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## **Putting Business Services 1st and the impact it can have on a Vocational Rehabilitation System**

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### **THE ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUE - Employer Services & Business Engagement**

- Is there a need to change the culture of the organization in response to changes in the rehab act around employment goals?
- Are employment services integrated with the changes in priorities and focus of the agency?
- How do we support good vocational planning?
- How is the knowledge of opportunities, such as career pathways and apprenticeships integrated into the guidance and counseling process?
- How do we integrate the knowledge of the business team services throughout the entire process of the case, starting at referral and intake?
- How do we increase our business services to employers, such as On the Job Training (OJT) and Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)?

### **EXPECTED OBSERVABLE/BEHAVIORAL OUTCOMES - Employer Services & Business Engagement:**

- Increase in participation in apprenticeships and OJTs.

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<sup>1</sup> The authors of this paper are participants in the *Executive Leadership Seminar in Rehabilitation Administration*, National Rehabilitation Leadership Institute, Interwork Institute, San Diego State University.

- Create a cultural shift consistent with the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) and common measures with increased career pathways, increased awareness of how business services can assist with achieving these outcomes.
- Increase the knowledge of business services and how they can be applied.
- Increase staff retention due to enriched guidance and counseling, i.e., the reason we got into the field.
- Increase the employment options to offer the client.
- Ensure employment services are integrated throughout the process.
- Increase the knowledge of options available towards quality employment outcomes.
- Ensure consistent and continuous messaging of Labor Market information is exciting and intriguing to staff.

### **FOCUS OF THE FOUR FRAMES<sup>2</sup> - Employer Services & Business Engagement:**

**Structural Frame:** shift thinking toward career pathways for all participants.

**Human Resource Frame:** strengthen staff retention as they feel more supported and knowledgeable of their resources towards outcomes in quality employment.

**Political Frame:** Increase alignment with WIOA and aligning with career education and sustainable employment.

**Symbolic:** Ensure everyone in the organization is focusing on the mission and vision of the public vocational rehabilitation program – competitive integrated employment.

### **INTERNAL ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTHS - Employer Services & Business Engagement:**

- As an organization our mission and vision align with the shifts mandated by WIOA.
- All parts of the organization's structure are involved in implementing the shift to Employer Services and Business Engagement.
- Collaboration with the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), National Employment Team (NET), Statewide Business Solutions Teams, Program on Innovative Rehabilitation Training on Employer Engagement (PIRTEE), Sector Strategies and career pathways efforts are strengthened.
- Technology is available for virtual work - ability to get hotspots to those candidates who need access.
- Currently have many seasoned staff to share best case practices with new staff.

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<sup>2</sup> The four frames refers to the work of Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal (2017), 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, *Artistry, Choice and Leadership – Reframing Organizations*, Jossey-Bass.

## ***INTERNAL ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGES - Employer Services & Business Engagement***

- Survival jobs vs. Career Pathways.
- Back to basics for career counseling, labor market information.
- Ensure we have a model or menu of services that is easily accessible to staff.
- Staff knowledge of flexibility for funding/braiding funding towards apprenticeship and other trainings or opportunities.
- Connecting the needs of the business with the skill set of our candidates.
- Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors' understanding in demand and upcoming occupations to better prepare candidates for these opportunities.
- Sharing resources and contacts to meet the needs of the business.
- Reduce the Communication challenge – ensuring that information and marketing is getting to all staff.
- Remote work possibly increasing internal silos.
- Need for technology training for all of the virtual platforms and resources dedicated for increased use of technology.
- Case management needs and requirements outweigh traditional counseling methods.
- Alignment of staff's job title with their duties and trainings that are required.

## ***EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT STRENGTHS - Employer Services & Business Engagement:***

- WIOA Partners are an advantage.
- Employers need good candidates and are open to our talent pool,
- Virtual career options and increasing.
- Strong internal Business Services teams.
- Partners are more willing to work with virtual technology for meetings.

## ***EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT CHALLENGES: - Employer Services & Business Engagement:***

- No system integration among government and community organizations.
- How do we braid funding? Confusion of grants and how they can be spent causes categorical issues.
- Proving our efficacy to stakeholders (are we doing what we have been tasked with?).
- Sharing resources and contacts to meet the needs of the business community.
- Limited work for succession planning for WIOA core partners and businesses.

## ***Strategies to incorporate the value of building Employer Services & Business Engagement into the rehabilitation process***

Initiatives that can be implemented now:

- Increase Strategic National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) activities towards supporting these shifts including:
  - Registered Apprenticeship 101,
  - Lunch n' Learns, Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP), VOCentral Direct, Workforce Connect
  - Windmills Trainings
- Spotlight in demand jobs, create "Career Cafe", educate on career pathways, have employers share the information, and create monthly targets according to the region (scripts, outline, and formatting available to share).
- Implement Channels/Streams of engagement that will be exciting and offer Continuing Education Units (CEU) for staff who are interested.
- Utilize opportunities through the Council of State Governments (CSG) Public Sector Apprenticeship Consortium.
- Integrate technology to promote greater understanding and emphasis on career explorations, i.e., virtual job shadow, TransfrVR: <https://www.transfrvr.com/>.
- Utilize RSA Disability Innovation Fund Grants-when available.
- Prioritize the work that needs to be done when change happens as to not overwhelm staff while still making the changes a priority.
- Share success stories of how business services can assist with quality employment outcomes and provide awards or recognition for a quality employment outcome through partnerships with business services.
- Conduct cross training and access to case management systems
- Create one sheet of in demand occupations in each region that is shared out with staff monthly for easy access

Initiatives that can be implemented with planning and systematic development:

- Implement back to basics trainings - these would integrate the knowledge of business services. How we provide and pay for services, how we develop the participant's goal (interest, aptitude, strengths, motivations to work), provide informed choice and increase the knowledge of in demand occupations and skill set required.
- Incorporate business services during new counselor training and development of trainings for staff regarding business services.