: Wagner-Peyser program; and the Title IV: Vocational Rehabilitation program, as well as other required and optional partners identified in WIOA.

## **WIA to WIOA: In General**

Now that we know a little bit about the purpose of the law and the shared vision of the core partners, let's talk about some of the big picture changes from the Workforce Investment Act to WIOA.

First, aside from simply matching workers with job orders, there is an emphasis on career pathways and sector partnerships to promote employment in in-demand industries and occupations. Second, there is an elimination of the sequencing of services, something to which many of us were accustomed -- moving from core to intensive to training services. What we now have is a focus on career pathways and career services, training and supportive services.

WIOA continues the establishment of a Workforce Development Board by each state, and enhances the guidance for the creation of a single, Unified or Combined State Strategic Plan. This was an option under the Workforce Investment Act, but now all states are mandated to create these strategic plans that are reviewed by both the Department of Education and the Department of Labor. The State Plan outlines the State's workforce objectives and the strategies for meeting those objectives. It also outlines the strategies for creating a universally accessible, integrated service flow for job seekers.

Finally, we have -- for the first time -- a shared accountability system with Common Performance Measures that will be used throughout the workforce system and across agency boundaries.

### **WIA to WIOA: Title IV**

In Title IV of WIOA, the amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 bring significant changes. For one, Voc Rehab is an official part of the team. VR has a reserved seat at the table, named as one of the six core partners responsible for WIOA.

WIOA also has an increased emphasis on services to help youth successfully transition from school to post-secondary education or employment. This includes collaboration among a number of different programs and service providers, including coordination with transition services provided by local educational agencies under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Title IV of WIOA includes new provisions regarding the use of subminimum wage. For the first time, we have a Federal Cross-Agency Advisory Committee on increasing competitive, integrated employment for individuals with disabilities. And in Section 511 of WIOA, an entity with a special wage certificate may provide subminimum-wage work for individuals 24 or younger, only upon completion of some very specific actions by multiple entities. Specific conditions will need to be in place for an individual to enter into and remain in a subminimum wage situation. Also for the first time, schools will be prohibited from subcontracting to employment service providers who are going to place individuals in a subminimum-wage environment.

Finally, Title IV of WIOA includes criteria for certifying the American Job Centers, which include physical and programmatic accessibility. Who better to consult with regarding accessibility and inclusion than the folks in VR?

### **WIA to WIOA: A Disability Perspective**

From a disability perspective, VR has been working for years toward not just jobs, but meaningful employment, and the focus on Career Pathways in WIOA supports that same value. We will talk a little bit more about Career Pathways in a moment.

Individuals with disabilities are also included more in the planning process. WIOA says that individuals with disabilities must be a part of state and local strategic plans.

It also says performance outcomes must be identified, reported and disaggregated so we can see what the outcomes are for groups with barriers to employment, such as individuals with disabilities.

We touched on this earlier, but the new certification requirements for the American Job Centers include a review and assessment of physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology and materials, and appropriate staff training and supports.

Another big change is that under Title IV, at least 15% of a State's VR allotment must be expended for pre-employment transition services to prepare youth for postsecondary education and employment.

Under the Workforce Investment Act, employers have always been a key stakeholder; but under WIOA, there is an increased emphasis on the employer as a customer as

well. In Title IV, the Vocational Rehabilitation program must identify and respond to the needs of employers, and help with recruitment, job matching, hiring, on-the-job training, accommodations, retention and even career advancement.

### **Governance: State Workforce Development Board**

The guidance in WIOA for the governance and operation of a collaborative system is addressed in Title I of WIOA. We talked about the increased focus in VR on the employer as a customer. We also see an increased focus on business and employers in Title I. Under Title I, State and Local Workforce Development Boards are chaired and largely comprised of business representatives and other state leaders who are committed to a 21st century-ready workforce. Members of the State Board are appointed by the governor to oversee the workforce system and create policy. The State Board develops the State's strategic plan that describes the seamless, integrated services that are available in the workforce system. And the six core partners play an essential role in drafting and supporting the State Plan.

