EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT QUICK GUIDE

VR PARTNERSHIPS WITH WORKFORCE PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Businesses have their own language. It is important that we listen to and learn the terms they use, become familiar with them, and begin to speak the language of business. Some of this language is for hiring and some is industry specific. Below is a list of terms that will help get you started in your learning about the language of business. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list.

ORGANIZATION: WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARDS (WIBS)
also called Workforce Development Boards or Councils

ROLE

Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) are regional or state-wide entities that direct federal, state, and local funding to workforce programs included in the Workforce Innovations and Opportunity Act (WIOA). WIBs create strong local partnerships between business and the community that create systemic responses to each community's economic development and workforce needs. The goal of these partnerships is to enhance the skill sets and earning potential of citizens, including those who are unemployed or who have special needs, and provide employers with skilled workers. WIBs also select the operators of the American Job Centers (AJCs, formerly known as One-Stop Career Centers) and the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs' service providers.

WORKFORCE INTEREST

Representation on WIBs includes employers from local business communities and workforce agency professional staff, as well as partners from education and community-based organizations. This ensures that current skill needs of local employers are communicated to relevant training programs. Workforce development and training projects, including initiatives on behalf of people with disabilities, can vary across WIBs.

Typical projects include the oversight of American Job Centers (One-Stop Career Centers), training resources for dislocated workers, and other economic development projects specific to state or local workforce needs.

POTENTIAL VR PARTNERSHIP ADVANTAGES

Under WIOA, state VR agencies are mandatory partners on state and local workforce boards. Local boards have the potential to play a critical advisory role to job centers regarding services to people with disabilities.

KEY TACTICS FOR ENGAGEMENT

- Familiarize yourself with your local WIB and your state's WIOA strategic plan
- Look for opportunities to partner in creating regional and local sector initiatives

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ORGANIZATION: AMERICAN JOB CENTERS (AJCS)

ROLE

The AJCs (also known as One-Stop Career Centers or Job Service Agencies) are designed to be a one-stop system located in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. AJCs offer a multitude of resources for businesses and job seekers under one roof.

WORKFORCE INTEREST

AJCs provide access to an integrated array of labor exchange services so that workers, job seekers, and employers can find the services they need. AJCs are intended to meet the needs of a diverse range of individuals, including people with disabilities.

For job seekers, services include job search, application, and interviewing assistance for anyone, and re-employment services for unemployment insurance claimants. Services are delivered in three modes: self-service, facilitated self-help services and staff assisted service delivery. Education, training, and support services may also be available to eligible youth and adults.

For employers, in addition to referral of job seekers to available job openings, AJC staff can help match job seeker experience with job requirements and skills, assist employers with special recruitment needs, arrange job fairs, and help employers by providing rapid response services to laid off workers. AJCs employ business services staff to support employers with hiring needs, as well as HR-related questions and resources.

POTENTIAL VR PARTNERSHIP ADVANTAGES

- Coordination with AJC business specialists in activities such as business training, employer consultation, job fairs, etc.
- Opportunity to assist AJC in making resources and services accessible to job seekers with disabilities.
- Increased awareness and use of Partnership Plus under the Ticket to Work program.
- Access to state and local labor market information.

KEY TACTICS FOR ENGAGEMENT

Where possible, co-location allows both formal and informal sharing of information and resources.

Cost-sharing is by VR required by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, and shows VR's commitment to collaboration.

Invest time to develop relationships and initiative on the local level. Providing coordinated services to employers reduces employer confusion and investment of time/energy.

ORGANIZATION: COMMUNITY COLLEGES

ROLE

Most community colleges, tribal colleges, and other technical education institutions are key partners in workforce training. These education providers often work with employers and other economic development partners to determine the skills and training required to enter or move ahead in career pathways. They may provide certificates, credentials, and/or degrees, depending on the nature of the training.

- These two-year schools, sometimes called junior colleges or vo-tech, provide affordable postsecondary education as a pathway to a certificate or four-year degree
- They serve all segments of society through an open admissions policy for short-term training as well as life-long learning.
- Respond to local workforce development needs through certification and one and two-year degree opportunities.

