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>> You want to move to the next slide? So it's my pleasure to introduce presenters. First we'll have Chaz Compton who will give us an overview of the work he's been doing as well as the work he's been doing around Section 511.

Christine Johnson has been supported states with her team pre-employment transition services.

We'll then hear from Doug Keast who's a project director. Rachel Anderson is going to talk about performance measures with states. Nikki Powis is going to talk to us about apprenticeship. Jeff Hughes is going to talk about career index plus. We have Sean talking about competitive integrated employment. And then we have Russ Thelin about business engagement activities.

So today for our objectives our hope is we'll hear a brief overview of each of the topic areas, and then some specific example of how WINTAC staff have been working with states to date as well as sharing links to really good resources. We'll hear from the WINTAC project director and eight subject matter experts.

We're hoping that you'll be able to consider some ways to utilize WINTAC resources in the future depending on the specific needs. As mentioned earlier, if you have questions throughout, please put them in the chat box and we'll be keeping track of those. And then at the end we'll provide an opportunity to review those questions and hopefully answer them during this presentation. And if we can't answer them, we'll take note of them and get them back out to you by email.

So at this point, I would like to turn it over to Chaz Compton.

>> Chaz Compton: We're all looking forward to sharing information. So let's get started. I'm going to give you a brief overview of the center and we'll start with the partners that we have across the country.

WINTAC is led by the Interwork Institute at San Diego State University. And we have partners through the George Washington University, through the University of Arkansas Currents, the National Disability Institute, Policy Works, Syracuse, and CSAVR as well as the career index plus, and the Institute for Community Inclusion at U Mass Boston and the University of Washington.

There are -- each of our partners has a topic area that they specialize in and provide technical assistance and training to state agencies across the country. The main WINTAC started out was five major topic areas we were supposed to be helping VR programs and their partners. One of them was the pre-employment services, the implementation of Section 511 which deals with subminimum wage employment. The third area is resources and strategies to promote competitive integrated employment. The fourth area is integration of the vocational rehabilitation program in the workforce development system.

We're pleased we have been able to provide technical assistance and training in some of the areas that job-driven technical vocational center have been providing to this. We've recognized great work they've been doing out of University of Massachusetts.

Boston and providing supplemental funding to ensure that work will continue for the next two and a quarter years of the remainder of the workforce innovation technical assistance center. So we have a new partner with ICI so continue with business engagement and employer supports as a technical assistance topic area.

In addition, we're able to provide training and technical assistance on the career index plus and labor market information in general. And apprenticeships and customized training, all areas that ICI and their partners were providing training and technical assistance and part of the JDVRTAC. We're pleased they were not able to lose the great work they have done.

A heads up that if you are look for technical assistance in how to either improve or maybe even establish your business relationships capacity as an organization and improve effectiveness in serving employers, or if you want to increase the ability of your staff to utilize labor market information effectively in a vocational planning process with consumers and/or you want to develop apprenticeships and/or learn about customized training or other work-based learning opportunities, we're able to provide that technical assistance as well.

So we're very excited about that as a growth opportunity for the remainder of the time that we're out there as a center and we hope that you will not be shy in requesting assistance if you're look for help in those areas.

As of today, there are 31 agreements, intensive TA in the WINTAC and those cover 33 VR agencies. We have a couple states where they have one agreement and we have provided at least targeted technical assistance as a center to almost every VR program in the country so far. Our website includes lots of helpful information on all of our topic areas and we are expanding that website right now, as a matter of fact, as we speak to include the new topic areas we address. We're going to be migrating in a bunch of information. But the information they already developed is available still on Explore VR. So encourage you to go there. We will be migrating that information and developing further new information as we go along. So please keep your eyes out on the website for that.

We're going to begin now with the formal presentation of each our topic areas. I'll start with Christine Johnson.

>> Christine Johnson: Thank you, Chaz. This is Christine Johnson and I am part of what I call the pre-employment transition services team at George Washington University covering this topic area.

Pre-employment transition services is found in Section 113 of the law are really giving you some specific requirements regarding fiscal, program attic and coordination activities. In our brief overview I'm going to give you -- I'm not going to be able to go into depth, but I will echo what Chaz just said: If you go to the WINTAC.org website, go under the topic area of pre-employment transition services, you'll find wealth of information that should help you answering questions.

So when we look at an overview of pre-employment transition services are, the law as I mentioned has some fiscal components. And one of the things that states are now working with is that 15% of a VR agency's state allotment from their federal grant has to be reserved and set aside and spent only on students with disabilities and only for specific activities that you'll find in the law.

So what are these pre-employment transition services? These are an early start at job exploration. They are only for student with disabilities. So pre-employment transition services helps students with disabilities begin to identify career interest that may be further explored through either additional VR services such as transition services.

