



Acknowledgement and Disclaimer

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- ⇒ The ideas, opinions, and conclusions expressed, however, are those of the presenters and do not represent recommendations, endorsements, or policies of the U.S. Department of Education.





Project E3: Educate, Empower, and Employ

Strategies for Effective Rural VR Service Delivery

projecte3.com





Introduction



Catherine Ipsen, MA, PhD

Catherine.Ipsen@mso.umt.edu

Associate Director

Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities (RIIC)

University of Montana

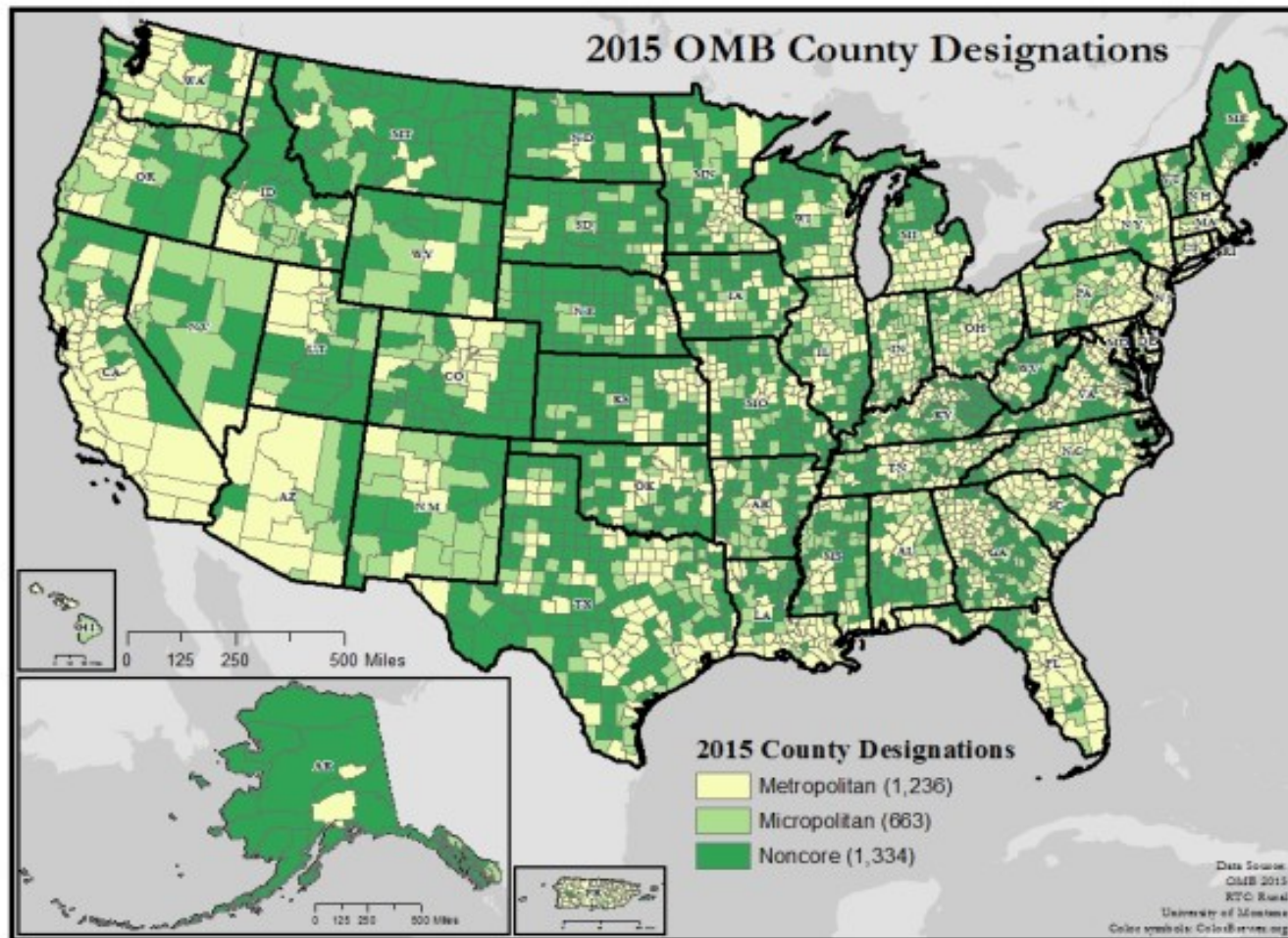
<http://ruralinstitute.umt.edu/>

Director

Research and Training Center on Disability in

Rural Communities (RTC:Rural) at RIIC

<http://rtc.ruralinstitute.umt.edu/>

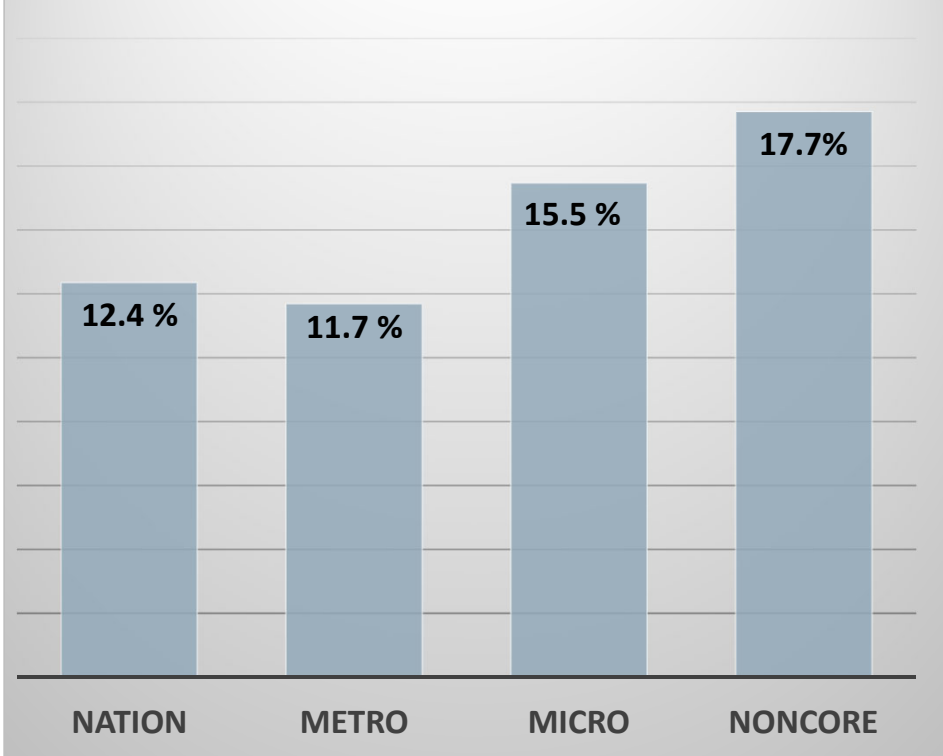


E3TC: educate, empower, employ

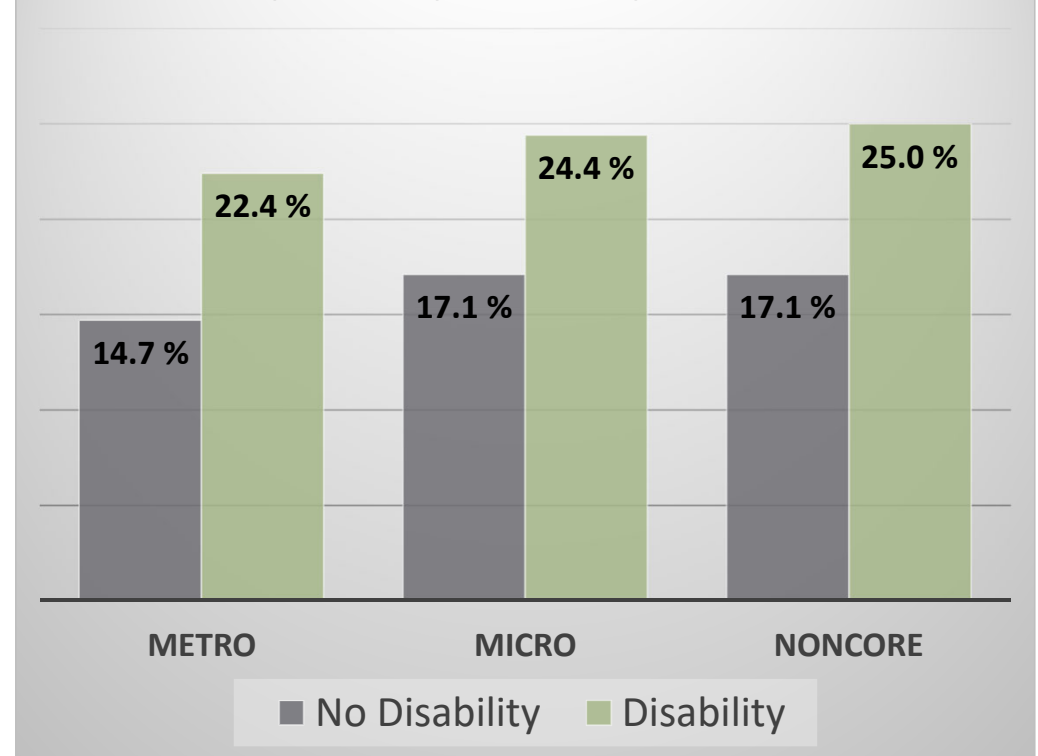


Rural Demographics

Disability Rate by Metro Status



Poverty Rate by Disability Status





Rural Service Delivery

Setting the Stage

- **Premature exit**
 - Informant interviews with early exits (n = 28)
 - Quantitative prospective longitudinal study (n = 355)
 - Qualitative interviews with random sample of exits (n = 38)
- **State data project**
 - Quantitative study of VR RSA 911 case records
 - VR informants (n = 82, 48 agencies)
- **Rural business development strategies**
 - CSAVR – RTC:Rural collaboration (n = 22, 10 agencies)



