Project E3 provides technical assistance (TA) to State VR agencies and their partners to address barriers to VR participation and competitive integrated employment of historically underserved groups of individuals with disabilities who are economically disadvantaged.

Technical Assistance (TA)

TA will be provided onsite through long term service delivery relationships with local VR agency personnel and community-based partners in targeted communities identified by VR agencies. Project E-3 has the capacity to provide technical assistance in a way that eases the burden on already-stressed agencies.

On behalf of participating VR agencies, Project E3 will develop proposals for TA to improve VR participation rates and competitive, integrated employment outcomes in the targeted communities identified by state VR agencies. Intensive TA will be provided on-site to local VR agency personnel and community-based stakeholders. The goal is to increase VR agency capacity to:

- Increase, identify, and engage VR-eligible disadvantaged individuals with disabilities who could benefit from VR services, with emphasis on high-leverage groups with national applicability;
- Establish or expand partnerships with local social service and community development agencies, correctional facilities, community rehabilitation programs (CRPs), school systems, employers, community leaders, and other relevant stakeholders;
- Implement comprehensive support services to increase VR participation rates of individuals in targeted communities by addressing systemic barriers such as poverty, homelessness, food insecurity, safety concerns, interpersonal and family issues, language barriers, and lack of transportation and childcare.

Project E-3 Activities

1. Conduct VR services needs assessment of targeted communities identified by State VR agencies:
   - **Outcome:** Identify current conditions and promising/evidence-based practices to address substandard participation levels and performance outcomes.

2. Provide technical assistance in developing intensive TA proposals for 20 identified TCs for review by RSA.
   This will lead to the selection of 12 TCs as Project E3 service recipients.
   - **Outcome:** The 12 selected TCs will receive long-term, on-site intensive TA on VR-related issues having the potential to result in increased employment and community integration of persons with disabilities in the targeted communities.
3. Develop focused and generalized VR training modules for the 12 selected TCs with feedback from state VR agencies (on-site and online). The training modules will be designed for short/long-term delivery in collaboration with other TACs.

   **Outcome:** These collaborative services, designed to help improve and sustain VR access, use, outcomes, and capacity of 12 selected TCs, will be replicated in other geographic areas within the states in where the TCs are located.

4. Provide targeted and universal TA products and services to state VR agencies and rehabilitation professionals representing SRCs, ILCs, CBOs, and CRPs. Information will be developed collaboratively and disseminated through CoPs, the Project E-3 website, and platforms such as NCRTM (National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials) and CSAVR.

   **Outcome:** These collaborative training and TA on service strategies (with other RSA technical assistance centers) will increase the number of TC based economically disadvantaged clients with disabilities who receive services from state VR agencies and/or stakeholders.

5. Provide sustainable capacity evaluation for each intensive and targeted TA strategy (in collaboration with respective state VR agencies) for the duration of the project and beyond.

   **Outcome:** The promising TA delivery strategies and contents will be identified for use by other state VR agencies and high-leverage groups of national applicability nationwide, during and beyond the project period.

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**Technical Assistance Training Topics**

Depending on the particular needs of the targeted populations and communities, training topics may include:

- Use of labor market data and occupational information to increase employment;
- Disability-related consultation and services to employers;
- Building relationships with industry leaders, employer associations, prospective employers, secondary and post-secondary educational systems, and CRPs;
- Leveraging individualized wrap-around services to meet basic education, remedial learning, increase literacy to support youth transition;
- Customized employment and training services addressing the needs of both employers and individuals with disabilities;
- Increase awareness of cultural and socio-economic barriers that negatively impact employment
- Relevant information regarding the WIOA pre-employment transition services and subminimum wage limitations.
Definitions

Targeted community:
Any economically disadvantaged community that qualifies as an Empowerment Zone (a highly distressed urban or rural community) and in which: (a) the median household income is below 200% of the Federal poverty level; (b) the unemployment rate is at or above the national average; and (c) persons with disabilities, as a group, have historically sought, been determined eligible for, or received VR services or achieved competitive, integrated employment at 65% or less than the State VR agency’s overall employment outcome level.

High-leverage groups of national applicability:
Examples are: residents of rural and remote communities; adjudicated adults and youth; youth with disabilities in foster care; individuals with disabilities receiving Federal Financial assistance; culturally diverse populations; high school dropouts and functionally illiterate consumers; persons with multiple disabilities; and SSI and SSDI recipients, including subminimum-wage employees.


Project Partners

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- Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Employment Resources, Inc.
- A national network of expert consultants