They are meant to enrich, not delay any kind of transition plan, application to the VR program, or the full continuum of VR services that may be necessary for a student to have in order to successfully transition from school to post-school activities.

So, again, they are that early start. They represent a continuum of services. So it's not just I'm going to give you pre-ETS and that's it. But it's pre-employment services lay foundation for students to begin to look at the world of work.

When we look at well, who's a student with a disability? This is, again, within the law defined as an individual with a disability who's in a secondary, post-secondary, or any other recognized education program who's meeting certain age requirements and who's eligible for or receiving special education or any related services under Part B of the individuals with disabilities education act or they are an individual with a disability for the purposes of Section 504.

Pre-employment transition services are provided in collaboration with state and local education agencies to students with disabilities. So VR agencies work very closely with the state education agency and also with the local schools to coordinate and collaborate on how to provide pre-employment transition services and transition services to students.

Pre-employment transition services are to be made available state-wide to all students with disabilities who need those services. And this is an area in which we often work with states because this is -- this has been a, I guess an area that states at first were very confused about, saying, "Hey, we've got 10,000 students in our state; we don't have the capacity to serve every single one."

Pre-employment transition services just have to be made available. So just how you deliver your VR services in general to the population in your state, you're making them available. So not every student is going to need pre-employment transition services or require it, but you will have it available for them.

Pre-employment transition services consist of five required activities. So the first one is job exploration counseling. This can be, again, generalized. It's provided individually or in a group setting. So they may be working with students in a classroom or a community setting. You're going to be exploring and helping them look at information about different sectors -- industry sectors, occupations, non-traditional employment, what kind of interest they may have helping them explore that, identifying career pathways.

So giving that student that early foundation in the world of work.

The second of the five required are work-based learning experiences. Again, these are done individually or in a group setting. So it helps that student look at necessary job skills, job shadowing, maybe some work experiences that could be paid or unpaid, short-term on-the-job training, giving them that taste of work.

The third of the five required is counseling on opportunities for enrollment and comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs. So, again, you're helping the students look at career options, what course offerings may be at a community college or a four-year college or university?

The types of academic and occupational training that they may need to look at in order to succeed in a particular job or career field. And, again, helping them maybe apply for

federal financial aid. So how do they access maybe disability support services on campus? So that would fall under counseling on post-secondary education. The fourth is workplace readiness training, social soft skills you'll need on the job. Communication, interpersonal skills, some basic financial literacy, job-seeking skills, understanding what the employer expectations are going to be for them to include performance. So, again, provided individually or a group setting.

And the fifth one is instruction and self-advocacy. How to request services and supports they may need. Let them also maybe work with peer mentors who can help them in self-advocacy. You could also include talking and meeting with principals or nurses and teachers or any other individuals who are employed by or volunteering for employers, boards, associations, and others.

So, again, that is the overview of what these pre-employment transition services are. They also include four coordination activities that I will in the spend too much time here going through all of those. It also requires if a state has fund remaining after they've provided the five required, then there are nine additional authorized activities.

Those activities that we often help states do fiscal forecasting to see if they can provide the nine additional activities are those services or strategies that states actually can utilize to help build a foundation to effectively deliver the direct five required services to students.

So to recap this, the pre-employment transition services consist of the five required -- direct services to students with disabilities; it also includes four coordination activities as support working with students; and then if fund remain, the state has the option to provide any of the nine additional authorized activities that are broader in scope and help a state build a foundation to work with students state-wide.

So the pre-employment transition services team as part of WINTAC do a lot of technical assistance. As you can maybe imagine. Because pre-employment transition services is not only a new focus for agencies where they're working with students with disabilities who are maybe younger than what they were working with before, but it's also requiring a fiscal component.

So some of the examples that you will see here on the PowerPoint slide really are the foundation of how we work with states. So one of the things is we help a state agency

look at how do they develop their capacity to deliver the five required pre-employment transition services to all students who need them?

So oftentimes that includes looking at strategies to deliver services in a very rural area or in remote areas.

We also work with states to help them develop effective policies and procedures, how to put in writing what you're doing and how you do it.

We look at helping you develop those internal controls so that you are as a state agency properly setting aside the 15% reserve and also spending that -- those funds on the pre-employment transition services activities. That takes into account also how do you properly track what you're doing and how do you report the services that you're providing to eligible and potentially eligible students with disabilities?

The other area in which we provide a lot of technical assistance is just helping states do what's called the fiscal forecasting and the assessment of needs. So in your state, how do you determine what is needed to serve the students with disabilities? How do you say we spent X amount of dollars this year, we still need -- we have provided these services, we project we're going to serve X amount of students next year? It will cost us this much and we are going to be able to now move onto providing additional authorized activities.

And the federal government really wants states to be able to provide additional authorized activities. Because that's what helps you build a base state-wide to support the state VR personnel and partners in delivering pre-employment transition services.

