Testing, testing. >>

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 Good afternoon, good morning everybody. I apologize for the delay. We are having technical difficulties. Welcome to the explore webinar, getting more people employed in North Dakota improving business engagement and utilizing labor market information. I am Katie Allen. I will mention a couple of rules and logistical points.

We ask that you listen to today's presentation through your computer speakers or headphones.

If you call into the webinar today please Mute your phones.

If you cannot find your phone Mute press\*Pound.

If you experience any connection issues, try to close other applications and log out and back in.

If you continue to experience technical difficulties please type in the chat box. >> We reserve time at the end to answer any questions. We encourage you to continue to type in your questions throughout the presentation.

If you want a copy of the PowerPoint presentation, you can download that.

You can also find the PowerPoint slides on www.ExploreVR.org. There will be an evaluation at the end. After the presentation. Please follow this link to complete the webinar evaluation. If you're a counselor requesting credit you must complete the evaluation to obtain credit. This webinar is worth one credit.

The webinar is being recorded and will be archived. >> When you visit ExploreVR you can find information about all other webinars. Terry Brigance will be the host. He will introduce the presenters and explain the project as well as the objectives for today's webinar.

 Thank you. I want to welcome you to the webinar.

This is the North Dakota division rehabilitation webinar entitled getting more people involved and employed in North Dakota improving business engagement and utilizing labor market information.

The objectives today are several, we will explain the JD-VRTAC goals partners technical assistance and learning collaborative. Described in North Dakota DDR background/services. Explain North Dakota DDR JD-VRTAC project background. Discussed North Dakota DDR JD-VRTAC project purposes and goals. Describe North Dakota DDR JD-VRTAC project a couple months and share the accomplishments, share challenges and lessons learned from the North Dakota DDR JD-VRTAC project, describe current status of this project discuss what was most helpful from the TA and learning collaborative throughout this process, and share next steps future direction and goals for the North Dakota DDR.

The overall JD-VRTAC goals are to improve the skills the state staff, other rehabilitation professionals and providers of VR services, were trained to provide job driven VR services and supports to people with disabilities, employers and customized training providers, there are four main topic areas for the project, business engagement, employer supports, labor market information or LMI, and customized training providers. The website for the project is www.ExploreVR.org.

The JD-VRTAC partners the Institute of community inclusion, ICI, at the University of Massachusetts/Boston, it's the primary recipient of this project and it works in partnership with jobs for the future, University of Arkansas CURRENTS University of Washington, a council of state demonstrators vocational rehabilitation, CSAVR, the United States business leadership network, USB LM, the Association of University centers on disabilities, AUCD, in collaboration with national Council of State agencies for the blind, NCSAB, and the technical assistance Center cooperative.

The JD-VRTAC packable assistance offered is each state in the learning collaborative is assigned to a technical assistance team. The activities vary based on project needs, as outlined in mutually agreed-upon see a plan, the TA can be delivered via regular contact via email, conference calls, and or site visits.

The JD-VRTAC learning collaborative, it's part of receiving intensive TA, states attend 2 to 3 in person learning collaborative meetings to provide project updates, collaborate across agencies and participate in topical discussions. Learning collaborative states participate in conference calls with their cohort to discuss job driven topics. 19 state VR agencies are part of the JD-VRTAC

 learning collaborative.

Brenda Vennes is the business

 service specialist for the North Dakota division of the dilatation, regional office. She has over 20 years of private and public sector marketing experience. As a DDR business service specialist Brenda creates a broad awareness and understanding of the DDR employer and employee services throughout the Minot region. Jeff Jenkins is the career assessment specialist for the North Dakota division of vocational rehabilitation, in the Fargo regional office, he has a Masters degree in community counseling and 12 years of experience assisting those who have special needs or disabilities. For the last five years he has provided career assessment administration and interpretation, resume writing, interview skills training and job search assistance to be our clients. At this point want to turn it over to Brenda and Jeff.

Thank you Terry. Jeff, are you on the line?

Yes.

 Thank you. I want to welcome you and thank you for joining us today, a special thanks to Katie for assisting us with all the preparations for the webinar, and for the JD-VRTAC team for all of their year-long assistance in getting us to this webinar.

As you can see there's a map of North Dakota and it shows the regional offices, in those offices we have 41 VR counselors, seven vision rehab specialists, three business services specialist, located in Minot Bismarck and Fargo, we have two career assessment specialist, and to rehab text.

