



**The Vocational Rehabilitation
Return on Investment Project:
Employment Research and
Knowledge Translation**

**12th Annual Summit on
Performance Management Excellence
Portland, Maine
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Today's Speakers

- **Mr. Rick Sizemore (moderator)**
Director, Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (WWRC)
- **Dr. Robert M. Schmidt**
VR ROI Project Principal Investigator, University of Richmond
- **Dr. Kirsten Rowe**
Project Coordinator, Va. Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services
- **Dr. Joe Ashley**
Co-principal Investigator, private consultant
- **Dr. Robert Froehlich**
Project Director, The George Washington University

Session 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 activities resulting from ongoing stakeholder engagement
- A side note:



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

- Research grant from the National Institute for Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research to refine an earlier ROI model with a diverse set of vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies and more recent cohorts of VR program applicants
- Partners with 9 agencies from 7 states: Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Texas, and Virginia
- Uses VR applicant cohorts from 2000, 2007, 2012 (and multi-year cohorts from 2007-2012 for low-incidence disabling conditions like blindness, autism spectrum disorders)
- Uses readily available administrative data to estimate the return on investment of services provided by state VR agencies.

Project Overview (continued)

- Generates estimates of the impact of specific types of VR services on VR applicants' long-term (2-3 years before through 5+ 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 (mental illness, cognitive impairments, physical disabilities, blindness/vision impairment) as well as overall agency ROI
- For more information, visit the project website: www.vrroi.org

Ongoing engagement of VR agencies in

- developing, implementing and refining the project and its intended products;
- ensuring validity of results (making sure they pass the “smell test”);
- interpreting results and applying them appropriately; and
- ensuring the methodologically rigorous approach was conceptually valid and reflected how VR services are actually provided

Engagement of VR as equal partner in

- developing the multiple grant applications that led to the grant awards;
- including VR agency staff as co-PI;
- using grant funds to help support VR agency costs for project participation; and
- identifying and implementing effective knowledge translation strategies.

Stakeholder engagement

“early and often”

- Multiple focus groups held in conjunction with stakeholder meetings to get input on knowledge translation 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 the 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

- Building knowledge translation (KT) into the project from the beginning by including VR training experts as major project partner.
- Allocating significant grant resources for stakeholder involvement in developing and implementing KT
- Creating learning community and other feedback channels to assist VR staff in using the ROI information.
- Determining how ROI results can – and should not – be used for VR program decision-making

“Elevator Speech”

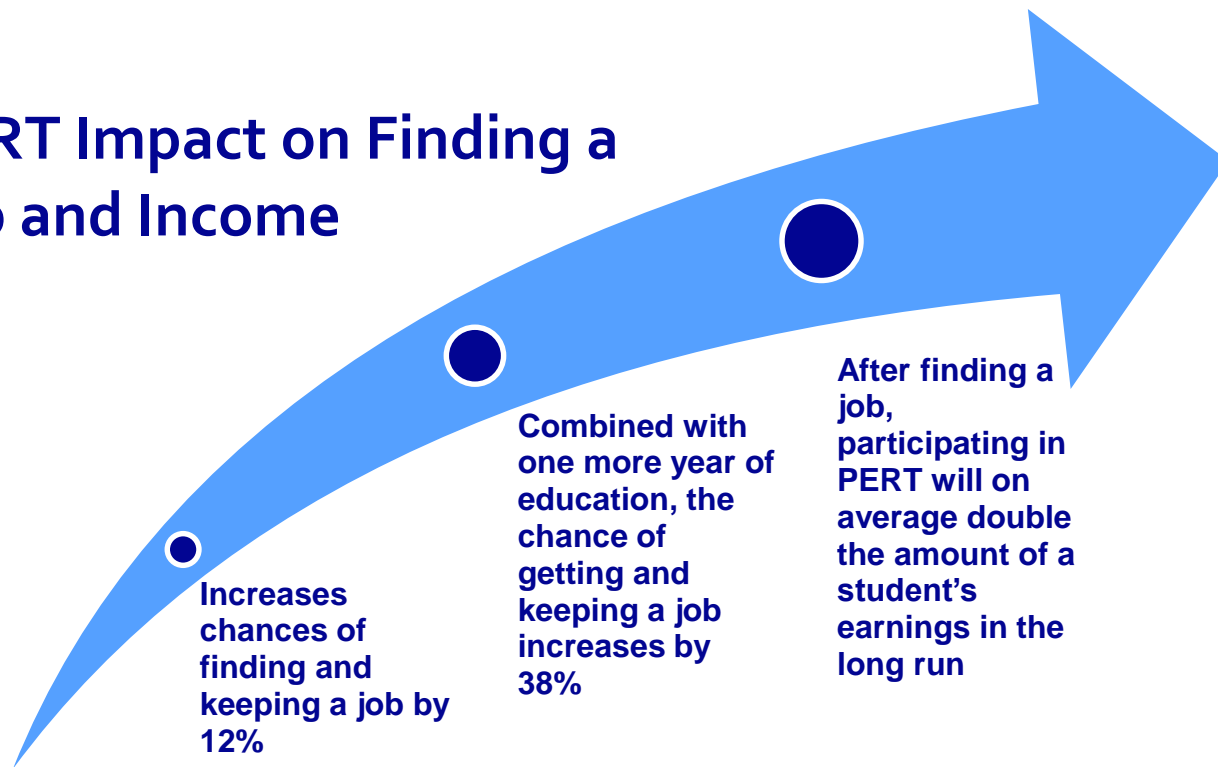
For those VR applicants in 2000 who received VR services, 80% enjoyed earnings gains that exceeded the cost of their VR. For every \$1,000 spent by the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, the average (median) consumer earned \$7,100 more over 10 years than they would have earned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

ROI of a Collaborative Transition Program

Post-secondary 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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