Outcomes – Premature Exit

- **Background: Nearly half of all eligible consumers drop out before completing the program**
 - VR spends approximately \$365 million annually to serve clients who disengage from services
 - Premature exits are associated with worse economic outcomes
- **Prospective study to understand factors leading to early exit**
 - T1 = 355, T2 = 262, T3 = 212, T4 = 188 – followed consumers for 18 months
- **Findings**
 - Almost half of all VR respondents felt that progression through VR was too slow
 - Attachment to VR was associated with the number of client-counselor contacts – both in-person and via phone or email

E3TC **Reasons for Exit (n = 162)**

■ **Satisfied reasons (35%)**

- Got a job
- Received services I desired

■ **Dissatisfied reasons (35%)**

- Not receiving services I desired
- VR stopped contacting me
- VR process taking too long
- Problems with counselor

■ **Other (30%)**

- Health issues
- Discouraged with job opportunities in my community
- Transportation issues
- Moved
- Family issues
- Did not want to risk losing benefits
- Incarceration
- Unsure about status/exploring work independently





Rural Service Delivery Issues

- **More time to IPE and placement**
 - Faster delivery leads to better VR attachment and employment outcomes
- **Less frequent client-counselor contact**
- **Less access to specialists**
- **Fewer vendors**
- **More limited educational and training opportunities**



Rural Employment Issues



- **Harder to establish business networks**
 - Personal communication important
 - Itinerant counselors have limited community presence
 - Vendors do not serve the rural community
- **Harder to access appropriate training**
 - May need to travel or access online training
- **Fewer job opportunities**
 - Harder to accommodate client choice
- **Closed doors**
 - Reputation or family history
- **Challenges related to transportation**



Strategies to Improve Rural Delivery

- **Increase use of telecommunications**
 - Counselor-client communications
 - Online job search
- **Expand rural capacity**
 - Vendor strategies
- **Expand economic opportunity**
 - Rural business development strategies
 - Self-employment



Telecom and Social Media

- **Alternate methods of communication**
 - Expand use of email, text, and video for rural engagement
- **Alternate methods of job exploration**
 - Expand job-search capacity
- **Barriers**
 - Lack of counselor knowledge and capacity
 - Ethics concerns
 - Lack of telecommunications use policies
- **Strategies**
 - Telecom Toolbox (www.telecomtoolbox.org)
 - Social media policies



Online Career Development Tools for Employment

Various online platforms can be utilized to advance employment goals whether someone is looking for a job, interested in keeping a job, or wants to network within a profession. The telecom toolbox supports career development professionals and job seekers in using online tools.