We also work with many states on updating and completing formal agency agreements with your state education agency. Because that's, again, pre-employment transition services are provided in collaboration and coordination with your state and local education agencies so that sets the foundation for both VR and education to work together, to serve students with disabilities.

Again, on our topic area I would ask that you -- if you have questions, look at the WINTAC.org website under the pre-employment transition services. We have a frequently asked questions section which has about, I think, 26 or more questions, frequently asked questions. We've got the answers there.

There are many resources, toolkit guides, webinars that are archived for you to look at covering a whole host of pre-employment transition services. We invite you to look at

that and contact us through the website or the information at the end of the slide. And with that I will turn it over to Chaz Compton who will speak about Section 511.

>> Chaz Compton: Hi again. The second area is Section 511. That was added to ensure certain requirements were in place before youth could end enter into subminimum wage employment. Just briefly touch on some of the highlights here because the purpose of 511 was to ensure that individuals with disabilities are aware of the options available to them in terms of competitive integrated employment through the VR program specifically in order to ensure that they're making an informed choice about whether they pursue that employment or choose to work in subminimum wage employment. It does not outlaw subminimum wage employment, it provides individuals opportunities to have all their options and pursue more if they desire to do so.

So we're going to touch on the requirements for youth. These requirements apply to individuals 24 or younger. Before they can enter subminimum wage accomplishment they have to have documentation or receipt of transition services, work transition services, they must have been applied for and found ineligible for VR services, or closed in plan after pursuit of vocational goal with appropriate supports or a reasonable period of time, and provided career counseling or information and referral services. And information on peer mentoring and self-advocacy information available in their geographic area.

The choice really is for youth to go through this process or not work in subminimum wage employment. So they must apply for VR services and be found ineligible or be closed after a plan was developed if they were found eligible before they could pursue or enter into subminimum wage employment.

There are also requirements for all individuals regardless of age and one of those requirements is even if they've been working there for how many years CCIR must be provided every six months and the first year and annually thereafter. The employer is responsible for keeping that documentation and making sure when it's provided it's kept on file.

In addition to that, individuals must be provided information on self-advocacy, self-direction, peer mentoring, training opportunities in their geographic area.

The 14C holder on the entity as the law indicate is responsible for ensuring that this is provided, although they can't provide it themselves. If the 14C holder, the employer has less than 15 employees, the VR is responsible or can be responsible for providing that information.

This is a really good time to just briefly mention that one of the pilot projects that WINTAC engages in is the peer mentoring project in which we work to help VR programs establish a network of peer mentors in their state and train those peer mentors free of charge to the VR program. And then they can get connected to youth who can get advice and mentoring from those individual on how to achieve their greatest potential.

And I think this is kind of a nice why where the peer mentoring pilot project comes in handy. It also comes in handy for the pre-employment transition services and helping individual pursue competitive integrated employment. So if you're interested in being at that part of that project, let me know and we'll help you get with our team.

So some of the work that we're doing around 511 includes develop of the presentation including some of the content areas, the format that's presented. We do a lot of question and answer where we answer questions about unusual circumstances that people run into or just general how to implement.

The logistics of providing a service has been a focus the first year or two. How do we organize this, what does it look like, what are some best practices, how do we track it? Now that we move to approaching the end of the second year of full-blown implementation we're seeing VR programs asking how do we maximize the impact and move toward competitive employment and insure we're delivering to best effectiveness. That's been a nice switch as VR get compliance stuff out of the way and focus on how do we deliver this in an impactful way?

We look forward to working with you. There's information on the website but we'll be happy to talk with you anytime. Just send a note or give a call anytime.

Now we move to competitive integrated employment and Sean from the University of Arkansas will handle this one.

>> Sean O'Brien: Thank you, Chaz. So the area that we focus in assisting VR agencies is really to help implement effective competitive integrated employment strategies including supported employment and customized employment.

We also spend a considerable amount of time clarifying what competitive employment means under the new law. Some shifts under WIOA have changed to meet that level of integrated employment. So we spend time clarifying that.

We also spend a lot of time in partnering with VR agencies to help develop and implement sources and strategies to support their efforts for both supported and customized employment efforts. And that's including policy development and some other things. So let's move onto the next slide.

So, for example, when we talk about assistance we provide for supported employment which we can intend a fair amount of time on, it oftentimes starts with reviewing the current policies that VR agencies have in place that might have been more applicable under the old WIOA versus WIOA and the new law. So we'll spend time looking at existing supported employment policy in particular those areas within supported employment that have changed under the new law. We'll have good examples of states gone a long way with policy development and others that are still developmental. We may go in and review and draft supportive employment policy and make suggestions on areas that might need attention.

Similar to some changes under WIOA program there have been extended services and really picking up expectation for VR agencies for consumers on extended services. That might be an area we spend time on both in terms of policy description and program development and quite frankly just helping states identify where those resources like like Medicaid and other resources. So extended services are really available including that support and others.