A little history as you can see all the regional offices they have little pictures by all of them, in the western half of the state you will see Wilson has an oil derrick and that's because Willison sits atop the Bakken oil formation which is predicted to Bruce more oil than any other state in the US, the Dickinson office is in Queen city, the Minot office is the magic city, the Bismarck office is North Dakota State capital, and we have an office that houses our director and his staff and also the VR regional office, we have the Devils Lake office, the Jamestown office which is the Buffalo city and is home to the largest Buffalo statue in the world, it's 26 feet tall, 46 feet long and weighs 60 times. On the eastern side of the state we have the Grand Forks office, and our Fargo office which is the largest office, and is normally associated with the [ Indiscernible ] hence the wood chipper on the picture, and it's also home to the North Dakota state University bison 15 consecutive NCAA championships got --

 The services that NDDVR provides, to the individual clients, the main thing is we are helping people get and maintain employment, we do that through providing assessments to help clients understand what types of jobs are suitable for them they have done their interest skills and [ Indiscernible ] they will meet with their VR counselors to then start to do the employment goals, and then also to go through a bunch of different rehab counseling, then we also once the goal is to develop, we have placement activities, this is done with a team approach with the various positions in our agency, we also provide different things like resume writing, interview skills, job search activities, application assistance, those type of things within our placement activities, we can also help with accommodations as needed on the job or in school, we can help with different training programs, helps him financially, the vision specialist help elderly clients who have vision issues, this would have more independence and remain in their homes, so a wide variety of things that we can help our clients with, on an individual basis.

As far as the services that we provide on the business side, one of the things that we have is staff retention, we tried to stress the benefit to employers of keeping experienced personnel on the job and avoiding training cost of a new hire, we can provide accessibility and ADA consultation, we want to be known as the recruitment source so creating that awareness, wanting that employer to contact VR first to see if we currently have anyone in our labor pool that fits their needs and has the skill and qualifications to do so, financial incentives such as the work opportunity tax credit, because in business, the bottom line is the bottom line, and financial incentives are always attractive.

Disability consultation, providing training to an employer staff, addressing common employment misperceptions or concerns, the diversity training, another services on the job training and job coaching services, on the say consultation and recommendations, this is an opportunity for VR to develop the strategy for a positive disability related solution when working with businesses. >> The DDR and the JD-VRTAC background, since Elimite is engagement we are ready on the Dakotas radar, North Dakota VR apply to this project seeking technical assistance and training, and enhancing staff skill and use of labor market information, we are also seeking technical assistance and training in enhancing staff skill and business services to employers, building partnerships with employers and also with implementing effective strategies to increase the arts program performance over time. >>

 Purpose and goals of our project, one of our purposes was to improve business engagement, throughout the state. In order to do that we need to develop best practice guidelines, we need to establish the number of business contacts each VRC is required to make on an annual basis. And to train our VRC's on best practices, we want to focus more on a rapid response approach with employers, by creating awareness of VR and stressed the importance of retention, and how we can assist them with that.

Also we want to hold business meetings in each office, twice monthly with the business services, staff, and the counseling staff to update everyone on job openings, new business openings, business closures, how to assist with a difficult placement, and then offices that we did not have business service specialist, we basically got regional administrators to oversee that or sign someone in the office to take over that portion of the meeting. >>

 Implementation, had we go about the implementation of business engagement, senior business service specialist which is myself, was tasked to developing business engagement practices for North Dakota DDR, we develop best practices and that was done through many discussions with states having similar demographics as North Dakota, with regular conversations with DDR staff and JD-VRTAC staff, they provided suggestions after we had an initial outline drawn up and so that we could perfected to get to the final draft of that.

We also developed counsel implement contact goals, this was in discussions with our states director and our administrator staff, we provided guidance and technical assistance to staff on how to work with businesses using our videoconferencing, the in-person instruction, and during North Dakota annual training is done on a yearly basis. We have network with over 400 employers in human resource professionals while presenting DDR recruitment and retention services at the annual Governors workforce conference. >>

 The goals for the LMI portion of the project, we sat down and decided we want to try to get this information to our clients in a group format, so will be developing that group and to go along with that we need some materials, that we were to develop with different instructions, different lessons plans whatever the case might be for it but whatever we needed if we need to get that together, then after we got the basic framework of that, we were going to need to figure out how to train the counselors and other staff about the process of using L&I with our clients, so those were the main things we were looking at with his LMI portion.

