DRAFT

RRTC on Advancing Employment for Individuals with IDD

July, 2017

State of the Science Paper

Delivering the most effective employment supports:

Organizational design and capacity building

Brief Summary

INTRODUCTION

The Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) on Advancing Employment for

Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, a research project housed at the

Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at the University of Massachusetts Boston, and part of

the ICI's ThinkWork! Initiative, has employed a group of projects to promote community

employment for people with IDD.

The RRTC's work covers 4 main strands:

Strand 1. Sharing knowledge with and supporting individuals and families around employment;

Strand 2. Increasing the effectiveness of employment consultants;

Strand 3. Building capacity and supporting organizational change for community rehabilitation

providers; and

Strand 4. Furthering policies and practices of high-performing state employment systems.

This brief provides a summary of a paper on organizational design and capacity building, using findings from Strand 2 (effective employment consultants) and Strand 3 (capacity building and organizational change for community providers).

BACKGROUND

Expectations that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) are viewed as valued contributors to the workforce are growing. Despite continued development and refinement of best practices in employment services and supports aiming to increase workforce participation over the past two decades, the number of individuals supported in integrated employment has remained stagnant for the past fifteen years, participation in non-work services has grown rapidly, and individual employment supports are not implemented with fidelity to a consistent model or expectations (Butterworth et al, 2016). Many individuals with IDD use employment supports and services to assist them in finding, securing, and maintaining employment through a service provider. Service providers, however, are experiencing changes related to funding and expected outcomes, including priorities around transforming employment supports away from sheltered settings towards integrated employment.

This brief aims to share information learned from two studies: 1) interviews with employment consultants; and 2) a Delphi process to determine what characteristics are most critical for organizational transformation from facility-based to community-based integrated employment for people with IDD. The relationship between study findings will be explored and a relational model will be introduced.

FINDINGS

Qualitative interviews with employment consultants

The overall goal of this research is to support employment consultants' use of best and promising practices by describing: what employment consultants actually do to help people find jobs; a holistic model for employment support; and an intervention that provides integrated training and data-based performance feedback for employment consultants. The work is guided by this research question: '*How do effective employment specialists implement supports, and how do they make decisions about which support activities to emphasize and implement with each job seeker?*'

Interviews were conducted with 43 employment consultants and their supervisors, job-seekers with IDD, and families of job-seekers with IDD. Interviews revealed four key areas of support for assisting job seekers: 1) getting to know the job seeker; 2) finding jobs; 3) providing other supports before hire; and 4) providing support after hire. Figure 1 illustrates these four key themes and characteristics of each.

Figure 1. Key areas of support for assisting job seekers
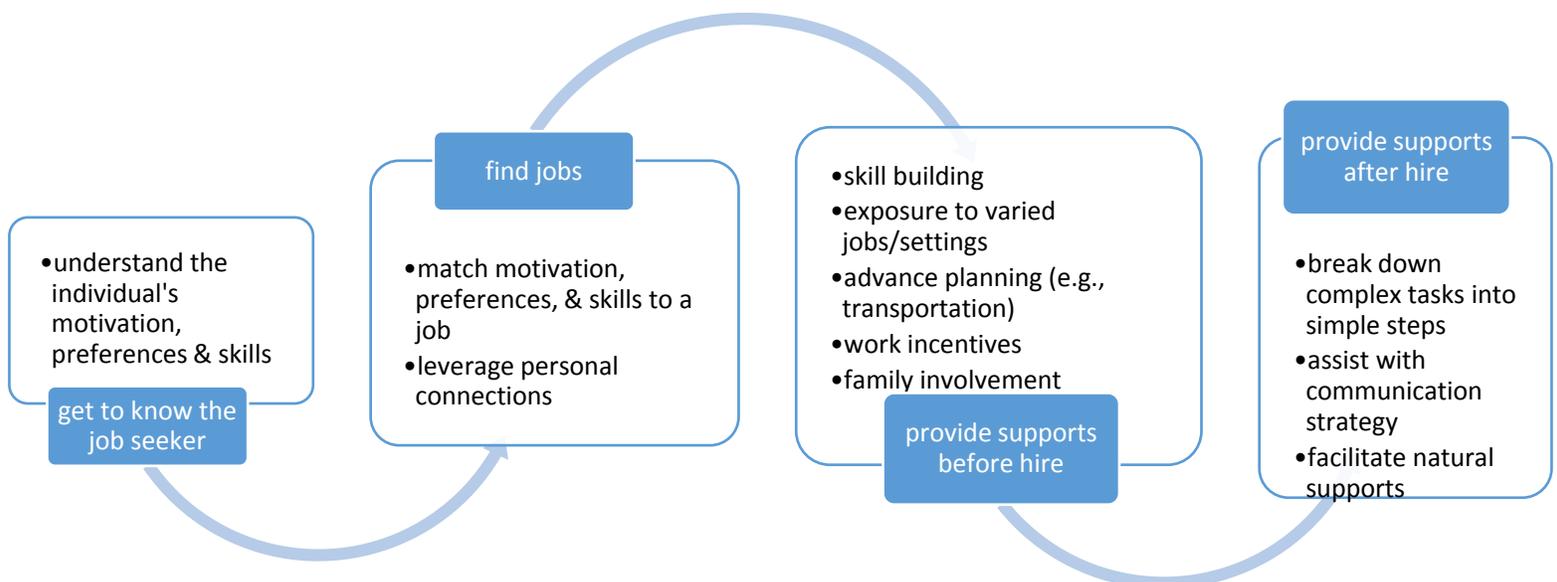
Delphi panel on organizational transformation