Another area for sort of a common request is assisting states and their monitoring concerns including preparation for upcoming monitors as well as findings, draft, and final regarding supported employment. There's oftentimes those questions that come up regarding findings or suggestions from RSA in particular with supported employment policy and other areas.

And we often are consulted in figuring out some solutions and/or preventing some of those findings or concerns that come up in the first place for the monitors. So both the front and the back end are reported for us it cover. So we'll spend time on that.

And we also actually have a few states have asked us to assist in implementing some new supported employment program approaches. And that's, for example, included in that is actually some piloting for supported employment programs. What does that look like, what some of the new expectations around WIOA and what does that look like in terms of the partnering and kind of coming together for approaches on supported employment.

We also spend a fair amount of time monthly and sometimes even between meetings with our supported employment community of practice. It's both kind of a learning collaborative where VR agencies participate who are interested in learning more from each other about practices and strategies for implementing supported employment policy and program level. They share both questions and answers, and we've help facilitate that and do digging with some of the research when needing to answer questions. That's very popular and very good opportunity to do questions and answers and technical assistance at the same time.

So the other big topic area that we work in collaboration with, with WINTAC on and [INAUDIBLE] is really the national lead for implement customized employment that we assist in that process to first of all, understand what the new customized employment definitions are and expectations around it including customized employment process.

So we'll facilitate orientation meetings and Chip and I oftentimes go out and spend time with state agencies and develop customized employment implementation plans. I don't know the latest number but I know over a dozen of them. And that's been hopefully helpful and well received. And we continue to expand in that why where pilot are launched all over the country and helping with the successful implementation of those pilots and basically expanding that into a state-wide delivery system for customized employment.

The last thing I mentioned earlier is there's been a lot of the concern over the interpretation of the new competitive integrated employment definition and how that applies to everything from organizations like Ability 1 and what does that, like, on the

individualize jobsite? We've spent a quite a bit of time clarifying that. Checklist and so on. As well as just making sure we're clear on what that definition look like for competitive integrated employment.

That's all I have at this point. I just want to mention that on website we do have a number of resources and toolkits for really good examples and models for what's out there for competitive integrated employment for tools states are using. We also have quite a bit of information on both customized and supported employment tools and practices. All on our website under the topical area. I'll turn over to Doug.

>> Doug Keast: Great. Thanks, Sean and thank you.

The greatest part of the mission for customer service with WIOA is articulated jointly with an emphasis on a common service flow for job seekers. In order to provide that approach, agencies have been working with agency partners to establish collaborative systems unique in each state. An improvement in the guidance from WIA to WIOA is the establishment of VR's role as a core partner in each state so that the expertise that is unique to the VR agency's position in a leadership capacity.

This strengthens how the system respond to individual with disabilities. The focus of the WINTAC team in this area is to support the VR agency in this role so they'll not only be effective in implementing the actions required but more fully benefit as an agency through stronger outcomes based on partnerships.

The service immigration and alignment team is available to support agencies for plans necessary for system implementation and also enhance operations within the division of customer service to the benefit of all involved. Key vehicles to that flow are the local areas, career services, and career pathway models.

The goal is to establish these avenues are fully response to job seekers with disability. One of the more common requests is to have an idea of how other states are approaching alignments and integration. Panels on live and recorded training session and with communities of practice. Examples of current communities of practice through this team in partnership with other TA centers and organizations include collaborative business engagement, labor market information, career pathways, WIOA implementation with vocational rehabilitation agencies serving blind and visually impaired individuals, and

we're currently developing communities of practice with focus on partnership strategies around or selection implementation and common intake and information sharing.

In terms of technical assistance, we provide to agencies in the area of service integration, we begin with the WIOA checklist they may complete on their own or with support of the WINTAC team.

Since our shared vision for customer service is built around a theme of integration and some areas of WINTAC technical assistance in assessing the degree to which they're working with the partner agency and increasing the service alignment. The integration self-assessment continuum is designed to be taken on your own.

We've facilitated this process also with a group with you and your service partners together. And if there are state partnerships who would like to conduct this process in their local areas with or without the WINTAC's team support, we just created a facilitator's guide that can be used to support you in this activity.

Results and analysis in the group assessment process can be used by teams to develop their strategies in addressing service alignment in those areas in which they share the highest priority.

Notable areas of interest are with regard to common intake, case management, and business services. But we also look at career service assessment and follow-along services.

For a closer look at customer engagement, the WINTAC team has developed a process to -- the WINTAC team can use a combination. Integration self-assessment to support the VR agency in developing a collaborative strategy for customer service.