In implementing it, the career assessment specialist and one rehab tech we were assigned to put this together, we started off by conducting a survey in the Fargo Bismarck and Minot offices, and we found that the majority of cases were using LMI to some degree we have 90, 95% it was how in depth were they being used and how in-depth information was being used with clients. So that's where we were coming up with this group to get this information out. We did develop some instructional guides, and a worksheet to go along with it, the instructional guides were for own at, the councils were primarily using [ Indiscernible ] and then we also used our job service website, which is the department of labor, to the online for more local areas like different by county and metro areas, to help narrow that down for clients, instead of looking at the whole state which ONET was doing, so that's where we started with those guides in the worksheets, the worksheets being more of a notetaking sheet for clients to record the information they found such as job duties, for the certain careers the education that's required for that career, wages that are typical, and then as we call the job outlook, how many job openings are there? How many are projected on annual basis? What is the growth rate of that field? Will there be plenty of jobs in the future? All that information to help clients get more of an understanding of the job market, and help you narrow down what would be their best fit. For a career.

As we developed all that we had the pilot, to work out the kinks and make sure we had it all up and going before we tried to have it go live across the state, so it's all been a couple of different things going on as we found, when doing this pilot, I found when I was doing a lot of the clients right after the assessment, which is another thing we added to this, during application phase, to help with timing, and get the ball rolling, for the clients to get them more engaged, with their case. I found that right after we would do assessments, the clients work many of them were interested in receiving that information right there and then, so on an individual basis I was giving them instructions on how to use the website, and to access the labor market information and I showed up and they could work on that and others wanted to do the group that I had scheduled gap for a certain time in the day, so they would come and get the same type of information within the group format, and the benefit of doing that was that they had more opportunity to work on it right there and then because they kind of had more the expectation, they would be there for roughly an hour or so, to complete the worksheet and bring it to their counselor and saying, I did some research in these careers, these are the ones I would like to do, these are the reasons why I want the job duties, I think I would enjoy doing that job, the wages are enough for me or not too much to go with SSI and different things like that. May be there were plenty of job openings that it made a lot of sense, maybe somebody in stock with something and there is no job opening, for that career, so what is a priority and that's what the counselor would be working on. Would you like to stay in this area can you move for this job? That kind of stuff.

After the pilot, throughout the summer of 2016, around October, we did a presentation over a videoconference to the whole state, on what this process was, and what we're doing with helping our clients understand where the labor market in our state is. >> We were very fortunate to be able to gather some data in regards to business contacts, we became part of the project in October 2015 and we started with two full-time [ Indiscernible ] in the fourth quarter while we were still trying to put together a project to figure out which direction we need to take all this, between the two full-time people we made 88 contacts, as we moved along, the project ended in October 2016, at that time we had three full-time BSEs, and 41 counselors, so for the fourth quarter of 2016 October November December, we had 432 employer contacts. Which was 344 additional contacts then when we started in 2015.

In that regard, I can say, though" is really looking forward to seeing the positive impact of business services, on our 2017 data collection.

The data that I had collected, was from the Fargo region, for how many clients were using LMI, in going through this, we had 32 in our region, the LMI instruction, yet only six clients actually completed the worksheet, to bring it to their counselor which is the main point of it all. So most of the clients would get the instruction within if they are not doing their homework, but we did find one client about a month after finishing the LMI worksheet, he worked through this pretty well and figure out what you wanted to do and he was able to find employment, and then there was one client who had brought the worksheet into his VR counselor, that had stated and it was stated on his behalf, he had no desire to be working on it, it was more this case manager and his mother that were pushing to get some of that stuff done, so I don't know how beneficial all this information was for him, so while six clients completed it, it's really tightly probably more closer to five that had benefited from doing some of this. The ratio not quite where we want and so as we go forward We will figure out other ways to get more usage out of this LMI instruction. >>

 Challenges. One of the challenges that we ran into was communication. Had we provide information to our staff on effective business engagement and utilization of LMI with our clients? What will work best? Will we benefit from in person training? Videoconferencing? Phone calls? All of the above? That was something that we needed to figure out.

How many regions should be provided this information at one time to best incorporate this project statewide?

How do we keep a consistent message when we might be doing it at different times?

Another challenge for us was had we impress upon our staff and how do we make them understand that business services are part of WIOA and it's not going to go away. It's going to remain important aspect of the work that we do within our agency.

Another challenge was how can we be sure to present both sides of business engagement LMI as one project rather than two separate projects. That one aspect of the project complements the other.

Another challenge that we had was establishing business engagement guidelines that are relatable in both rural and urban North Dakota regions. We needed to create an understanding and a clear and straightforward language, as to what his business engagement, what are the objectives, had we achieve them? And that business engagement is basically value added services for the employers. So therefore, it's making VR more valuable to the employer.

