

# RTAC Expert Summit

## Session 1: RTAC on VR Program Management Key Findings

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**Where did we start?**

- **Partnership between NIDILRR (formerly NIDRR) and RSA to identify, develop, test a VR Program Management Model that included at minimum quality assurance, human resources and strategic planning practices.**
- **Motivations were both research and policy/practice**

**We are very grateful to Dr. Leslie Caplan (NIDILRR) and Mr. Charles Sadler (RSA) who were our federal project officers!**

**And to our partners:**

**Dr. Susan Stoddard at InfoUse and Mr. Michael Tashjian!**

# **Out of the Gate Research Agenda!**

- **Literature Review: What's out there? Is there an answer already? Maybe, Maybe not.**
- **Data Analysis: Who are the best performers and maybe they are the best managed. Maybe, maybe not.**
- **Key Stakeholders: What do they think and who do they nominate as best VR managers?**
- **Case Studies: Let's go ask 8 or so VR agencies nominated as well-managed, leading agencies and find out what they do.**

**Some of the problems with  
that very well-intentioned  
research approach.....**

- **There is not much in the way of outcome evidence for management practices in the literature. QA, HR, and Strategic Planning practices cannot be isolated from the context in which they operate systemically.**
- **Performance on indicators may or may not mean well-managed. State economy and poverty rates. Choice of populations to target for outreach.**



- **Peer Nominations: With exceptions for those directors active nationally, few VR directors have a clear picture of what happens outside of their state.**
- **What leads to what: People in organizations rarely will tell you that a specific management process did or did not work. Mostly because context matters.**

**Hence, Learning  
Collaboratives!**

# Why?

- **Can we observe people actively managing a QA, HR, Strategic Planning initiative? What happens and what did they balance/do?**
- **Will a Learning Collaborative method work as a University-State System partnership to study, develop, and disseminate a VR originated VR Program Management Model?**
- **What do VR agencies get out of being “research subjects?”**

**We are declaring success on  
several fronts!**

# Front 1: Learning Collaboratives

- **Learning Collaboratives proved popular!**
- **28 State VR agencies and one American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation project (Chickasaw Nation).**
- **No one dropped out across all three cohort years!**
- **A large percentage of the participants joined another Learning Collaborative beyond the RTAC project.**
- **Documented increasing peer to peer exchange of innovations, solutions, and advice across state lines!**

# **Front 2: VR Program Management Model Development**

- **We learned a great deal about elements of a VR Program Management Model, which I will share momentarily.**
- **There is no one way to manage or lead. But there are good ways to proceed.**
- **The sessions today and tomorrow demonstrate how our Learning Collaborative partners recommend tackling some new management challenges while using the RTAC VR Program Management Framework.**

# Front 3: Innovation in Leadership

- **We found in nearly all of the 29 Learning Collaborative state VR agencies and AIVR Projects that leadership teams were trying new ways of leading:**
  - **Emphasis on communication and data**
  - **Decentralizing decision making**
  - **Appreciative inquiry trials**
  - **Centralizing business processes for efficiency**
  - **Organization of field services and team approaches**
  - **Specific offices/units as laboratories for new service modes**
  - **Business intelligence strategies**

**Model Learnings...Just one  
example today.**



# **The evolution of the QA component**

# **We started with....**

- **What are the important QA practices (case file review, use of data) and how do you do those well.**
- **Then noticed that QA practices are not enough it is how you integrate that with data and metrics and what is considered data. (Grievances, customer satisfaction, financial data).**
- **Then... observed that agencies seemed to be at different “levels”**
- **So, now, we are looking at:**

# Data Analytics

- **How do you take all the “intelligence” coming into your organization and to you, and then use it skillfully to navigate?**

