Collaborative Workforce Employment Network Operation:  
Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation and its role with the Iowa Workforce Region 15  
Ottumwa IowaWORKS Center – Workforce EN Operation

# Highlights:

1. The Regional Workforce Partners, including the Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, have established a Collaborative Workforce Employment Network under the Ticket to Work Program.
2. There is an effective Partnership Plus agreement that outlines partner roles, ticket assignment and follow-along service commitments.
3. Ticket to Work milestone and outcome payments are collaboratively invested to increase the responsiveness of the Center’s Career services to include individuals with disabilities and support their engagement in the region’s Career Pathway models.
4. This model increases the relevance of the career services for all partner case management services, and the partnership with regard to service response for all customers.

While this workforce Region has the support of the collaborative State agency partnership to operate as an employment network in 2007, the Job Center partnership did not actively begin assigning tickets and supporting ticket holders in the center until 2011. Initially, it was focused primarily within the workforce and TANF partners. The ticket assignment process was integrated into the overall customer service flow for the AJC, and facilitated by the initial center intake process in which newcomers were invited to “disclose” whether they were SSA disability beneficiaries, for the purpose of improving the service delivery and supports for those individuals. One of the staff people assigned to the job seeker support in the career services served as the individual who provided orientation to ticket holders and managed the ticket assignment process. This individual was trained and supported by the state partners through the “state ticket coordinator.” This particular workforce region is rural.

After three years, in this fashion, the region had over $25,000 to invest collaboratively. The Job Center Leadership, including the Vocational Rehabilitation agency and a representative of the Workforce Investment Board, invited all required partners and other community stakeholders, including area community rehabilitation programs that are not AJC partners, to meet to discuss the AJC operation as a collaborative Workforce EN. They determined that they would manage the operation and investment of the resources collaboratively. They recognized that effective connection for job seekers with disabilities that come in the door to the diverse expertise of the full partnership would benefit by having an individual with disability subject matter expertise operating as a **Navigator** within the “career services” of the AJC. It was determined to invest the majority of the resources available in this role for now and reserve a smaller portion as a “flexible funding” budget, to be expended as determined by the partnership at a later date.

This leadership team then approached the local Goodwill agency and presented the proposition of managing the ticket resources on behalf of the workforce partnership and expending the resources as directed by the partnership. This would require the employment of a disability Navigator that would operate in the workforce center as a part of the career services team and manage the ticket assignment and support processes. The partnership asked Goodwill how many hours per month they could employ a Navigator who would operate in the center, based on the resources the partnership would make available. Goodwill said they could provide a Navigator 48 hours a month for the rest of the program year, and the Navigator would support the partnership in their oversight of the EN operation as it grows. Goodwill engaged Clark Young as a Navigator, and he continues in this role today, increasing his time in this role as the EN grows.

In the second year of the partnership operation as a Workforce EN, Clark recognized the importance of having SSA disability benefits advisement expertise available right in the center for all job seekers as needed. The partnership supported him in getting the necessary training, and Clark has maintained his connection with the network of benefits planners in the state. Through this and other investments of the ticket funds generated by the workforce EN, the center is increasing its capacity to respond to all job seekers with disabilities who come into the center. Increased ticket payments coming into the center are a performance indicator in themselves, as each payment is an indicator of an individual becoming more self-sufficient and less dependent on government support.

Activity Oversight – Region 15 Workforce Development Board – Core and Required Partners of Region – Area Stakeholders represented by community agencies

Significant Development notes:

* Developed in partnership with community oversight
* Strong Partnership Plus Agreement
* Agreement with SSA held at State Level, and funds passed through to Region that are generated by the region each year
* Leadership engaged a community partner – Goodwill – to employ an individual with disability expertise to be a resource to all job seekers with disabilities with the Region’s “Career Services” (available to all job seekers) and to manage the Employment Network administrative and reporting responsibilities, as well as track payments received. This individual operates as a Navigator.

| Program Year | Leadership | Ticket Income | Tickets assigned | Investments | Accomplishments |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 7/1/11 – 6/30/12 | Board – Core Partners | $2,430 |  |  |  |
| 7/1/12 – 6/30/13 |  | $10,282 |  |  |  |
| 7/1/13 – 6/30/14 |  | $13,278 | 24 |  |  |
| 7/1/14 – 6/30/15 | Added community partners | $10,384 | 56 | Engaged Navigator PT  Flexible funding for leadership  Navigator trained as benefits planner |  |
| 7/1/15 – 6/30/16 |  | $48,000 |  | Engaged a Navigator PT  Flexible funding for leadership | Navigator is a part of the business service team |
| 7/1/16 – 6/30/17 |  | $72,357 | 38 | Engaged a Navigator PT  Flexible funding for leadership |  |
| 7/1/17 – 6/30/18 |  |  |  | Engaged a Navigator PT (now 50%)  Flexible funding for leadership  Looking at adding Financial Literacy to Career Services  Disability Outreach event to community |  |

# Positive aspects recognized by Team:

1. Important to engage a Navigator that is a disability SME.
2. Include all partners in oversight and resource investment decisions.
3. Invest in benefits planning training with the Navigator, and use the State’s benefits planning network as a resource.
4. Strong agreement with VR agency regarding assignment and support, and VR is included in operational oversight.

# Benefits to the VR Agency:

1. Having a subject matter expert in the job center who can facilitate disability and employment events.
2. Flexible funding resource that can purchase accessible equipment like iPads for the AJC.
3. With Order of Selection –
   1. We’re able to make sure they are connected with the benefits planning resources.
   2. With Clark (Navigator), they are connected with the Career Services in the Job Center.
   3. If they make this connection, it is then helpful to customer in reconnecting with the staff when they come off the wait.
4. VR staff feel more connected with the Workforce Partners as a result of the Navigator activity – it doesn’t feel as siloed as it did before.

# Partnership Plus Information:

* FY 2017
  + Ottumwa VR Office successfully Closed 20 cases of SSA Beneficiaries.
  + Referred three directly to ENs – all to the Workforce EN.
  + The State VR successfully closed 638 cases of SSA Beneficiaries.
  + The State directly referred 88 to ENs, 41 of them to Workforce ENs.
* 10/1/17 to 1/31/18
  + Ottumwa VR Office successfully Closed 10 cases of SSA Beneficiaries.
  + Referred two directly to ENs – both to the Workforce EN.
  + The State VR successfully closed 128 cases of SSA Beneficiaries.
  + The State VR directly referred 38 to ENs, 22 of them to Workforce ENs.

The Ottumwa VR office works with other Community Rehabilitation Programs in the area that are not a part of the Workforce System directly. One of them is also an EN. The VR office and their workforce partners who make up the Workforce EN will be engaging this other EN in a process that supports partnership and directs referrals to this EN for assignment as well. The partnership recognizes that there will be an increased impact for customers and the partnership success with the Increased “Partnership Plus” activity and will focus on increasing successful “re” assignments of VR closures in the future.

For more Information:

Kelli Hugo, Ottumwa Area Supervisor, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services

[Kelli.hugo@iowa.gov](mailto:Kelli.hugo@iowa.gov)

Linda Rouse, Region 15 IowaWORKS Director

[Linda.rouse@iwd.iowa.gov](mailto:Linda.rouse@iwd.iowa.gov)

Clark Young, Region 15 IowaWORKS Navigator

(641) 684-5401, ext 40035 [clark.young@iwd.iowa.gov](mailto:clark.young@iwd.iowa.gov)