Communication

If managed effectively, distance



Online Career Development

The internet and social media platforms, such as LinkedIn and Facebook, can



Ethics


Online career development tools introduce

- **Communication**
 - Email
 - Text
 - Video conferencing
 - Instant messaging
- **Online career development**
 - Managing your online presence
 - Active job search
- **Ethics**
 - Using distance communication
 - Using social media
 - Informed consent



Social Media Policy Elements

- **Policy scope**
 - Guidelines about use at both the agency and counselor level
- **Consumer awareness**
 - Procedures for informing clients about risks and benefits, including risks to confidentiality
- **Acceptable use**
 - Agency expectations, monitoring procedures, disciplinary actions
- **Account management**
 - How the agency and employees create, maintain, and close accounts
- **Confidentiality**
 - How the agency and counselor will minimize risks to confidentiality; steps to address confidentiality breaches should they occur
- **Ethical guidelines**
 - Posting guidelines that highlight professionalism, confidentiality, and steps to do no harm



Vender Availability & Rural Outcomes

- Most VR agencies utilize vendors to deliver job development services
- Approximately 50% of agencies have areas in their states that are unserved
- When vendors are unavailable, VR counselors typically provide services
 - Delays in services due to itinerant schedules
 - Reduced community connections





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Results based funding (RBF) models

- **Approximately 80% of VR agencies use RFB models to pay vendors**
 - Result in higher rates of competitive employment and lower overall costs
 - Decreases delivery time
 - Shifts financial risk from the agency to the vendor
- **RBF payments are based on average costs**
 - Some cases move quickly to job placement and payments exceed true costs
 - Some cases move slowly or do not reach job placement and payments do not cover true costs

E3TC RBF barriers and outcomes

- **RBF can undermine rural vendor availability**
- **Average case costs are higher**
 - Travel costs and time
 - Fewer job opportunities
 - No economies of scale
 - Harder to develop business relationships
- **Limited number of referrals**
 - Hard to overcome risk





Strategies to Improve Rural Services

■ Reduce vendor financial risk

- Provide incentives for serving rural locations
- Provide travel support
- Increase use of shared funding models (fee-for-service & RBF)
- Provide guaranteed referral levels or monthly fixed payments

■ Improve outcomes

- Hire rural community insiders with established community connections
- Establish payments for non-traditional employment options (such as self-employment or at-home contracts)

■ Lower barriers to provider entry

- Allow small or independent contractors to serve underserved locations (limited use providers)
- Waive requirements (i.e. CARF)
- Support establishment grants to help with start-up costs
- Sponsor training which shifts costs to the agency

■ Increase agency capacity and support

- Expand agency/vendor collaborations such as shared job leads



Rural Business Outreach Strategies

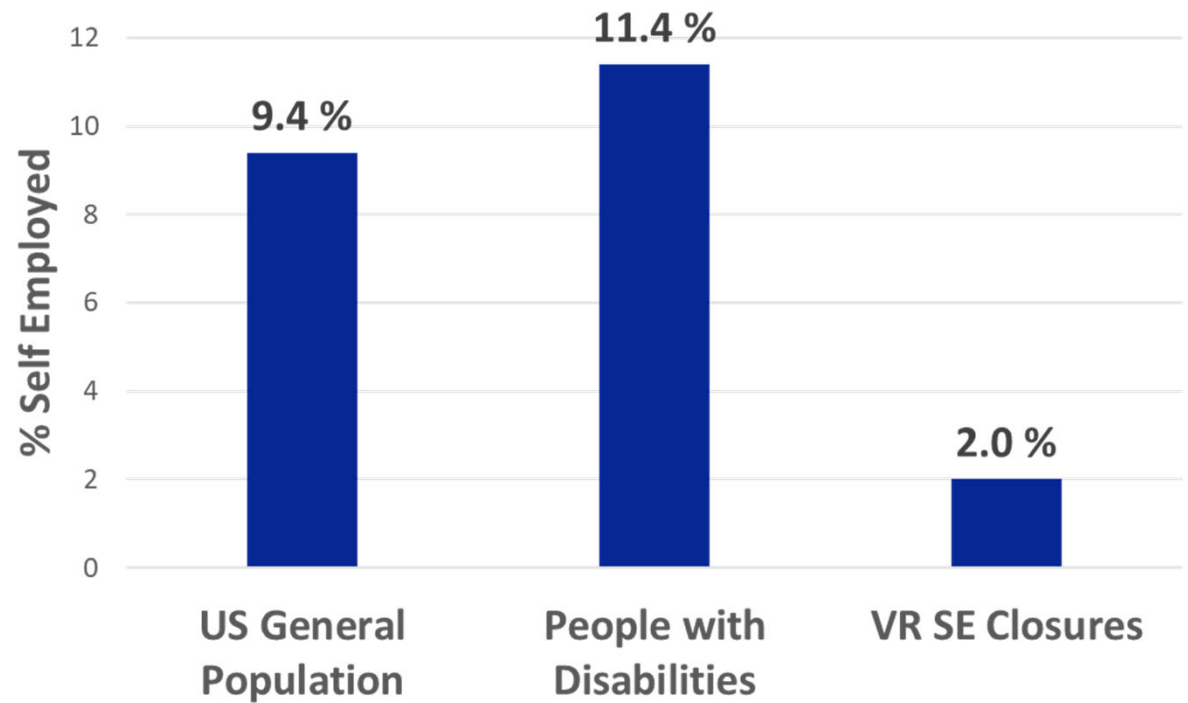


- **Personal vs professional relationships**
 - Presence at community events
 - Rural office locations
 - Use of community insiders
- **Community reputation**
 - Long term face of VR – importance of not burning bridges
 - Dual customer approach – human resource expert

Self-Employment



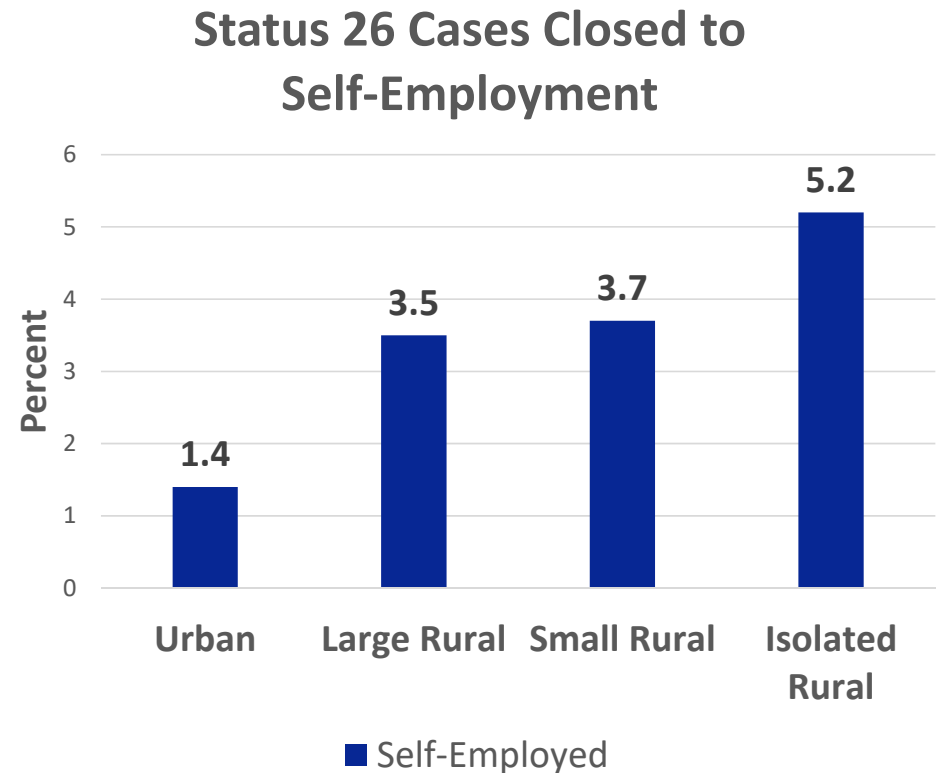
Self-Employment in the US





Self-employment (SE) Outcomes in VR

- Closure rates to SE increased for more rural cases
- VR-Blind agencies had above average closures to SE relative to combined and general agencies





Explaining Low Rates of VR SE Closures

- **Counselor unpreparedness to assist clients with SE exploration**
 - Not trained in business start-up
 - Vendors not in place to support business development services
 - Confusion about the process
- **Concerns that outcomes will not result in viable employment**
 - VR self-employed clients earned comparable wages to those in competitive employment
 - Earned significantly high wages ($p < .001$)
 - Worked significantly fewer hours ($p < .001$)
- **Concerns case costs will be higher**
 - Costs of purchased services were significantly higher ($p < .001$)



Addressing Barriers to SE

■ VR Self-Employment Guide

- Self-guided content
- Slide-show format
- Business owner interview
- Audio and video examples
- Companion materials
- Fully accessible

■ Partners

- Margot Dana, USOR
- Dr. Nancy Arnold, Consultant
- Jennifer Stephens, SBDC
- UM Media Arts
- UM School of Extended and Lifelong Learning
- Business Owners with Disabilities

<http://vrselfemployment.org>



VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SELF-EMPLOYMENT GUIDE

Click on the chapter icons to get started.

1 | OVERVIEW



2 | READINESS



3 | BUSINESS FEASIBILITY



4 | THE BUSINESS PLAN



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CHAPTER 1

SELF-EMPLOYMENT OVERVIEW



Click the image above to play the "Meet the Business Owners Video"

FOCUS AREA 1

INTRODUCTION TO SELF-EMPLOYMENT

Introduction

Self-Employment & VR

Tier 1 & Tier 2 Businesses

Client & Counselor Roles

Chapter Review



OVERVIEW

People choose self-employment for many reasons. Self-employment can provide flexibility. It can meet a vocational goal when employment options are limited. It can allow you to use your creativity. Whatever the reason, many people with and without disabilities dream of owning a business.

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FOCUS AREA 1

INTRODUCING SELF-EMPLOYMENT READINESS

Introduction

Myths

Business Owner Traits

Readiness Self-Assessment

Chapter Review



INTRODUCTION

Self-employment is not as easy as hanging an “open for business” sign. Running a successful business requires more skills than delivering your product or service. You need to know how to market your business, keep track of your financials, and manage day-to-day operations. This chapter helps you figure out if self-employment is a good fit. It explores some common myths about self-employment. It then asks you to think critically about your ability to run a business.

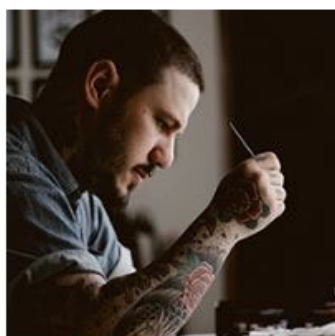
Click through the tabs in this section to learn about self-employment readiness.

If you are unsure how to navigate this site, click on the WEBSITE NAVIGATION heading at the very top of the page.

You can download a print-only version of [Chapter 2: Self-Employment Readiness \(PDF\)](#) for reference. You can download additional materials included with this chapter, including the [Rate Your Entrepreneurial Potential Worksheet](#), [Self-Reflection Worksheet](#), and [Readiness Self-Assessment Worksheet](#).

FOCUS AREA 1

INTRODUCING SELF-EMPLOYMENT READINESS

[Introduction](#)[Myths](#)[Business Owner Traits](#)[Readiness Self-Assessment](#)[Chapter Review](#)

MYTHS

Have you heard people say they should be self-employed because they don't like working with others? This is just one myth about self-employment. To get a better picture of what self-employment involves, click on the MYTHS & REALITIES button below to explore some myths and realities of business ownership. Then, click on the QUIZ YOURSELF button to check your understanding of the content.

[MYTHS & REALITIES](#)[QUIZ YOURSELF](#)



Myths & Realities

Vocational Goal

Myth: Self-employment is my vocational goal.

Reality: Self-employment is a way to meet a vocational goal. It is not, however, a profession. For instance, you might be interested in becoming a hair stylist or furniture builder. To practice these professions, you could be employed by someone else or open your own business.



▶ 1:03 / 1:03 ———— 🔊 ———— ⬇

[Vocational Goal Audio Transcript](#)



Business Feasibility: About Your Business

Answer the following questions about your proposed business, competition, and business location. Each question is followed by things to address.