Many vocational rehabilitation agencies report that if the American Job Center partners are effective in providing the same services to people with disabilities as they do those without disabilities, the skills and abilities unique to the professionals of the VR agency can be more effectively utilized in strengthening the community. Likewise, if the career services of the job center are to support all partner programs and be a [INAUDIBLE] into the local pathway model, many partnerships are looking at how career services can be enhanced beyond those services.

Program access, partnership in light of the VR agency with the focus on warm engagement of partners with partner expertise as customers move on and off the order of

selection. Ticket to work partnership plus and workforce employment network operation. In partnership which can be coordinated with strategy that provides stronger engagement.

Financial capability and literacy, collaborative career pathways, and collaborative business engagement. Depending on an agency's recognized need in the capacity development of the job center's career services, the WINTAC team begins the activity in these areas with an assessment and then moves to strategy developments and implementation with the agency in light of national practices.

desired outcomes include increased enrollment, increase self-assessment, an increased number of individuals with disabilities meeting work and credential attained outcomes. And now it's my pleasure to introduce you to my friend and colleague, Rachel Anderson.

>> Rachel Anderson: Thanks, Doug. And my colleague Betsy Hopkins are the subject matters agency transition to common perform matters.

So when we first started diving into these performance measures, we really thought it would be understanding six indicators that apply across all and understanding VR agencies how, why, when as it relates to reporting.

It's also been really important for us to learn and understand the way of reporting for VR agencies.

This included the RSA 911 report, aligning definition and processes with core partner is. So, for example, the baseline years vary depend on the indicator and the partner. For VR we know all these are new so we are in our baseline years for everything which isn't the case for Title I or Title III.

We've also learned VR only reported on closed cases, figuring out how and when to report on the closed data to be a learning curve. As you know, we haven't even completed a full year of reporting in this new system yet. As each quarter passes, the WINTAC and agencies learn more about it.

At WINTAC we've done a lot of intensive and targeted work with states and agencies across the country. The most common activity has been assessing the status of the agency's ability to comply with performance accountability requirements. We created an implementation checklist to use independently or with WINTAC's help. For example, most states have been able enter a database system.

So it really does vary across the country on the status of reporting and implementation for VR's. That can also be found on our website if you're interested in using it.

One of my favorite activities with states is just having a conversation. That sounds a little bit boring but it's been extremely helpful not just for the states but for Betsy and I as well. We're able to discuss barriers, confusion, timeline, RSA interpretation, and implementation. It's a way to address questions and not feel dumb or they should already know them but really gain a better understanding through reporting and case management standpoint. So also a counselor and program standpoint.

We are learning best practices and solutions from you to share with peers but also additional questions and clarifications that need to be brought to RSA in order for you to be effective if your implementation of all this WIOA stuff.

We provide multiple trainings and this has been inclusive of all staff or just with leadership teams to help facilitate understanding of this topic and build strategies moving forward. This one has been a really great activity because we can tailor it to the needs of the state and who the people are in the room.

So, for example, with one state we provided a general training at first and then we came back to the state a few months later, provided the same training again from a deeper perspective of planning steps. This was a greater approach and actually requested by the state because it give the leaders time to really absorb and learn the content. And then come back for clarification and understanding and having an ability to understand the implications for the agency.

WINTAC doesn't all the have to do training. We provide training and content to leaders and help them create strategies for them to do themselves. So this helps us share examples from all of you from across the country to help agencies struggling in a particular area. Many have been implemented core partner work groups, and other strategies that help other agencies.

I haven't come across one agency that's not willing to share their work with another state. This is great to share your work and contact information with other states. It's been really a pleasure for us.

We felt many agencies with development or [INAUDIBLE] policies as it relates to performance and particularly in the area of credentials and measurable skill gain since

they have the greatest impact on VR counselors. We also addressed many areas of change.

So, for example, reporting all these services in the quarter they happened is very new. You used to report at closure. This quarterly reporting has changed more practices for VR than we expected.

Some other activities that we've done with states not -- there are not limited to this but a couple other things are we work with many states on the amendment of staff performance evaluation to better align with WIOA and agency goals.

Also we're talking to a lot of states about using data and what we're learning for quality assurance and program improvement. We've also developed quite a few tools for agencies to use. So as we're working you on an individual basis we'll see questions and themes of confusion. It's helpful to create a tool that will be useful to all agencies. couple of examples is our implementation checklist. Also the alignment of VR performance and part B indicator. We're also working on a counselor toolkit and we have a ton of other tools in the book.

Also, the RSA 911 and other VR reports many elements in the 911 mean something completely different than they used to. And we've spent a lot of time reviewing these. So not everything is captured in the 911. So having an understanding of what lives in which report has really been an important aspect of our work. And I can't believe how much time I've spent in the 911 in the last couple of years. And it's way more than I ever did in my entire VR career.

I say the most common activity we're engaged with right now is development of internal controls. So this one's pretty huge and I think that sometime this we're we will have some really great examples from states that are working diligently. You have a lot of internal controls that you use for training and improvement activities, but they aren't usually written down or cover all aspects of your program.

