

Vocational Rehabilitation: How Practitioners, Researchers and Policy Makers can work together

Susan M. Foley, PhD

Senior Research Fellow

**Institute for Community Inclusion,
University of Massachusetts Boston**



The Back of the Rug Problem

Why is it important to know what the customer sees?

- **Creating inducements or incentives to change behavior means the policy maker needs to understand the citizen's perspective.**
- **Incentives are just another choice and not necessarily convincing, given everything else.**



Some things are lining up

- **Quicken the pace**
- **Early movement to real work settings**
- **Rise of dual customer efforts (business and jobseeker)**
- **Multi-system coordinated approaches**



Some hurdles

- Measures that cross systems and have a customer focus (ex. how long did it take to get a job?)
- Who pays for what, when, and how does it relate to the “entire rug” and household?

Speeding things up.

- **Researchers finding pace of services is important**
- **Customers state pace too slow**
- **WIOA shortening time between eligibility and written plan**
- **Wide range of pacing standards across VR agencies.**



PACING

- **R: Study pacing and outcomes.**
- **P/PM: Prioritize a sense of urgency. Careful of inadvertent policies/practices that increase time.**
 - **Assessment requirements**
 - **Reliance upon medical records versus counselor judgment.**
 - **“Job readiness” approaches**



Real work settings rapidly

- **Multiple research studies finding rapid movement to real work settings**
 - **IPS studies**
 - **ICI's efforts with VT Progressive Employment model**
 - **VCU's work with youth in school**



What to do

- **R: More EBP practices needed BUT not just specialty disability. Inclusion of PWD in mainstream research studies.**
- **P: Reduce or eliminate “job readiness” requirements.**
- **PM: Reduce financial incentives for assessments.**



Dual Customer Strategies

- **Significant investment by VR agencies in Business Relations units, staff, practices, and databases.**
- **Emerging practices in dual customer strategies balancing business and jobseeker needs.**



Examples

- **Vermont Progressive Employment Model**
- **The NET's Talent Acquisition Portal**
- **Nebraska Middle Skills Certificate Programs**
- **Alabama's Labor Market Information Dashboard (in development).**



Coming soon..

- **Demand Side RRTC funded by NIDILRR is collecting and examining best practices in dual customer strategies.**
- **Will be posted at ExploreVR.org**
- **Have 25 identified and another 19 under review.**



Coordinating Across Systems

- **WIOA requiring unified state plans**
- **Cross system performance measures**
- **Required MOUs**
- **Employment First efforts**
- **Funding requirements**



What to do:

- **R: Identify practices that have merit, transfer potential and study them.**
- **P: Adapt and adopt.**
- **PM: Enable adaptation and adoption of new practices.
Funding mechanisms.**

Implementation issues....

Cruise Ships versus Kayak



INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY INCLUSION
promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities



Issues such as...

- **The system includes “high volume, low touch” agencies and “low volume, high touch” agencies. Triage, scope, pace.**



Priorities?

- **Child/youth (entitlement) versus adult (eligibility) systems. Who is a priority?**
- **Spend program income from SSDI/SSI reimbursements before able to count expenditures for transition age youth.**



What to do:

- **R: Identifying solutions to implementation barriers**
- **P: System level coordination and customer focus**
- **PM: Financial incentives for coordination that do not pit populations against each other.**



Contact Information

Susan Foley

Susan.foley@umb.edu

617.287.4317



INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY INCLUSION
promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities

