

# Effective Strategies for a Dual-Customer Approach

## At-a-Glance:

For years, vocational rehabilitation literature has discussed “dual-customer” strategies, where both businesses and consumers with disabilities are considered customers. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act now requires agencies to invest in business services and report on common performance indicators of success for their business customers. To learn what was most effective when taking a dual-customer approach to services, researchers asked 67 agencies about their business relations strategies and activities, staffing and organizational structure, marketing, outreach, and business contracts.

## Key Findings

Vocational rehabilitation agencies found the following methods helpful for successful dual-customer service provision:

- Seventy percent network with businesses.
- Many provide disability awareness training, assistive technology, and work-site assessment services to business.
- 69 percent have specialized staff who spend the majority of their time implementing business strategies.
- Almost all have additional staff (counselors, job placement specialists, administrators) with business relations responsibilities.

## Putting It into Practice

The Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act authorizes vocational rehabilitation agencies to expand services and education to employers who have an interest in hiring people with disabilities. Here are some other ways to incorporate a dual-customer approach in services:

- Network with businesses and establish partnerships useful for clients.
- Provide educational material on disabilities and employment law, including the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act.

- Provide businesses with information on accommodations and assistive technology.
- Organize employer recognition events.

### **More About this Research**

This was an initial study to provide a “snapshot” of business relations strategies and approaches by vocational rehabilitation agencies. In-depth interviews and additional surveys should expand upon this research.

### **Learn More**

Haines, Kelly; Soldner, James L.; Zhang, Libin; Saint Laurent, May-Lorie; Knabe, Barbara; West-Evans, Kathy; Mock, Linda; Foley, Susan (2018). Vocational rehabilitation and business relations: Preliminary indicators of state VR agency capacity. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 48 (1), 133-145.

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### ***Questions? Feedback?***

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