# Forms of intelligence

- **Case management system**
- **Financial**
- **Customer Satisfaction**
- **External data sources (LMI, Census, SSA)**
- **Performance indicators**
- **Audits**
- **Grievances and Complaints**
- **Compliments and thank you's**
- **What your staff tell you**
- **What your customers tell you**
- **What employers tell you**
- **Your observations**

# **Levels of use of that intelligence**

- **Compliance monitoring**
- **Quality Assurance**
- **Innovation and Performance Improvement**
- **Strategic Intelligence**

**The first two are necessary, the second two create opportunities for progress.**

# Compliance monitoring

- **Absolutely necessary activity and to do this well, you need to use your data to spot failures, sentinel events, egregious situations, bad stuff!**
- **VR agencies are under a lot of pressure to do this with financial data as well as clinical/outcome/case data.**
- **Limited sophistication across most agencies in incorporating financial data into compliance monitoring processes.**

# Quality Assurance

- **Focus is on identifying processes, fidelity to the process (often at front line levels) but may have a system solution. The question tends to be: Are we doing what we know to do well to continue to meet our indicators. Heavy reliance upon case file review. Tends to hold processes constant and looks for consistency of performance.**
- **A large percentage of agencies are at this level. VR agencies in a highly political context may be risk averse and opt for consistency.**
- **Not necessarily a bad approach for some practices (like EBPs), but may be limited for innovation.**

# **Innovation and Performance Improvement**

- **Agencies are less beholding to a particular process and more focused on outcome, new ways of doing things (“how can we be the agency of 2020?”). Appear to be very customer focused (“People need jobs today and cannot wait for X,Y,Z”). Use data to pilot, adopt, and integrate new things. Quick to eliminate things that don’t work or add value.**
- **At risk for “chasing shiny things” or from losing site of compliance and QA as necessary. But, highly likely to discover new ways of doing business.**



# Strategic Intelligence

- **Heavy use of data from external sources. Value transparency and universal access in which all employees are expected to understand how they and each subunit contributes to the success of the organization as a whole. Agencies tend to report using “business intelligence” strategies, use of data-driven problem solving for complex problems at front line levels, may challenge the very goal of performance indicators (should we take a ding on wage indicators so we can serve more impoverished youth?).**
- **A few agencies are moving toward this or entertaining this. Increasing access to data may be encouraging such efforts. Increasing societal emphasis on transparency.**

# **Just one component of many**

- **Human Resources is also about Workforce, Strategic Human Resources Management, Highly Valued Workforce**
- **Strategic Planning is also about Mission, Vision, Civil Rights focus of the Work.**
- **Leadership**
- **Communication**
- **Partnerships**
- **Customers**

# The Summit Goals

- **The Next Sessions will give case examples from our Learning Collaborative Partners on how to think through the WIOA related challenges ahead.**
- **Listen for the importance of a comprehensive approach to creation or adoption of practices and how you might transport suggestions into your agency.**
- **Listen for the increasing emphasis on data, the opportunities to learn from peers, and the need for innovation.**

# **Cohort 1!**

- **Alabama Department of Vocational Rehabilitation**
- **Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**
- **Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation Services**
- **Maine Bureau of Rehabilitation Services**
- **Michigan Rehabilitation Services**
- **New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired**
- **Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services**
- **Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services**

# Cohort 2

- **California Department of Rehabilitation**
- **Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**
- **Connecticut Department of Rehabilitation Services (General and Blind Agency participating)**
- **Delaware Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**
- **Kentucky Office for the Blind**
- **Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation**
- **Missouri Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**
- **Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation**
- **New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services**
- **North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

# Cohort 3

- **Chickasaw Nation American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation**
- **Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired**
- **Louisiana Workforce Commission**
- **Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services**
- **Massachusetts Commission for the Blind**
- **New York Adult Career and Continuing Education Services: Vocational Rehabilitation**
- **Oregon Commission for the Blind**
- **Utah State Office of Rehabilitation**
- **Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired**
- **Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**
- **Washington State Department of Services for the Blind**

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