This document is a synopsis of research previously completed or currently underway through the RRTC-EBP VR. This work is established at both the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the University of Wisconsin-Stout through a grant from the Department of Education, National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR), grant number PR#H133B100034. Research partners at Michigan State University, the University of Texas-El Paso, and Southern University have also been instrumental partners and contributors to the research.
Phase I Research

Using a multi-level analysis, the RRTC looked at the Rehabilitation Services Administration’s (RSA) 911 data across a 3-year timeframe (FY 2007-2009) to arrive at these findings:

Consumers most likely to achieve quality employment outcomes through VR possess the following characteristics:

- Male
- Higher educational attainment
- Sensory disability (followed by physical and psychiatric disability, then by developmental disability)
- Non-significant disability
- Not receiving disability benefits

Environmental and Individual Factors Matter.

- At the national level, environmental factors (i.e. economic indicators and state agency characteristics) had a moderate impact on employment quality and outcomes. Individual and disability-related characteristics had a stronger influence on both employment quality and outcomes than did the economy and state VR agency characteristics.
- At the state level, state economic factors were associated with quality of employment outcomes and states’ variations in employment quality. Caseload size and order of selection (state agency characteristics) explained states’ variations in employment outcome.

Specific factors result in higher quality of employment (measured by wage, number of hours worked, and benefits received) for consumers:

- VR Services
- Job placement assistance
- Educational change during VR

Phase II Research

The RRTC used findings from Phase I as the basis for multiple case studies with VR agencies. Our research focused on highlighting agencies that have been relatively successful in establishing promising practices and could serve as models to learn from in the delivery of services.

Rather than selecting VR agencies randomly, the RRTC identified states that had developed effective models of delivering of services that set them apart in performance from other state agencies, based on Phase I data. The RRTC also considered guidance from the advisory council, data available through the Phase I studies using RSA 911 data, survey data from state agencies regarding best or promising practices in public rehabilitation, and nominations of exemplary states from other state agencies.
Following are examples of promising practices that resulted in improved employment and quality of employment outcomes in the four states studied:

**Organizational Promising Practices:**

**Incubator Unit**
- The development of “incubator units” where new approaches to service delivery are piloted may have merit for implementation throughout the agency or in certain areas of the state

**SharePoint**
- Use of the web based “SharePoint” site that the agency calls “Replicating Success” to share innovative practice and manage employer/business accounts

**New Approach to Customer Service/Dual-Customers**
- Excellent Service, Every Customer, Every Time (E3)
- Heightened employer relations
- Business development programs
- Dedicated employment coordinators

**Rapid Response and Internal Service Delivery**

**Specialized Caseloads and Counselors**
- Transition
- Supported Employment
- Blind/Deaf

**Professional and Leadership Development**

**Service Delivery Promising Practices:**

**Maryland**
- **Specific Promising Practices**
  Benefits Counseling, Maryland Seamless Transition Collaborative (MYSTC), Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Program, Supported Employment, Staffing (3 levels of counselors and support staff), Braided Funding/Partnerships, Evaluation, Idea Development, Training, Sustainability

- **Organizational Promising Practices**
  Innovation/Best Practices, Resources/Funding, Use of Technology and Data, Evaluation, Policy and Process, Culture of Creativity and Flexibility, Partnership
Mississippi

- **Specific Promising Practices**
  Ability Works/LINCS (rapid response & internal service delivery), Smart Work Ethics (soft skills training), Business Development Program and Employment Coordinators, Specialized Coordinators/Counselors/Caseloads

- **Organizational Promising Practices**
  Business Model, Leader Continuity with a Focus on Performance, Monitoring and Accountability, Communication and Constituent Relations, Training and Staff Development, Support for Innovative Practice, Recognition

Texas

- **Specific Promising Practices**
  Incubator Units, Replicating Success (SharePoint), Excellent Customer Service (E3 and Four Way Test coaching model), Distinct Culture Shift (promotes flexibility in service delivery, reduced reliance on bureaucratic procedures, increased flexibility in service delivery), Valforce (outsourcing non-essential VR functions)

- **Organizational Promising Practices**
  Culture Shift, Transformational Leadership, Processes and Systems Alignment, Technology, Partnerships, Resources, Staff Recognition, Evaluation, Training

Utah

- **Specific Promising Practices**
  Employer Relations, Supported Job Based Training and Supported Employment, Work Incentive Planning Services, Choose to Work, Defendant Offender Workforce Development Taskforce, and Career Exploration Services

- **Organizational Promising Practices**
  Partnerships and Collaboration, Recognition, Increasing Visibility, Community Outreach, Communication, Quality Outcomes Evaluation

**PHASE III RESEARCH**

The following research projects are currently underway:

**Evaluating the International Classification of Function (ICF) as a VR Model**

Preliminary findings indicate that several ICF predictors (medical benefits, perceived stigma, social support, work tolerance, work communication skills, hope, etc.) are strongly associated with employment outcomes of people with disabilities. Over three hundred participants completed the survey designed to assess the ICF model in VR. The RRTC is conducting a preliminary analysis of data and validating the psychological instruments developed specifically for this study (e.g., the Engagement in VR Scale).
Motivation to Work
The RRTC is evaluating Bandura’s social cognitive career theory and Deci and Ryan’s (2002) self-determination theory as a motivation to work model for people with disabilities. We are also developing and validating an instrument to measure motivation to work and will provide it to VR counselors as a resource.

Motivational Interviewing/Motivation to Work Curriculum
The RRTC has developed a Motivational Interviewing (MI) motivation to work curriculum. Dr. Trevor Manthey, a national MI expert, has completed his review of the curriculum and his feedback is being integrated into the materials. We are planning to conduct a randomized-control trial of the curriculum in Wisconsin, Texas, and Florida.

VR Counselors’ Toolkit
We are developing a toolkit that will include evidence-based resources for VR counselors to use in practice to assess and improve consumer motivation to work. The toolkit will be finalized once the research noted above has been completed.

Evidence-Based Practice VR Survey
Our intent is to identify the needs of rehabilitation professionals in regard to evidence-based practice. Researchers have completed the survey of counselors in four state VR agencies (TX, MS, MD, and UT) with N=445. We are currently collecting data from community-based rehabilitation organization personnel (N=214).