

COLLABORATIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF WIOA

Five state agency practitioners and experts in the field presented on our first panel about **Collaborative Implementation of WIOA**. This panel featured their leadership and progress in this area. This panel presentation was followed by small and large group discussions, and report-outs about emerging practice and recommendations to the field.

Emerging Practices

- » **Address physical and programmatic access** across partnerships. A good foundation for success in this area includes an expectation for shared:
 - » Responsibility/costs in addressing programmatic access in the American Job Center (AJC), and
 - » Staff training with your partner agencies.
- » **Develop an education strategy with partner staff.** Many of the Forum attendees discussed using the [training videos like those developed by the Iowa Department for the Blind](#).
- » **Take advantage of AJC co-location.** This was noted in discussion as a benefit to agencies in supporting the use of the career services and career pathways by job seekers that are blind and visually impaired.
- » **Participate on workforce boards, and develop disability access committees.** Michigan and Oregon addressed the importance of participation on state and local boards, and Iowa shared their example of “Access Committees” that respond to local boards. These are collaborative committees that focus on disability and employment. Committee meetings provide an opportunity for VR leadership to support their partners in strategic planning to develop inclusive workforce systems.
- » **Define a data-sharing approach** between core partners and other required partner agencies, like the development of [the Hub in Mississippi](#) and in other states as noted in [some best practices, processes and tools regarding common intake](#).
- » **Use collaborative business engagement strategies.** Tap into the expertise of the Blind and Visually Impaired (BVI) agency in partnership with workforce to support businesses. Not only does this expand the access for businesses to qualified candidates, it also increases the range of expertise available through the workforce system to support businesses in meeting their objectives.
- » **Share case management approaches** (strategies) in practice, like Virginia’s Integrated Resource Team discussed in this [Practice Description](#).
- » **Train VR counselors** to engage and serve businesses, which includes reviewing internal structure that makes business service and engagement a part of the agency operation. Importance is placed on guidance and support to agency staff, which creates both the expectation and competency to meet business as a customer.

In June 2018, professionals from 29 American vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies convened in San Antonio, Texas to discuss employment outcomes for individuals who are blind and visually impaired. The purpose of this forum was two-fold: to learn from each other’s experiences implementing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and to enhance VR’s success increasing employment outcomes for people who are blind and visually impaired in light of WIOA’s vision.

In addition, these VR representatives came together to identify the emerging practices and their recommendations to the field in the following categories:

- 1) Collaborative Implementation of WIOA
- 2) Youth-Focused Initiatives
- 3) Access to Training/Career Pathways
- 4) Use of Labor Market Information
- 5) Collaborative Business Engagement

Recommendations for the Field

- » **Be assertive and get a place at the table** with state-level WIOA implementation and on state and local boards.
- » **Promote the unique expertise of the BVI agency** in addressing accessibility of AJC career services and system services to businesses.
- » **Increase community awareness** of barriers to employment and ways to remove them.
- » Increase emphasis on and practice **expedited service engagement** and flexibility in adjusting objectives, and plan as needed for each client.
- » Focus on alignment, communication, and education between agencies; work toward **integration with partners**.
- » Move forward with partners, knowing that WIOA is here. We have to **adapt to realize the benefits** of its vision.

Panelists

KERI OSTERHAUS

Iowa Department for the Blind: integrated resource team and training videos for One-Stop Career Center partners

BILL ROBINSON

Michigan Commission for the Blind: value of role on workforce investment boards

MEREDITH HARDIN

Washington Department of Services for the Blind: One-Stop Career Centers and other WIOA partners

DOROTHY YOUNG

Mississippi Office for the Blind

LAVONDA HART

Mississippi VR: data system sharing with general agency

Funder information

The Job-Driven Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center (JD-VRTAC) is a national center housed at the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston. The center and its materials are funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration within the US Department of Education under grant #H264A140002.

The Workforce Innovations Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC) is a national center housed at the Interwork Institute at San Diego State University. The center and its materials are funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) within the US Department of Education under grant #H264G1500005.

The Mississippi State University NRTC on Blindness & Low Vision primarily funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR). Research funding has also been provided by the Rehabilitation Services Administration, the Institute of Education Sciences, the Office of Special Education Programs, and the National Institutes of Health.

Author information

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**Institute for
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Inclusion**

These briefs are part of the ExploreVR project at the Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston. ExploreVR offers vocational rehabilitation agencies easy and convenient access to a range of VR research, related data, and tools for planning, evaluation, and decision-making.

[Visit ExploreVR](http://www.ExploreVR.org) for additional resources from these presenters and others at the forum.

www.ExploreVR.org