What did we learn? Working on this project and getting implemented in our state, as Brenda was talking about, trying to figure out how to get the communication across and how to get the training across the whole state, instead of just the pile regions for the LMI and how we will get it all out to all the is engagements -- to all the business engagements, the different types of avenues we have to take, one of the things that may have been helpful on our side, involving more of our staff for informing as we went along informing everybody throughout the state as to what we are doing, we made transition may be a little easier, instead of kind of getting to the end of it and being where we are right now going say how can we get out there so people know what it is we are doing, that could have been helpful, at the beginning, because I have been helpful if we had a little more clear goals, most of us working on this project were not quite sure what exactly we will do, and what we wanted to end up doing, so maybe we could have put some more effort into doing and figuring out exactly what we want to accomplish with this, and then with that dovetails here even though we may have had clear goals and know what we want to do and we still would've had to been flexible because as we go along with it, something was likely to change, so one thing that we want to impress upon anybody else who was working with these type of projects, in implementing different business engagement strategies or working with LMI, being flexible is helpful to finishing a project such as this.

Those are the main things we seem to learn from this project. >>

 Future goals. A little bit of background, on North Dakota, in fiscal year 2016, we had 537 successful closures. That's in a state that has approximately 750,000 people in the 3% unemployment rate. The average weekly earnings of our individuals before we had was $156 a week. After we -- $437 a week. So as far as the future goals, we want to increase the amount of successful closures statewide. We also want to increase the number of businesses contacting VR for their hiring or employee retention needs. When employers start to contact you on an increasing basis, it's an indicator that business services is working. That's also an indication that businesses have placed their trust in you, as the representative of vocational rehabilitation. And when they trust you, they will buy into the our services. Another one of the goals was to decrease the amount of time it takes to develop an individualized plan of employment. Or in IPE. Also want to decrease the number of closures before the IP is established.

The last two bullet points, it would seem to fit more with the LMI instruction, as if instant that career exploration phase of what we do, during application, getting them engaged, at the beginning, where we do have those 60 days to find somebody eligible, and most of the time it doesn't take that long but it certainly can, and it's easy to probably lose clients during that time they drop off, trying to figure things out and try to keep phone calls with them and that kind of stuff but maybe they the communication is not working out so well for them, and we end up closing them because we don't have contact so doing the LMI portion like we are now we are hoping to decrease those type of closures before the plane is established, we can have the more engaged so they are getting somewhere right when they're coming in, or soon after they with orientation.

And the idea of having everybody go through during the application phase, getting assessments done, understanding what the careers are that are out there, if they already do not have a plan, or don't have an idea, and then going to the LMI to see what's going to be doable for a career and help to figure out what they want to do, as they get that and there found eligible and they meet with their counselor they will have a little clearer idea of what direction they are going, so the plant can be established much sooner and in some cases, perhaps even right at that appointment, the first one after eligibility so we don't have to worry about the 90 days out also those would be some ideal goals with that, but hopefully we can get going on our LMI piece of this and help decrease the amount of time and decrease the number of closures.

Some of the next steps as we go with this project, is not so much that we do it for one year and then all of a sudden it is finished, we will continue to work with this as we implement this across the state, we will look at doing the continue training on business engagement strategies in the LMI as we talk about we try to figure out what is the best ways to do so, we are looking at figuring out ways we can get our clients using the LMI, and getting all the instruction and going on and taking it home and not really getting any of it done and bringing it to their counselor and the counselor may ask, how did the worksheet go and I don't know what you're talking about. So we're trying to figure out ways, we have a couple of here, in Fargo that we are trying to work on having even if they did receive all the information about accessing LMI online and showing them websites, and getting them in the materials, individually, still have them come in for the group as well, so they can actually work on the worksheet during the timeframe, here at our office, then we can make a copy of whatever they may have gotten during that time so the counselor can have at least some idea of what they have been working on. And then, other things we will be collecting more data that was a big part of this, collecting data, so we will go on trying to figure out any correlations between our business engagement, the contacts we have made, the LMI, the client's getting that and developing their plan sooner, and getting more successful closures, how this correlates that's definitely something that we will be looking into, in the future as we can see how we are doing. Most of us it's been involved with this are hopeful that it can be of help to our clients.

We will see, we will go from there. That's what we are looking at on the horizon I think.

 Any questions?

Let me help with this, several people are asking some questions so I'm going to start at the top, the ones I have, we will take it from there. The first question, can any of the instructional guides and worksheets be shared? That you have developed?

Are you willing to share your instructional guides and worksheets?