In this project, the research explored the following question: '*What are the most important features necessary for successful organizational transformation to support competitive integrated employment outcomes and full engagement in community life?*' A Delphi process was used to collect information from 36 professionals (including trainers, field leaders, family members of people with IDD, and self-advocates) regarding the most essential elements of organizational transformation based on previous work by Butterworth et al. (2007)

Table 1: Ranked Elements and Definitions shown in descending order of importance

Rank	Name of Element	Definition of Element
1	Clear and consistent goals	An explicit commitment to increasing competitive integrated employment. Goals must be measurable, compelling, easy to grasp, directly reflective of the core mission, modifiable, specific to an established time frame, and reflect the needs of individuals.
2	An agency culture that values inclusion	Establishing a culture that values supporting individuals in the community rather than in facilities, positive thinking, learning, creativity, innovation, and continuous quality improvement.
3	An active, person-centered job placement process	Proactive job-finding one person at a time. This "just do it" approach creates momentum as successful employment outcomes are achieved and celebrated.
4	A strong internal and external communications plan	Communicating clear, authentic expectations for competitive integrated employment. Internally, this includes all levels of staff, individuals, families, and board members. Externally, it's marketing services in the community.
5	Reallocated and restructured resources	Active and ongoing investment in realigning all fiscal, material, and staff resources in order to put into place the supports and services needed for increasing competitive integrated employment.
6	An ongoing investment in staff professional	Frequent and ongoing training, continuing education, conference participation, and mentorship opportunities to develop and maintain staff's core competencies and to

|	development	implement best practices.
7	A focus on customer engagement	Engagement with customer groups including individuals, families, funders, and other community partners. It also means engaging with new and existing business partners to meet both individual and market needs.
8	Effective employment performance measurement, quality assurance, and program oversight	Establishing a clear framework for implementing and measuring administrative, management, and program strategies over defined periods of time in order to determine the impact and success of efforts.
9	A holistic approach	Consideration of the whole person with wrap-around life supports, and use of a career planning process that involves staff, parents, and friends, and include any accommodations, including assistive technology.
10	Multiple and diverse community partnerships	Partnerships can include school districts, state agency offices such as vocational rehabilitation, faith-based and/or civic organizations, and transportation resources.

SYNTHESIS

The ten transformational elements can be conceptualized within three essential components: 1) focus and values, 2) agency infrastructure, and 3) employment consultant practices. Effective employment practices can only thrive in organizations where a clear focus, values, and infrastructure are present. Meanwhile, organizational focus and values are carried out and disseminated through practices of employment consultants. While organizational elements of focus, values, and infrastructure create conditions that are conducive to successful organizational transformation, a comprehensive change effort must include an emphasis on promising employment consultant practices among front-line staff. Figure 2 highlights the relationships between organizational elements and employment consultant practices.

Figure 2: The intersection between organizational design and capacity building
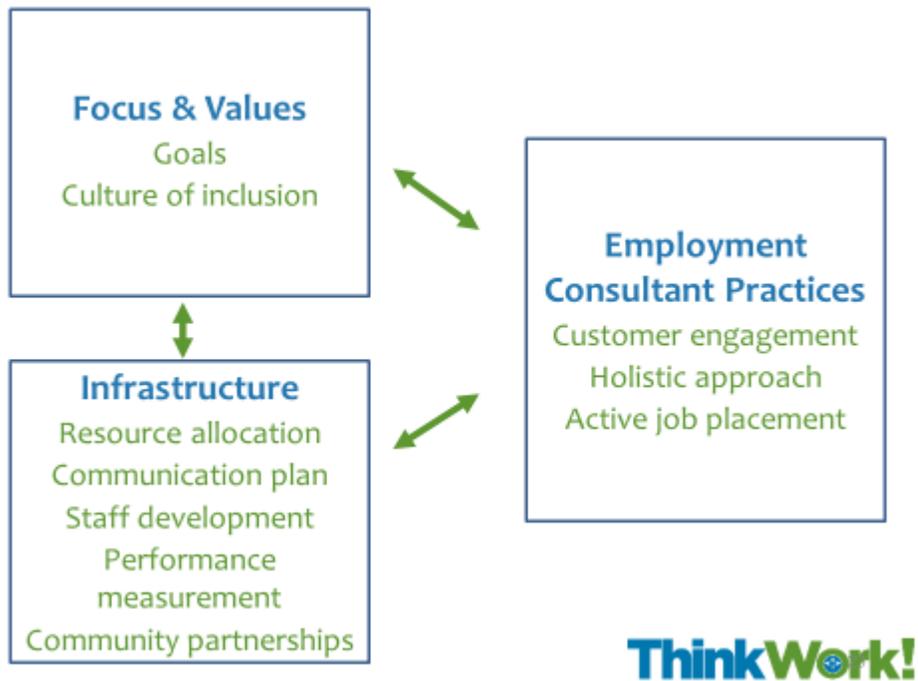
Focus and values. An organization's focus and values provides the groundwork from which to build a road map for practices, directions, and priorities. Key themes are: 1) agency goals and 2) culture and values.