» May be a “maker space” site, providing specific career focused credentials, badges, or opportunities for hands-on practice.

WORKFORCE INTEREST

» A significant percentage of community college students are persons with disabilities (12% according to a 2014 report).
» Enrolling people with disabilities provides colleges with a diverse talent pool, enhancing their efforts to meet the needs of local businesses.
» Diversity in the student body can also help colleges’ overall recruiting efforts.
» Students with disabilities may have access to tuition funding programs and student disability services.
» Partnership between workforce agencies and community colleges may enhance workforce training with and for employers.

POTENTIAL VR PARTNERSHIP ADVANTAGES

» Colleges and VR agencies can initiate and share business connections and workforce development initiatives to aid business hiring needs and job placements for VR participants.
» Community college certificates, credentials, or degree programs can enhance the employability of VR participants. Some programs are directly related to needs in the local labor market.

KEY TACTICS FOR ENGAGEMENT

» State VR agencies can help colleges with assessments, accommodations, and other costs that can be associated with enrolling individuals with disabilities.
» Job Fairs and other approaches to connecting with the business community may be co-sponsored to support the objectives of both entities.
» VR can provide resources to college disability services staff and help increase the knowledge and skills of faculty and staff who work with persons with disabilities.
» VR can collaborate on workforce development initiatives

ORGANIZATION: COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS (CRPS)

ROLE

A Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) is a non-profit or for-profit organization which contracts with the VR agency to provide employment and placement services for people with disabilities. Many CRPs are well connected in the business community and have long-standing relationships with local employers.

WORKFORCE INTEREST

CRPs generally focus on assisting people with disabilities in obtaining and maintaining employment, though some also serve individuals with other employment barriers.

POTENTIAL VR PARTNERSHIP ADVANTAGES

» Allows VR agencies to build on resources that are supported by other funding sources like Medicaid waiver dollars.
» Can minimize VR’s financial risk, especially when using milestone and outcome payment systems.
» The VR/CRP partnership can facilitate rich relationships with the local business community.

KEY TACTICS FOR ENGAGEMENT

- Coordination of business engagement activities and shared leads.
- Coordinated communication with employers to reduce confusion and duplication of information/efforts
- Payment structures that encourage desired outcomes (e.g., bonuses for full-time work, benefits, quick placement).
- Understanding of/respect for the CRP's need to balance fulfilling its mission and remaining financially solvent.

ORGANIZATION: INDUSTRY AND TRADE ASSOCIATIONS

ROLE

Industry Sector and Trade Associations are membership organizations that focus on promoting and developing commercial and industrial opportunities, education, training, etc. in a specific industry.

Examples of trade associates can be found at the American National Standards Institute website

WORKFORCE INTEREST

- Recruiting and maintaining a stable workforce
- Partnerships that can help members comply with all kinds of regulations.
- Commitment to social responsibility and interest in a diverse workforce.

POTENTIAL VR PARTNERSHIP ADVANTAGES

- VR can gain understanding of workforce needs within specific sectors to guide training resources for job seekers with disabilities
- VR can offer assistance in developing a diverse workforce through consultation and training.

KEY TACTICS FOR ENGAGEMENT

- Assess the jobs available in an industry or geographic area by using both traditional labor market information (LMI) and real-time LMI, if available.
- Identify trade associations that represent the employers in a local service area.
- Research the priorities and current initiatives of trade associations and identify potential areas for partnership that would benefit the association and its members.
- Coordinate VR employer services with other workforce partners to support industry hiring and training needs
- Support and facilitate community hiring events in collaboration with the trade association and other workforce partners.

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The Program on Innovative Rehabilitation Training on Employer Engagement is a project of ExploreVR at the Institute for Community Inclusion, UMass Boston. ExploreVR offers VR agencies easy and convenient access to a range of VR research, related data, training and tools for planning, evaluation, and decision-making. Funding for this project is provided by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Grant #H263C190012.