So we are discussing using different strategies on how to accomplish this to align with WIOA and RSA expectations.

And couple things about our cross work with teams is as you probably know, there's a ton of crossover with reporting and performance with the other topics. We spent time making sure us across the WINTAC work well together. So it's really important for us to

understand things like how do we consistently and accurately report supported employment and section 511 closures. Or where and how do states document business services and co-enrollment with core partners? We want to make sure we're giving you consistent TA.

So, for example, student with disability means one thing but for performance we're talking about the same student but the definition and documentation requirement for credentials and skill gain are different. We have to make sure we have an understanding of where components align and where they do not.

We have a really amazing working relationship with RSA. We're able to discuss questions and concerns as well as with you what supports you need. And we host many webinars and trainings to make sure our message is consistent. I hope this overview has been helpful. I know I talked really fast. It's not all the activities we're doing with states or have plans for the future. I'm going to turn it over to Russ who will discuss business engagement.

>> Russ Thelin: Thank you, Rachel. It's my pleasure to spend a little time talking about business engagement.

Business engagement is in so many ways has been a part of the VR culture for several years at various levels with different state initiatives and the CS AVR net making it a greater presence within the vocational rehabilitation community. But with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the requirements for working with businesses to serve their business needs are pretty well articulated both in the act itself and regulatory language and one of the particular common performance measures that Rachel was just talking about.

Through the job-driven vocational rehabilitation technical assistance center and going forward now through the WINTAC, technical assistance is available to state agencies to meet business engagement expectations, plans, and needs, and those types of things. And it's a pleasure to have ICI working as a partner with the WINTAC on this particular topic going forward.

When we talk about the philosophy and overview, we're really talking about methods, there was one on which vocational rehabilitation engages with business in meeting their

particular need and at the same time building the capacity to improve employment outcomes for the consumers of the VR agencies.

What we do is use and build on promising and emerging job-driven strategies that have emerged over the past few years through the -- the opportunities we have had to test things to establish standards and watch some of those things that come out that are successful and help those develop into our states but also see what we can do to take them to the next level.

One of the things that we have found is the need to align on three particular levels when it comes to business engagement in order for it to be most effective. Business engagement really requires effort on the level of within the agency itself for consistency state-wide within the VR agency, then working at the next level among the partner entities within the workforce system to help create that consistency and the quality of services to business within that level as well, and then lastly to make sure there's alignment with businesses themselves.

And services we've been providing are going to focus on helping in each of those three particular levels including some data collection mechanisms that we'll talk about in just a moment that relate to demonstrating how business engagement activities are being done and hopefully some of the results of that as well.

This slide takes the types of work we've been doing with states and breaks it into four generally categorical areas. We've done a lot of this in a number of different states through intensive technical assistance is the development of business relation units, helping create positions within the agencies and also reclassify exist positions or create new positions to help meet the effort in business engagement as a distinct part of the agency's culture and operations.

A lot of work has been done with a variety of states in creating job descriptions and performance matrices to help process engagement and get it in place and working.

We have been able to establish a number of different -- we've been able to help states develop some tracking systems that help capture those business engagement requirements to meet that performance measure on showing engagement with businesses as well as communicating and having marketing materials developed for states to utilize where they provide their services.

The second area talks about increasing the use of labor market information using it as a counseling tool to help with informed choice, to conduct pre- and post-survey on the labor market average and the degree to which that has been helpful and providing market information resource for agencies to utilize so that that information becomes part and parcel of the counseling process that goes in place.

Number three talks about implementing career pathway approaches. A lot of technical assistance around the utilization of the Department of Labor career lattices and engaging with job link, helping develop training for staff and creating an online toolkit. Chaz mentioned earlier the ExploratoryVR.org website which if you've not had a chance I encourage you to go to that website where at some point in the near future that will be available on the WINTAC website as well.

I'd like to talk about establishing business partnership for engagement. A lot of our assistance has been around creating memorandum or engagements within the workforce system and designing communication strategies for business engagement service and for job development.

And when we talk about that strategies for that focus on job development is a really different animal than business engagement services. There is an overlap to some degree but they really are different animals. And one of the efforts that we have found ourselves providing technical assistance on for a number of states is finding the bridge between those two efforts within the agency to make it work effectively for meeting the business needs that exist out there.

And then, again, talking about some shared database and employers and activities to help capture the work that is being done by VR agencies in business engagement and showing the effort there that can both help with continuous improvement of those services within the agency but also to make sure that the agency has information they can share with RSA as they need to under the common performance measures.

This is a really quick overview and would be happy to entertain any specific questions you have with this going forward. But let me turn the time over to Jeffrey Hughes who will be talking to us about labor market information and career index plus.