1. What is the name of your business?

- Does the name describe the business?
- Is the name available and distinct? Is there another business nearby?

2. Describe the primary product(s) or service(s) your business will provide.

- Did you describe the primary purpose of the business?
- Are there additional services or products that could/shoud
 - For example, a hairdresser might sell hair care products or a landscaping business might offer services like leaf raking or snow removal.

Business Feasibility: About You

1. Why do you want to be self-employed?

2. How did you come up with your business idea?

Start-up Costs Inventory

This section asks you to estimate your business start-up costs in the categories listed below. This is the start-up costs worksheet.

Materials and supplies. Estimate the cost of supplies, goods or services. Provide a list that includes each item and its cost per item.

Table 1: Materials and supplies

Item	Supplier	Units required	Cost per unit	Total cost
Shelving	Costco	4	\$ 50.60	\$ 202.40
Cash register	Willco	1	\$ 750.00	\$ 750.00
				\$ 0.00
				\$ 0.00
				\$ 0.00
				\$ 0.00
				\$ 0.00
				\$ 0.00
				\$ 0.00
				\$ 0.00
				\$ 0.00
				\$ 0.00
				\$ 0.00
				\$ 0.00
Total costs				(A) \$ 952.40

RESOURCES BY CHAPTER

This section lists some brief information and links to outside resources we refer to in our resources corresponding to each chapter.

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

C

CHAPTER 4: THE BUSINESS PLAN

- [Business Plan Outline- 23 Point Checklist For Success](#)
 - Article in Forbes magazine that provides an easy-to-follow business plan outline.
- [Choose Your Business Structure](#)
 - The U.S. Small Business Administration guide to choosing a business structure.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Business Development Resources

Funding Resources

Veterans

Tribal &

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

This section includes additional resources you might find useful as you c

- [U.S. Small Business Administration](#) (SBA)
 - The SBA is a government agency that provides assistance to s
loan guarantees, and contracts. We link to different pages on t



E3TC Next Steps



■ Upcoming RTC:Rural Research

- Key informant interviews with agency, counselors and consumers regarding implementation of SE guide
- Iterative input

■ Acknowledgements

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Barriers: References

■ Premature Exit

- Ricles, B., Ipsen, C., Arnold, N., & Seekins, T. (2011) Experiences of rural Vocational Rehabilitation clients who leave the system prematurely: A qualitative exploration. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, 54(3), 164-174.
- Ipsen, C. & Goe, R. (2016). Factors associated with consumer engagement and satisfaction with the Vocational Rehabilitation system. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 44, 85-96.

■ State Data

- Ipsen, C. & Swicegood, G. (2015). Rural and urban differences in Vocational Rehabilitation case mix, delivery practices, and employment outcomes. *Rehabilitation Research Policy and Education*, 29(4), 349-370.



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Strategies: References & Resources

■ Telecommunications

- Ipsen, C., Ricles, B., Arnold, N., & Seekins, T. (2012). The use of telecommunications to deliver services to rural and urban Vocational Rehabilitation clients. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*. 55(3), 144-155.
- Ipsen, C. & Goe, R. (2018). Vocational Rehabilitation agency guidance on social media use: A policy analysis. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, 61(4), 217-227. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0034355217700819>
- Goe, R., Ipsen, C. & Bliss, S. (2018). Pilot testing a digital career literacy training for Vocational Rehabilitation professionals. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, 61(4), 236-243. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0034355217724341>
- www.telecomtoolbox.org



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Strategies: References & Resources

■ Rural Service Delivery

- Ipsen, C., Goe, R., & Bliss, S. (In press). Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) funding of job development and placement services. Submitted for publication to the *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*.
- Ipsen, C., Colling, K., & Goe, R. (September, 2012). *Vocational Rehabilitation outreach to rural businesses*. Missoula, MT: The University of Montana Rural Institute.

■ Self-employment

- Ipsen, C. & Swicegood, G. (2017). Rural and urban differences in self-employment outcomes among Vocational Rehabilitation consumers. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 46, 97-105.
- www.vrselfemployment.org



Discussion Topics

- **Rural barriers to effective service delivery**
 - What additional barriers deserve attention?
- **Rural strategies**
 - What additional strategies can you share?