

# Summary: Business Engagement Community of Practice

## Principles

CSAVR, WINTAC, JDVRTAC and other partners developed principles to guide organizations in their efforts to establish and enhance their relationship with business in a way that meets the needs of all customers -- business, individuals with disabilities and state VR agencies.

- Initiatives include advancing the opportunity for individuals with disabilities to gain, retain and advance in employment.
- Partners support a dual customer approach that supports the connection of VR talent to opportunities in private and public sector business.
- Business is a customer -- and we ensure engagement, services and systems to support the customer's needs. Business relations include establishing long-term relationships, strategies for cross-state businesses, support for job retention, supports and training on disability and accommodations, other consultative services as appropriate. Messaging reflects business as a customer.
- VR and, by extension, the National Employment Team (NET) specialization and expertise are recognized to educate, inform, and influence policy, program and systems.
- Initiatives will coordinate, collaborate with each other and establish alignment with the work of respective state's VR agency. Alignment includes shared terminology and definitions, and establishes time frames associated with each goal. In addition to the benefits of coordination and collaboration, it 1) ensures no surprises and 2) increases awareness among all parties.
- Representatives of each stakeholder entity meet ("Steering Body") to ensure continued alignment with principles and to discuss ongoing progress.

## Practice

The WINTAC Business Engagement Community of Practice supported State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (SVRA) staff in gaining ideas and insights into how to more effectively engage business partners in hiring job seekers with disabilities as an integrated strategy of American Job Centers.

The Community of Practice members took the opportunity to interact with other States in exploring best practices, tips and techniques. Members will be able to work jointly with other professionals and content experts to jointly create new practices and resources for Business Engagement and Business Services.



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## Worksource – VR Collaboration

State of Washington: Brent Masters, Elysa Doss, Christine Simpson

### Target Workforce Services to Better Serve Employers and Job Seekers

- Monthly Employer Services meetings with ESD and DVR Business Services, DSHS, CBOs and Colleges
- Targeted outreach to and for employers
- Job fairs and resource fairs/employers of the day events

### The Successful Models of Collaboration Achieved by DVR at Both Worksource Everett and Worksource North Seattle

- From homeless to self-sufficiency
- Physical disability to OJT (One-the-Job training)
- LOWES

## Iowa Reverse Job Fair

Michelle Krefft, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Diane Hernandez, MS, CRC, CBIS, Iowa Employment Solutions at DMACC

### Turning the Tables

- The Reverse Job Fair is an opportunity for job seekers to showcase their skills, personality and ambition to employers. This is done by literally flipping the tables.
- Job seekers develop presentations, displays and materials, and the employers circulate around the room learning about candidates.
- This role reversal puts the job candidate in a position to design an experience that demonstrates their best attributes.

### Benefits

To Job Seeker:

- Shares high-quality portfolio, including resume, elevator speech, etc.
- Practices a presentation adapted to essential job functions
- Builds confidence

To Employer:

- Connects businesses with high-quality -- but often overlooked -- job seekers
- Requires less financial and logistical burden (no display)
- Provides a chance to see job seekers' strengths in a way that promotes creative thinking about hiring



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Learn more at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ai8sebl9IKQ> or [www.wintac.org/cop](http://www.wintac.org/cop).

## Measuring Business Engagement – VR

Depth vs. Breadth: Qualitative Measures of Engagement  
Ralph Roach, Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

### **Pennsylvania VR DOL approaches to tracking services to Business**

- Employer Information and Support Services
- Workforce Recruitment Assistance
- Engaged in Strategic Planning/Economic Development
- Accessing Untapped Labor Pools
- Training Services
- Incumbent Worker Training Services
- Rapid Response/Business Downsizing Assistance
- Planning Layoff Response

## Collaborative Strategies to Meet Business Sector Needs in Six States

Doug Keast, Project Director, WINTAC NDI Team  
Lou Adams, Manager, Training and Technical Assistance, WINTAC NDI Team

To Support area employers and industry sectors most effectively, American Job Center (AJC) staff, including designated partner program staff, must incorporate an integrated and aligned business services strategy among partners to present a unified voice for the AJCs in communications with employers.

