

# Middle-Skill Jobs + Employer Focused Services

Equals a Winning Combination for  
VR Consumers

Ryan Stamm - Nebraska VR

Bob Burns - ICI/UMass Boston

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# Goals of the Session

\*\*Provide context for the importance and relevance of Middle-Skill Jobs for PwDs

\*\*Discuss Nebraska VR's work (past and future) focused on Middle-Skill Jobs

\*\*Overview of the new NIDRR-RRTC - VR and Strategies to Meet Employer Needs in a Changing Economic Environment

# Middle-Skill Jobs - A Gateway to Economic Self-Sufficiency

1. Middle-Skill Jobs (MSJs) defined as requiring an educational level more than HS diploma but less than bachelor's degree
2. Examples - two-year Associate Arts degree, one-year technical certificate, or occupational license
3. In 2006, about 50 percent of all jobs nationally were classified as middle-skill, but only 44 percent of workers had the education and training required to fill those positions.

(Holzer and Lerman 2007)



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# Middle-Skill Jobs - A Gateway to Economic Self-Sufficiency

**Substantial demand remains for individuals to fill skilled jobs in the middle of the labor market, with many jobs there paying quite high wages.**

This is particularly true for jobs that require an associate's degree or some particular vocational training and certification  
(Workforce Alliance, Skills2Compete, 2007)

# Middle-Skill Jobs - A Gateway to Economic Self-Sufficiency

The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that nearly half (about 45 percent) of all job openings between 2004 and 2014 will be in middle-skill occupations.

This compares with one-third (33 percent) of job openings in the high-skill occupational categories and 22 percent in the service occupations.

For example, for middle-skill jobs, BLS projects that:

- Expected net growth in a range of health care jobs with sub-baccalaureate education and training requirements will vary from 20 to 40 percent, adding more than 1.5 million job openings.
- Employment in five skilled construction crafts is expected to grow by 10 to 15 percent and provide 4.6 million job openings, while those in installation/maintenance/repair and transportation will grow at similar rates and together generate more than 4 million additional openings.

# Middle-Skill Jobs - A Gateway to Economic Self-Sufficiency

"Overall, we conclude that demand for both middle-level and high-level skills is likely to grow more rapidly than the supply of these services over the next decade and beyond—both overall and within key sectors"

(Holzer and Lerman 2009)

(2011 Median Wages)

Carpet Installers - \$40,650

Construction Laborers - \$34,170

Physical Therapist Asst. - \$51,110

OT Assistant- \$52,150

OT Aide - \$31,770

Police Officer - \$56,260

Parking Enforcement Officer - \$36,090

# The Nebraska Experience

Find an industry and connect the partners.  
What is the most important piece?

Benefits to business? Benefits to students?  
Benefits to VR?

# The Nebraska Experience

Process- Prescreen, Employability Class,  
Class Schedule, Success

We didn't know what we didn't know?

Interests, Time Commitment

We all want #1 student in class

# The Nebraska Experience

Success vs. Soon to be successes

Empowerment= Strengths + Abilities



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# NIDRR-Funded Rehabilitation Research and Training Center

- Five-year (5) project started October 2012
- ICI/UMass Boston in partnership with three SVRAs - Alabama, Nebraska and Vermont
- Emphasis on communities of practice (CoP) with a four (4) state Learning Collaborative
- New England Council is also a partner; an association of over 400 businesses
- Principal Investigator: Dr. Susan Foley, ICI Director of Research ([Susan.Foley@umb.edu](mailto:Susan.Foley@umb.edu))



# Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services

- integrating labor market and business relations data into business intelligence and planning strategically
- effective use of Labor Market Information (LMI) by VR administrators, managers and counselors
- methods to align agency resources with LMI and emerging business trends (planning strategically)
- testing Dashboards for efficient and effective use of LMI and other business intelligence



# Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

- testing an emerging and piloted model of a "no risk, low risk" dual customer job placement services created by VT DVR
- rapid placement approach (rural area implications) with a "try before you buy" component
- incorporates options for temporary work, internships, work-study, information interviews, volunteerism
- model will be tested in four state VR agencies using a Learning Collaborative (LC) approach



# Project Deliverables

- Research Activities - determine effective ways for SVRAs to assess employer needs; identify planning models for SVRAs to integrate business intelligence into agency priorities; identify existing programs that support the mission of SVRA's work with employers
- Dissemination Activities
- Training Activities- continuing education of SVRA staff; long-term training
- Technical Assistance Activities



# Discussion

## Questions and Answers

- Robert Burns

Institute for Community Inclusion

University of Massachusetts

Robert.Burns@umb.edu

- Ryan Stamm

Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation

ryan.stamm@nebraska.gov