### **Governance: Local Workforce Development Board**

At the local level, the Local Workforce Development Board is comprised of locally appointed community and industry leaders. Both State and Local Plans must identify the employment needs of employers and develop strategies to meet those needs. The Local Boards are to enhance collaboration with employers, other economic development entities and service providers, including community colleges. These collaborations are formalized through cooperative agreements, or Memorandums of Understanding, which also have specific requirements under WIOA. The Local Workforce Development Boards are also the leaders of the employer engagement and career pathways efforts in the local area.

### **WIOA Title I: Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth**

Title I also authorizes the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs, replacing previous Job Training Partnership Act and Comprehensive Employment and Training Act programs. Some people used to see these as *the* one-stop center, but under WIOA, these programs are only *part* of the American Job Center. Career and training services under Title I are provided by local service providers selected by the Local Workforce Development Board.

### **WIOA Title II: Adult Education and Family Literacy Act**

Additional requirements in WIOA focus on systems coordination. Under Title I, there must be an alignment of employment, training and education, including career and technical education, with human service programs not covered by the State Plan. Here in Title II, we see that the Adult Education and Family Literacy activities must also align with the core programs and other one-stop partners, including in the development of career pathways.

There are four purpose statements in this Title, and we've copied two of them here. The purpose is to create a partnership to assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and economic self-sufficiency, and to assist adults in attaining a secondary school diploma and in transition to postsecondary education and training, including through career pathways.

There's the specific mention of economic self-sufficiency again. Going back to Title I for a second, for the first time, we have the promotion of financial literacy activities for youth and adults with disabilities. And there's a pretty extensive definition of financial literacy that has to do with helping people with money management, budgeting, improving credit status, reducing debt and really focusing on overall financial stability.

### **WIOA Title III: The Wagner-Peyser Act**

When we think of the Wagner-Peyser Act, we usually think of the traditional labor exchange services; but now we're talking about not just job matching, but also career services and business services, and WIOA also promotes a 21st century use and understanding of labor market information. Again, this goes along with the theme of a job-driven workforce, and using local labor market information can really help with identifying jobs that are economically viable and suitable for the job seeker, given his or her individual strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities and interests related to obtaining employment and pursuing a meaningful career.

### **WIOA Title IV: Vocational Rehabilitation**

Title IV amends the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. In many states, Title IV covers two State VR agencies -- the General agency and the Agency for the Blind. It discusses how the core partners, including VR now, will work together to accomplish the objectives in the State Plan. And going back to VR as a leader, there's a heavy emphasis in WIOA on the effective inclusion of people with disabilities in the American Job Center.

We have a chance, as Christopher Button from the Office of Disability Employment Policy said, "to take a look at how we're welcoming individuals with disabilities into our programs and services, and what actions we can take to make our systems even more welcoming and inclusive."

VR certainly has expertise in this area, and is therefore in a great position to advocate for inclusion when it comes to building accessibility, program and service accessibility, the development of career pathways that serve all people, regardless of disability -- and to consult with employers regarding *their* accessibility and inclusion goals.

### **Other Required Partner Agencies**

In addition to the Core Services, Congress has added the expertise of other key initiatives to enhance the effectiveness of the system in responding to the full community. These "required" partner agencies are identified in Title I of WIOA, and required by this act to make their services available to the community through American Job Centers. At the local level, these agencies work with the Boards to determine how their services will align with the others in the center.

These agencies include the services established in Section V of the Older Americans Act and provide the Senior Community Service Employment Program services; Carl D. Perkins Act Programs offered in postsecondary institutions; Trade Act Programs; Community Services Block Grant Employment and Training programs; Housing and Urban Development Employment and Training Programs; Unemployment Insurance; programs offered through corrections agencies authorized by the Second Chance Act; employment services provided through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program; veterans services authorized under Chapter 41 of Title 38; and other programs authorized by Title I of WIOA in addition to the Adult, Youth and Dislocated

Worker services. These include Job Corps, the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Program, Native American Employment Services and YouthBuild.