- RSA TAC 17-02 (p. 15, 16)
- OCTAE Program Memorandum 17-4 (p. 15, 16)
- DOL TEGL 16-16 (p. 17)

## Illinois

Core Partners and Economic Development Agencies held two-day regional meetings to 1) identify the economic conditions and business sectors unique to each region; and 2) identify culture and strategy of regional partnerships to meet business needs.

Following these meetings, Core and Other partners established an American Job Center Business Service Team in each region. This team includes members from the partners who will continue to work together in addressing the business needs for each region.

This collaboration will create a broader array of services immediately available in business services. It will also increase each region's capacity to shape its Career Pathway model as a "common pipeline of talent to meet business sector needs."



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## Indiana

Work at the State Level with two Collaborative WIOA Implementation Committees/Councils that have come together to strengthen Career Pathway development and support the Indiana Career Council and the Workforce Innovation Council.

Indiana is beginning the process of supporting the local Workforce Development Boards and Partner agencies in responding to business needs effectively together.

## Iowa

Developed the Employers Disability Resource Network midway through WIA Implementation:

- Enhances Regional collaborative state and local business efforts by connecting disability and employment agencies/communities for the purpose of being a resource to employers together
- Reverse Job Fair
- Diversity Summit
- Job Analysis

## New Hampshire

- Collaborative Job Fairs
- Partnership with HR Organization
- Business Awards program
- Local Collaborative Development of Workforce Coalitions
- Efforts to increase skills of VR Counselors as Business Service Representatives

## Missouri

The State of Missouri maintains a committee to the state Board that focuses on Business Services. This committee is currently chaired by Vocational Rehabilitation, a core Partner; one of its activities is the facilitation of an annual meeting to bring all partners together to focus on business services.

Many regions in the state maintain committees to the Local WDB that focus on disability and employment. Partners have begun a structure for collaborative focus on business service and employment for qualified individuals with disabilities called NEXUS.

Workforce Agencies and Vocational Rehabilitation in Missouri have been working together to host business events and to survey business satisfaction and service needs.

## Montana

- Locally, the Partner agencies have been coming together through meetings with the workforce Job Service Employer Council (JSEC) as one point of collaborative business service focus.



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- Core Partners have supported a common business customer information database -- MWorks. Business Specialists update business needs and contact information, which creates opportunities for partner agencies to work together in meeting business needs.
- Work together to provide TA and Training to business customers.

## **Business Engagement Community of Practice Lessons Learned**

### **Recommendations for the Field**

**Build your internal capacity** to serve the business customer.

- Determine your organizational model – centralized, regionalized or infused into current positions
- Identify Roles and Responsibilities
  - Who leads the business engagement strategies in the agency?
  - Who sets the direction for the rest of the staff involvement?
  - Who clarifies the expectations around roles and responsibilities in the business engagement approach?
  - Who initiates business contacts?
  - Who maintains business accounts?
  - Who shares the information within the organization? And with whom?
  - Who ensures that VR client information (e.g. qualifications, availability) is readily accessible to meet demand-side needs?

**Identify the unique perspective** and services you can bring to the business community.

- Knowledge of labor markets (LMI, industry sectors, required work skills)
- Creation of opportunities through business relationships – transformational rather than transactional
- Business Needs Assessment
- Understanding of accommodations
- Disability Management
- Inclusive on-boarding
- Hidden talent pool of individuals with disabilities

### **Partnerships**

Identify the benefits of coupling your services with those of partners – understanding that VR cannot do it alone just as others providing business services cannot do it without VR.

- Identify gaps in connections that a partnership can provide.
- Explore the match between VR and the other partner agencies' mission and service philosophy.



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- Look for the mutual benefit with ...
  - Workforce Boards/Core Partners
  - Education
  - Economic Development
  - Industry sectors (e.g. food, accommodations)
  - Other government and non-profit organizations

## For more information

- WINTAC Business Engagement Community of Practice  
<http://www.wintac.org/cop>
- Job Driven Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center  
<https://www.explorevr.org/toolkits/business-engagement>
- CSAVR The NET  
<https://www.csavr.org/the-net>
- Department of Labor Business Engagement Workforce GPS  
<https://businessengagement.workforcegps.org/>



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