Goals. Delphi panelists highlighted the importance of clear and uncompromising goals in supporting organizational transformation, which are measurable, compelling, and easy to grasp, directly reflective of the core mission, modifiable, specific to an established timeframe, and reflect the needs of the individuals supported. These goals are critical to employment consultants, providing a framework for performance expectations.

Culture and values around inclusion. Delphi panelists explained that agencies needed to

establish cultures that explicitly and visibly value supporting individuals in the community rather than in facilities. An agency culture that values inclusion as core commitment seeks to engage individuals and their families, all levels of staff, and the community at large, in reciprocal, mutually beneficial relationships**.** The culture also must value positive thinking, learning, creativity, innovation, and continuous quality improvement in order to achieve authentic community engagement for the individuals they support. This culture guides the work of all staff including employment consultants, who execute the functions of their jobs within their own sets of values and philosophies around inclusion.

Infrastructure. A second component of the model is organizational infrastructure. An organization's programs, policies, and practices can impact employment consultant practices, while also enabling or obstructing organizational transformation. While all the Delphi elements related to agency infrastructure are relevant to employment consultant activities and capacities, resource allocation, professional development, and community partnerships in particular directly converge with the front line.

Resource allocation. Transformation requires an active and ongoing investment in realigning resources. Thus, an organization must prioritize the re-allocation of resources toward building and maintaining the capacity of their employment consultants to effectively deliver the most effective strategies.

Staff development. An ongoing investment in staff professional development highlights an organization's commitment to developing their employees' core competencies and continual improvement through frequent and ongoing training, continuing education, conference

participation, and mentorship opportunities. Training, in addition to provider commitment to skill development and knowledge acquisition of employment consultants, provides a general framework of key aspects of the supported employment process. Beyond training and hiring, an investment in team building among employment consultants and mentoring was also seen as useful.

Community partnerships. Providers must engage other organizations and state systems to create buy-in for the transformation process. These partnerships provide a range of resources including new funding opportunities, expanded employment and community membership, exploration opportunities for job seekers, and resources that build job seeker human and social capital. Organizational partnerships also support networking efforts and the development of professional connections of employment consultants at the individual level.

Employment Consultant Practices. Effective employment consultant practices represent the third and final component of the conceptual model. Organizational transformation and support practices of employment consultants both require an emphasis on customer engagement and a holistic approach.

Customer engagement. Providers must engage with their two main customer groups: individuals and families, as well as new and existing business partners, to meet both individual and market needs. Engaging individuals at the outset supports them to envision themselves in varied employment roles and prompts open conversation where fears can be shared and assurances can be developed. Engagement with employers creates further employment opportunities for individuals and helps to build a coalition of expanded advocates for integrated employment and community integration in general. Approaching employers using business

language and demonstrating the likelihood of increased revenue and efficiency has proven successful.

Holistic approach. Delphi panelists indicated that providers must consider the whole person, include wrap-around life supports, and use a career planning process that involves staff, parents, and friends and respects the relationships, activities, and life priorities that are important to a person (i.e., accommodations, including assistive technology). The inclusion of multiple perspectives while still placing the job seeker at the center of the process was seen as a highly effective approach to job attainment.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The synthesis of these studies reveal that the combination of organizational transformation (focus, values, and infrastructure) and employment consultant practices support a comprehensive model of employment supports. Organizational transformation cannot occur without a strong workforce of employment consultants, and employment consultants perform their most effective work within a high-functioning organizational culture.

The ten essential elements identified by the Delphi panel in have great impact on the strategies and approaches that in turn affect the quality of services and outcomes for job seekers as described by employment consultants. Future research should explore the impact of organizational culture on employment outcomes, through employment consultant practices. In addition, a better understanding of effective employment practices is critical to developing a strong employment consultant workforce that is prepared to support the changing needs of job seekers in the face of policy and system changes.