Of course, Local Workforce Development Boards are not limited to this range of expertise and may add additional agencies to their workforce systems.

It is also important to note that WIOA does allow governors to exclude the TANF programs from the “required” WIOA programs, and some states have exercised that option.

This list gives you a pretty fair idea of the scope of the vision of WIOA. As you can imagine in your community, the breadth of expertise that is brought together here is immense. If engaged in a common service flow, the ability of your community to involve everyone in its industry is limited only by the ability of these agencies to work together.

### **Career Pathways**

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 was scheduled for reauthorization after five years. As it would turn out, the reauthorization was pushed back to 15 years. This long delay provided an opportunity for federal agencies to collaborate and reflect on this structure for labor exchange. With WIOA, they established a newer structure in which all workforce partner agencies work together to create a common pipeline of talent to the business sectors of their communities. Within the Career Pathways structure, each state and local Workforce Development Board creates their own model to provide the skills needed to their primary business sectors.

The six key elements of their Career Pathways systems are ...

- 1) To build cross-agency partnerships;
- 2) To identify industry sectors and engage employers;
- 3) To design education and training programs;
- 4) To identify funding needs and sources;
- 5) To align policies and programs; and
- 6) To measure systems change and performance

If these key elements sound familiar, they should. This is an operational outline around which the core and required partner agencies and boards can establish a responsive service system. Using this structure, your community can engage the expertise of all of the partners into a common service flow that is more responsive to all job seekers and your business customers.

### **Career Pathways Illustration**

If you have been engaged in the process of developing your state’s career pathway model, this graphic should seem familiar. This illustration (or ones very similar) have appeared in Unified State Plan drafts. This one is from the Career Pathways Toolkit, available as a resource to you through the ION Community of Practice.

This structure can be applied to the career pathways identified in your states and regions. For instance, if financial services are identified as one of the key industry targets by your Boards and economic development agencies, your business sector is

instrumental in supporting your Board in identifying the jobs and occupations in that career path, and the skills and expertise required to fill each position. Those career specialists will support job seekers in applying their skills in that career pathway, or in knowing how to increase their skills if the career objective is to move further along the pathway.

### **The Unified (or Combined) State Plan**

We've already hit on some key roles for the Core partners within the vision of WIOA. Especially key is the leadership role in supporting the State Workforce Board in the development of the Unified or Combined State Plan.

This is a four-year action plan which articulates each State's vision, challenges and operational objectives, as well as the State's strategy to meet those objectives. Many States have established collaborative teams who meet regarding the implementation of those strategies, adjusting the State Plan as a result of progress.

Your State Plan and strategy include the roles that each of the state core programs assume in implementing those strategies. In addition to the jointly developed Strategic Plan, the State VR program submits its program-specific plan, as required in Title IV of WIOA.

This plan is approved by the Secretaries of Labor and Education, after the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services has approved.

### **MOA Requirements for VR Agencies**

The structure and requirements in the development of the State Plan as well as those for the required partner agencies with the local boards establish the connections between those agencies regarding the state and local service alignment required to support each state's strategy. For each state's Medicaid, Intellectual and Developmental Disability and Mental Health Agencies, these agreements are designed to increase the effective service connections between them and the VR agencies, as well as increase the connection for them with the state's workforce system as a whole. Agreements with State Level and Local Level Education Agencies are necessary to coordinate community support to youth as they move into full community participation.

### **The MOU with the Local Workforce Development Board**

Let's talk a bit more about agreements with the Local Workforce Development Boards. The MOU with the Local Workforce Development Board is established to define the Local Workforce Center system. The local board is established by another local board known as the Chief Elected Official (or the CEO). The CEO is made up of local elected officials and makes the appointments to the local Workforce Development Boards according to guidelines established by the WIOA and Governor's offices in each state. Together, the CEO and the Local Board establish agreements with each core and required partner agency (together or separately) in terms that define the structure of the local workforce system and the participation of each agency.