>> Jeffrey Hughes: Hi, good afternoon and good morning. When we talk about labor information or LMI we are discussing the qualitative and quantitative information that is used by administrators and leaders of agencies on the employment opportunities we have for clients.

So in direct reference to vocational rehabilitation, they were kind enough to define LMI more vocational rehabilitation purposes. And so the first way they define it is they define it as traditional LMI -- aggregated data that we have about current economic trends that occur within geographic areas. So this would include things such as employment growth projections, unemployment rates, average wages, educational requirements and those data that exist.

So a second type of LMI, then, is called real-time LMI. And this real-time data is current and it's from employers in the local area. And this is coming from job postings, local employer demand or, you know, microtrends that have been seen over the course of a few weeks or a few months -- but this is stuff that's coming directly and emerging from the local area and in real time as well.

And so the third type of LMI, then, that they identify is these activities that are being undertaken by VR agencies themselves. And a lot of the engagement activities that was discussed earlier by Russ, that's included within that. And then also that includes partnerships with employers and activities states have been doing for quite some time.

So understanding what labor market is, is one thing. But for VR counselors and for VR clients, we want to think about how we access it in a comprehensible and accessible manner. And we want a location where all of this data is available. And this is challenging because labor market information comes from a variety of sources. It comes from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, state workforce departments, you have your job boards and posting boards such as indeed.com or monster Jobs, Department of Ed, occupational handbook and several other places that this data comes from.

And so because of all of this, this is why at the WINTAC we focus our technical efforts on the career index plus. I will refer to it as TCI plus is an online creation system and this system provides access to an abundance of labor market information elements I mentioned before all within a single streamlined systematic approach of a program. And that is why we like to focus on this.

So we recommend using TCI. Number one, it has been free for the developers and intends to remain free. And this is important because it provides a long-term solution to VR agency's LMI needs as something that is available and out there and has been updated and has been in existence for years now.

The second point of why we recommend it is because it is a clearinghouse and it has all of this data at one place. So a VR professional can access all of this data and access can very simply. I mean, it's all there and so that's an important fact as well.

The third thing that TCI Plus is a unique profile section where the VR participant can actually go in and enter their personal data, their preferences about work, and then this data can then be cross-referenced back to occupations. And the system calls it a fit, but this is a unique way to basically empower clients to go into and use the system for self-determination for their own informed choice.

And last thing is TCI plus was built from the ground up with VR counselors in mind but it was built with the assistance of VR counselors. And as a direct result of this last point it's always improving based on input. And that makes it a very powerful for VR counselors.

As a direct result of our interactions through WINTAC we have had some pretty exciting things happen across the US with VR agencies. So up on the screen here you'll see a few different things. So we'll briefly cover each of them. For instance, in Iowa we are working with the Iowa department for the blind on a counselor-driven pilot. And so as that says, we are actually working with counselors directly. Meeting the developing needs of the agency as they are growing and trying to meet the WIOA standards and the new changes within.

And so we're actually looking at how we can integrate LMI into their transition activities, into their IPE development, and also into identifying potential growth industries that their business outreach, their business engagement activities would be able to identify.

And so these types of activities as far as in-person trainings and those things, these are actually being done and documented with TCI plus and that's, again, a very exciting thing that's happening out there in Iowa.

In Arkansas, we are working with the Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Agency on a five-pronged pilot. And we are using LMI, again, access through the career index plus with clients directly through their client orientation process. We are also looking at LMI during the IPE process which we'll cover in a minute which is the main way states are using LMI. In addition, Arkansas also is looking at informed choice through the life of a case, they're also looking at job placement activities their staff perform. And they're looking at pre-employment transition services and using this resource in order to facilitate those services as well.

The next one is Mississippi. And actually it's listed on the screen but there are several other screens that are doing this exact same type of thing which include Florida, the South Carolina commission for the blind and a district out in California where we are focusing our efforts on using labor market information within TCI plus during IPE development.

And, again, in these scenarios we're definitely looking at how we are able to integrate TCI plus into their programming.

And then finally, we have provided overviews and trainings to a multitude of agencies, including New Jersey, blind, Massachusetts, Idaho, California, among others. So if your agency's interested in learning more about labor market information and the career index plus, please let us know how we can help. Thank you very much. We'll introduce Nikki for apprenticeships.

>> Nikki Powis: Great, thanks so much. And hi, everybody. Good morning or afternoon. As Jeff mentioned, I work for the national disability institute under WINTAC. I'm going to go quickly because we're running a little bit late.

Apprenticeship was mentioned at the beginning is a new area. We have included when we come out and say it's been done career pathways because it's a gold standard of career pathways and meets all the check marks for measurable skills gain and credential attainment. And it's immediately a [INAUDIBLE] employment situation. So really is a wonderful model to look at.