Yes absolutely. We can get that put up on to the ExploreVR site or somehow but yes we are willing to share our instructional guides and the worksheets that we have. That is not a problem.

I will work with you on that I think that's the way to do is to put on the website. We will figure that out and then a way to advertise the fact that it is there.

What are the strategies you use to get the businesses to call you?

It starts with networking, basically going in and introducing yourself and letting them know what services you have, and the do have individuals that are ready to go to work, you can make it short and sweet and then ask if you can maybe set up an appointment, and once you created that relationship like I talked about before once they get trusting in you, and trust the services once you have made a successful placement, and they see how easy it is to work with you. A lot of times they don't want to go through a job service agency they don't want to go through the paper, so they will contact our offices first, a lot of times they will send us a job description and say is your agency currently having anybody with these skills and qualifications. If so, please contact us.

It starts with the networking piece and getting people similar with what you do, and what you can do for their business.

What is your sense of LMI usage by the vocational rehabilitation counselor's do they use it more to identify potential employers, or use it more as a counseling tool or maybe both?

I think it was probably a little bit of both, I don't have the survey right in front of me right now, with the information, that we had gathered, we had a few questions about that. I think a lot of it was either just to see how many employers may be in the area for certain career, and then a little bit looking at wages, figure that out for our clients, it was a little bit like the education that might be needed, there was probably primarily for somewhat of a counseling tool, but then there could be some instances where it was used to really identify certain employers, or just the availability of jobs in the area as well. I can see both but maybe more towards counseling. >> Did many of the customers of the staff help local clients relocate based on LMI for occupations which may have more openings in other parts of the state?

Can you read that again?

Did many of the customers of the staff help mobile clients relocate based on LMI for occupations which they have may have which may have more openings in other parts of the state. >> I guess what I have encountered so far is that most of the clients the priority is more to stay in the region they are in or stay in the cities like here in Fargo, they were really looking at moving even for a job, so they found that more really what was happening here in understanding what career they are interested in that is actually here and how the interest might go along with other careers that are available in this area, as opposed to across the state. So I guess, that was more on my experience, the priority was staying where they are, as opposed to finding a job and being able to relocate so if that were the case I guess we will find out when that arises. How that all works out for us.

Are you able to share your business engagement information you presented at the governor's workforce conference?

I think right now the business engagement guidelines and such are on ExploreVR, and if somebody would like the PowerPoint that we used I'm assuming that we can put that out there also. And if not, my email address on both the front and back page. Feel free to email me and I can send you whatever you need.

We have that contact information in this webinar as well.

If it's not on the website, Brenda, we will see what we can do to post it.

Okay, thanks.

That's a good thing to with question about getting the LMI worksheets and instructional guides and everything if something was wanting it soon, before we get on the website, we can always send me an email and I can get that out to you.

Okay. I represent the District of Columbia VR, what is the business contact the goal?

What is the best dose -- what is the business contact?

The number of contacts. >> For the larger regions, it was determined based upon the size of the regions, for a larger region, we did 40 contacts per counselor, per year. With five presentations. In our smaller regions, there were 20 contacts per year, and I believe it was the same amount of presentations. Would prefer that most of those be face to face, but based on the size of our regions and the rural list of some of our areas that's is not even feasible. So there will have to be phone calls made and contacts made in that regard and then when they get out in the region, make that face to face connection.

Do you work with were state workforce agency to obtain your LMI data or only ONET

I guess we kind of pulled it from ONET and from job service, and actually now, as the Cree index plus, came up and running, we are utilizing that within our LMI process, primarily now, and working with three index plus as opposed to ONET and job service being that it seems to me for sure at the career index plus is a website that they match or a mixing of both those so you get a two in one type of thing along with having indeed part of it as well so it's almost like a three in one website so we have been using that more so within this process that our job service in ONET but we did not do anything too much with coordinating to get LMI we just used the websites as they were.

Those were the questions I just want to bring your attention to the last slide, which has the contact information. For both Brenda and Jeff. Here is the email address and phone numbers. And my contact information as well. I really appreciate the presentation that Brenda and Jeff gave, and for the excellent participation of the group for the webinar. Any other final instructions?

Make sure to complete the evaluation in order to let us know how the webinar went for you and also to get credit if you are CRC and you want credit, complete the evaluation at the end. Thank you Brent and Jeff and Terry for the excellent presentation, and also thank you to the rest of the North Dakota team from the JD-VRTAC so here is the evaluation screen now, and the link to the evaluation is on the screen so please make sure to complete this and thank you for attending.

Thank you everyone. >> [ Event concluded ]