The local board and CEO are responsible for the development of a local service plan, very similar to that required by the State Workforce Board in the Unified Plan. These agreements between the local boards and partner agencies articulate much of the structure that is a part of the local strategy to meet their objectives.

In these agreements, the Boards will describe the services provided in the system, and how they are coordinated and delivered; system operating costs, and how they are covered through resource sharing, including infrastructure costs; methods of referral; how individuals with barriers are included, and center accessibility; duration of Agreement; and other, as State or Local Board may require.

### **WIOA Vision**

In a conversation that the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center team had with Dr. Joseph Ashley in Virginia, we talked about opportunities for leadership roles that each of the core partners have in system development. We noted the leadership role that the Virginia rehabilitation agency has played with WIA and WIOA implementation in Virginia, and Dr. Ashley responded, quote, “To take a leadership role in the One-Stop, you have to show up and do some of the work.”

Let’s take a look at some of these leadership opportunities.

### **Customer Service**

Consider again what the WIOA Vision is for customer service with a job seeker, particularly a job seeker with a disability. Thirty years ago, advocates worked diligently to make our customers savvier. We worked hard to educate our customers about the 15 to 20 agencies, programs or service funding streams that might be relevant to them in pursuing their career opportunities. We learned that placing the burden on our customers to untangle the system may have worked for some of our customers, but not most of them. Our lesson was that to make our collective services welcoming and responsive to our community, it requires that the many parts of the system work together to place the complexity of the system behind the scenes. Each job seeker should be able to take full advantage of the expertise within each of the partner agencies in a manner that is uncomplicated and without needless barriers. The secret in finding this economy and expediency in service is that it can only be accomplished through the work of local partnerships working together with the support of inspired, collaborative state policy.

### **The AJC and Customer Service**

Within this vision, there are American Job Centers that have established a service culture in which each partner recognizes and respects the expertise of their partners. Each partner is supported and expected to emerge as a leader in their area of expertise, when needed by a customer. The service culture fosters the, quote, “braiding of expertise” as needed for individual customers to expedite service outcomes and create economy in service delivery.

This formula applies to both the job-seeking customer and the business customer in this vision. Just as the partners work together to create a common and accessible service flow in the American Job Center for all job seekers, they also work together to approach and serve the business customer as a single voice. This approach on both ends strengthens the local Career Pathway model and labor exchange efforts for all customers.

What does this mean for the collaborative impact on the community with regard to performance? It is a challenge. Historically, each program was evaluated based upon the impact for the individuals that they touch, or enroll. The vision of WIOA asserts that



together, we create a service model that responds to the full community as a lifelong resource, and our collective relevance will be determined based on how we do this together. There is an expectation in WIOA that the full system is responsive to and inclusive of job seekers with disabilities. Braiding our expertise to address the customer service needs of each member of our community is expected to improve each of the separate agency performance outcomes while enhancing the system's capacity to serve more people as a result of system efficiency.

### **Leadership of VR Agency as a Core Partner: Accessibility**

With regard to Accessibility, VR agencies' expertise proves invaluable where state policy and problem-solving approaches are concerned around the engagement of individuals with disabilities in Job Center services and in employment.

As WIOA requires workforce systems to be physically and programmatically accessible in order to be a certified American Job Center, the VR agency is in a position to be a leader in the development of state policy that supports the certification of job centers that will be more fully inclusive of individuals with disabilities.

The Vocational Rehabilitation partners in some states are stepping up to provide training around Section 188 for Job Center management and staff. In many states, the VR agency provides orientation to American Job Center staff on the inclusion of individuals with specific types of disabilities in service, and resources that will support stronger employment outcomes.