Some of them things we're looking at is assisting VR agencies in development strategies to increase individuals with disabilities into apprenticeship programs. They're

definitely underrepresented throughout the nation. Providing guidance and support in identifying existing registered apprenticeship sponsors. And within each of your states facilitate coordination and broaden the scope and figure out how can you bring disability as a viable pipeline of apprentices to the table

And then provide training and TA to increase the understanding of what WIOA's vision around apprenticeship is. We have the president's executive order expanding apprenticeship. And then there's updates to the apprenticeship equal opportunity. There's regulatory changes that now requires sponsors to have apprenticeship programs to have a utilization goal of 7% for individuals with disabilities. So that gives us some leverage to take to employers.

And apprenticeship fits really well with everything we've talked about. It's a way to increase performance measures and meet things Rachel talked about. Obviously because it's driven by employers and meet employer need and providing individuals to, you know, be viable employees through the apprenticeship model. It is definitely business engagement and meeting that as a customer base.

Obviously it's paid employment usually in higher fields. It's definitely in an integrated segment. If you think about apprenticeship as a roadmap that's productive and worthy of energy as creating this as part of your service flow, it can help take care of some of those other things we've already talked about.

So some of the things we've already done, we always include apprenticeship as part of any career pathway discussion we have talking about the presidential executive order EEO regulation. Also sort of really talking through some pre-apprenticeship as precursor and how do VR agencies really tap into that? Looking the management and field training to really increase awareness of apprenticeship opportunities. Some people really look at apprenticeship as being a blue collar unionized process and that's not the case.

Apprenticeship goes across multiple non-unionized, non-blue collar industries as well.

We've done some webinars on apprenticeship. We've highlighted the Pennsylvania VR model. We've highlighted some apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship things and that's available at the WINTAC website under the career pathways community of practice.

We're going to also put together another community of practice or sort of forum for sharing experiences from states that are currently working on this and have emerging practices and then those that really are wanting to get into looking at how they can increase their service flow and really looking at putting apprenticeship as a viable option in plan or, you know, having that be customer-driven and something to look towards.

In the future we're looking to come in and facilitate discussions and coordination with offices and look at what does that look like. As I mentioned, developing that forum or community of practice. Assisting VR agencies and actually looking at creating and expanding registered apprenticeship in your state. It can be something that VR can take leadership in and you can have just one employer that's willing to take on an apprentice and create a registered apprenticeship.

And then really looking at the recognition of the role of partnership plus and other follow-along services because most apprenticeship programs are fairly lengthy. And because it is an earn and learn model, people are employed from day one. So you may choose to exit them and who supports that apprentice as they go forward through the journey level? Looking at the blend and braiding of funding and cross over into what Doug mentioned about the integration effort with the workflow system.

So really quickly, that's sort of it in a nutshell where we're going, what we're doing and why you might want to get involved. We really are looking for states that are wanting some help and assistance around this as a modality to move forward in these areas. You have our contact information. We're happy to help anybody interested in moving forward. Back to Betsy for questions.

>> Betsy Hopkins: Thank you for sharing all the information. It doesn't seem -- it seems like we had a question during your presentation but it was answered throughout your presentation. I haven't seen any other questions that have come at this time.

So I think, then, I'll turn it back to you, Chaz.

>> Chaz Compton: Okay, thank you. And if folks can have questions in the next several minutes, please let us know. We'll be happy to answer those. And we hope that this little opportunity to share with you what the center is doing around the different topic areas has

been helpful. If you are interested in any kind of technical assistance at whatever level around any of these areas, please don't hesitate to reach out to us. You can do that through your state liaison which hopefully all of you know who that is. If you don't, it can be found on the website on the state liaison tab.

Each of the VR programs has a liaison with the WINTAC, you can also request technical assistance on the website. Many of you have done that and we try to respond the same day whenever possible.

We understand that you guys are very, very busy, that there's competing demands everywhere and we want technical assistance to be a value to you and a benefit and not a burden in terms of work. All the whatever level we can help, we hope that you'll take advantage of that and let us assist you.

We hope that the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act is something that has been -- we know it's been demanding but we hope it's been positive and we think it's a good law, that it has a lot of very positive implications for individuals with disabilities in terms of getting them to access the workforce development system at a greater rate and more integrated rate and having VR programs be the partners, you know, integrated and important partner with these programs.

As we go forward from this point and, you know, we expand a number of resources that are available to you in terms of topic areas, we want you to take advantage of those and don't let any opportunity for your agency go by where we could be of assistance. So with that, we'll say thank you very much.

>> Sean O'Brien: Chaz?

>> Chaz Compton: Yes?

>> Sean O'Brien: This is Sean. Looks like a question from Nikki.

>> Chaz Compton: Yeah, that one was already answered. That request was -- Nikki answered it in the course of her presentation. If there's nothing else, thank you very

much for your time today. Thank you to the panelists and good luck out there. We'll talk with you soon. Bye-bye.