

The Vocational Rehabilitation Return on Investment Project

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Knowledge Translation for Employment Research



The Vocational Rehabilitation Return on Investment Project

This project is funded by the Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects (DRRP) Grant No. 90DP0070 from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR).

Presentation Objectives

- Provide a brief overview of the Vocational Rehabilitation Return on Investment (VR ROI) Project.
- Describe the project's approach to ongoing engagement of state VR agencies and other stakeholders.
- Provide examples of successful knowledge translation (KT) activities resulting from ongoing stakeholder engagement.

Today's Speakers

- **Mr. Rick Sizemore (moderator)**
Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) Foundation,
Executive Producer, VR Workforce Studio Podcast
- **Dr. Robert M. Schmidt**
VR ROI Project Principal Investigator, University of Richmond
- **Dr. Kirsten Rowe**
Project Coordinator, Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative
Services
- **Dr. Joe Ashley**
Co-Principal Investigator, Ashley Consulting LLC
- **Dr. Robert Froehlich**
Project Manager, The George Washington University

Other Project Staff and Consultants

- **Dr. Maureen McGuire-Kuletz**
Project Liaison, The George Washington University
- **Dr. Christopher Clapp**
Consultant, University of Chicago
- **Dr. John Pepper**
Consultant, University of Virginia
- **Dr. Steven Stern**
Consultant, Stonybrook University

Project Overview

- DRRP project refines the ROI model developed under a prior NIDILRR grant with a diverse set of VR agencies and more recent cohorts of VR program applicants.
- Partners with nine agencies from seven states: Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Texas, and Virginia.
- Uses VR applicant cohorts from 2000, 2007, 2012 (and multiyear cohorts from 2007 to 2012 for low-incidence disabling conditions, such as blindness and autism spectrum disorders).
- Uses readily available administrative data to estimate the ROI of services provided by state VR agencies.

Project Overview

- Generates estimates of the impact of specific types of VR services on VR applicants' long-term (2–3 years before through 5-plus years after application to VR) employment and earnings for individuals with specific types of disabling conditions.
- Estimates annual rates of return for individuals with specific disabling conditions (e.g., mental illness, cognitive impairments, physical disabilities) as well as overall agency ROI.
- For more information, visit the project website: www.vrroi.org

Ongoing Engagement of VR Agencies

- Develop, implement, and refine the project and its intended products.
- Ensure validity of results (i.e., make sure they pass the “smell test”).
- Interpret results and apply them appropriately.
- Ensure that the methodologically rigorous approach was conceptually valid and reflected how VR services are actually provided.

*NOTE: This project focuses on understanding the impacts of VR’s “business as usual,” rather than the impacts of VR **plus** other services/treatments.*

Engagement of VR as an Equal Partner

- Develop multiple grant applications that led to the grant awards.
- Include VR agency staff as co-principal investigator.
- Use grant funds to help support VR agency costs for project participation.
- Identify and implement effective KT strategies.

Stakeholder Engagement “Early and Often”

- Multiple focus groups held in conjunction with stakeholder meetings (Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation-CSAVR, National Rehabilitation Association-NRA) to get input on KT activities.
- Project advisory group of senior VR agency staff and other stakeholders provide ongoing input into the refinement of the ROI model, review and discuss preliminary results, and identify what VR staff need to make use of ROI results.
- Ad hoc groups of VR staff in several states help researchers understand variations among states in how VR services are delivered and how to turn the research results into information for VR agency staff use.

Stakeholder Engagement in KT

- Build KT into the project from the beginning by including VR training experts as major project partner.
- Allocate significant grant resources for stakeholder involvement in developing and implementing KT.
- Create learning community and other feedback channels to assist VR staff in using the ROI information.
- Determine how ROI results can—and should not —be used for VR program decision making.

“Elevator Speech”

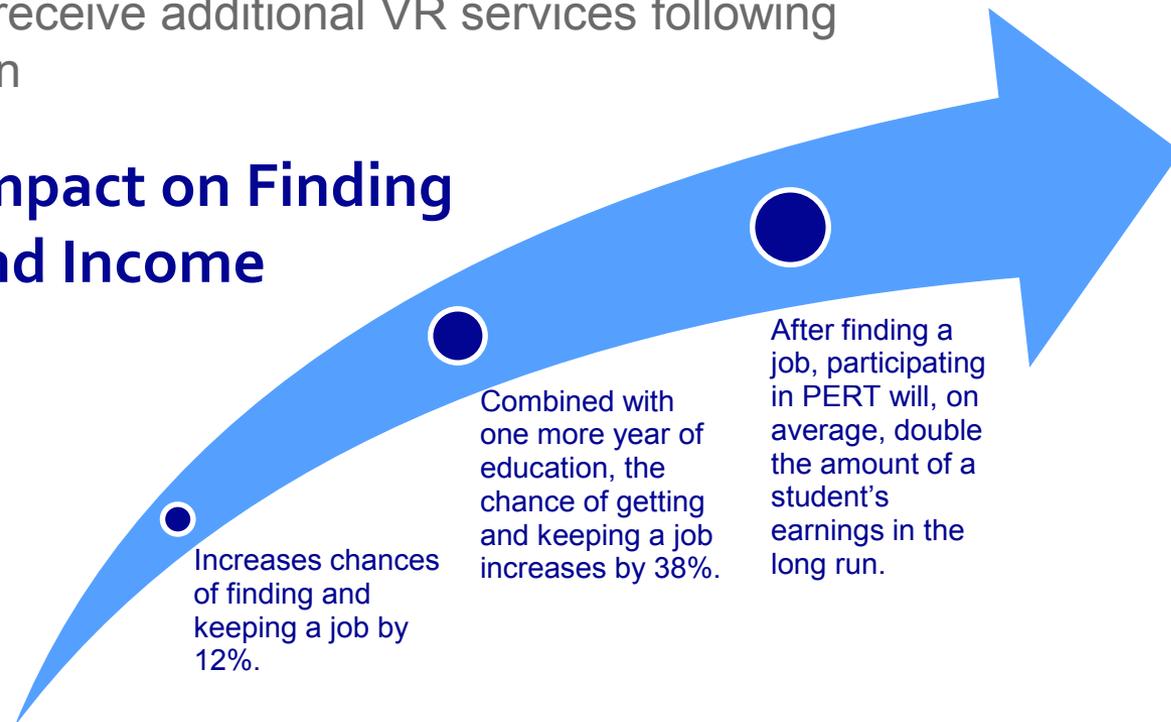
- For those VR applicants in 2000 who received VR services, 80% enjoyed earnings gains that exceeded the cost of their VR.
- For every \$1,000 spent by the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, the average (median) consumer earned \$7,100 more in 10 years than would have been possible without VR services.
- The top 10% earned \$45,100 (or more) in the same period.

ROI of a Collaborative Transition Program

Postsecondary Education/Rehabilitation Transition (PERT) Program

- Comprehensive career and independent living skills assessments at WWRC for high school students with disabilities selected by local school divisions
- Community-based team implementation of assessment findings
- Participants may receive additional VR services following PERT participation

PERT Impact on Finding a Job and Income



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