### **Leadership of VR Agency as a Core Partner: Inclusion in Career Pathways**

The expertise that is inherent in Vocational Rehabilitation professionals supports their ability to connect individuals with disabilities to the career pathways of a region. This is a key leadership role that is valuable in the development and enhancement of local and state Career Pathway models. This leadership expands the talent pool for businesses and increases the career opportunities for more individuals in the community.

### **Leadership of VR Agency as a Core Partner: Inclusion in Career Pathways (continued)**

Contributions that are available in Job Centers as a result of VR leadership as a core partner include ...

- Consultation regarding accommodations
- Strategies that include "discovery" and customized employment
- Solutions using technology to increase the ability of job seekers to participate more fully both in service and in employment
- Support to the Job Center in its operation as an Employment Network through Ticket to Work
- Strategies to make SSA benefits advisement and counseling available to job seekers on disability benefits
- Adaptation to assessments or curricula that might unfairly restrict access to career pathway participation for individuals with certain types of disabilities

## **Leadership of VR Agency as a Core Partner: Business Services**

There is an increased emphasis on business service for state VR agencies in the Rehabilitation Act amendments included in Title IV of WIOA. Businesses indicate that a collaborative and integrated workforce system is more effective in meeting their needs than systems in which each of the service agencies approach them separately. The leadership that VR agencies can provide businesses while serving on a collaborative business service team in the AJC include ...

- Ability to recruit qualified employees with disabilities
- Support to businesses regarding hiring and employment requirements with ADA
- Expertise regarding accommodation
- Information about disability and work that they are able to provide to businesses through Staff Training

### **Question 1**

Please take a few minutes to take the following quiz to test your knowledge.

Question #1: Which was NOT one of the three agencies that published the joint vision for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act?

- Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Rehabilitation Services Administration
- Department of Labor

### **Question 2**

Question #2: Fill in the blank. The common vision for WIOA calls for a “seamless, customer-focused one-stop delivery system that \_\_\_\_\_ across all programs.”

- Shares a single building
- Operates in silos
- Integrates customer service delivery
- Refuses to communicate

### **Question 3**

Question #3: The WIOA Core Partners include ...

- Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation programs
- Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs
- Title II Adult Education and Literacy programs and Title III Wagner-Peyser program
- All of the above

**Question 4**

Question #4: True or False? WIOA requires that each State Workforce Development Board develop a single state strategic plan.

**Question 5**

Question #5: The vision of WIOA expands on a unifying focus on “labor exchange” with guidance for collaborative development of ...

- Career Pathways
- Online job advertisements
- Resume building
- Job fairs

**Question 6**

Question #6: What percentage of Vocational Rehabilitation funds must be used for Pre-Employment Transition Services?

- 50%
- 20%
- 75%
- 15%

**Question 7**

Question #7: True or False?

In addition to working with the State Workforce Development Board to establish a Unified or Combined State plan, the VR program submits its program-specific plan outlined in Title IV.

**Question 8**

Question #8: WIOA requires that Vocational Rehabilitation Services address business services by ...

- Approaching the Workforce Business Service Representatives as intermediaries between VR agency and businesses
- Identifying and responding to the needs of employers, and help with recruitment, job-matching, hiring, on-the-job training, accommodations and retention
- Providing customer service to business separate from their workforce partners so impact can be evaluated separately
- Providing training to businesses about disability so they will hire more people with disabilities

**Question 9**

Question #9: The MOU with the Local Workforce Development Boards is required to address all the following except ...

- Describe how the services of the partner agencies are coordinated and delivered within the local one-stop system.
- Describe how the infrastructure and other operating costs are shared by the partner agencies.
- Describe methods of referral between partner agencies.
- Identify who is the funder of last resort.

**Question 10**

Question #10: As a Core Partner in all states, the VR Agency has the expertise to provide system leadership in the following areas except ...

- Accessibility of services
- Determining who is employable
- Including people with disabilities in Career Pathway models
- Supporting businesses in successful employment of qualified individuals with disabilities

**Results**

Congratulations! You have completed "WIOA Vision: Vocational Rehabilitation Service Integration in the Job Center." Thank you for participating in the training.