

Director's Report December 2, 2021

Pandemic Update:

We have implemented our hybrid work model beginning the first week in November. We have allowed supervisors flexibility in the implementation given the high case counts and increasing positivity rate and the fact staff may have unvaccinated children and may be caring for an immune compromised adult or be so themselves. For those of us who are not public facing (for the most part) we are having discussions about intentional teaming during our in-office time. Concern is high given the uncertainty around the new variant. We continue to be very productive with our remote work.

Budget:

We remain in very solid fiscal shape. We are rolling out many of our reallocation projects.

Paid Training and Paid Work Experiences:

We have rolled out paid work experiences and paying minimum wages for consumers to attend training leading to credentials. Too early to have any real data. Remain hopeful it will lead to credentials and higher wage jobs for consumers.

Summer Career Exploration Program:

Our summer employment program was wildly successful. We had about 155 participants working for 110 different employers. We did a comprehensive assessment of students, employers and youth teams with very positive feedback. This was our first year and there were many lessons learned. A "how to" manual has been written and is about to roll out to staff. We are starting early! A major recommendation from field staff.

VT Career Opportunities Program:

We were funded! A \$6.6 million-dollar five-year grant to support credential attainment and higher wage jobs for Vermonters with disabilities. Rich Tulikangas will serve as project director. We will be adding 6 VR counselor navigators, one

for each region. In addition, we will be funding two staff from CCV and VTC to support our customers to obtain certifications and credentials via these two institutions. This project will be transformational to our agency over the five years!

Rebranding:

HireAbility will be rolling out in a comprehensive marketing campaign at the end of January. We are in the process of implementing an internal communication plan to staff and an external communication plan to partners so we are ready for the roll out. It is a very exciting time to be messaging a new, fresh look and feel and shedding our old “rehabilitation” identity.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:

We have selected a vendor and are in the process of writing a contract with Social Contract to identify an organization to work alongside of us on this journey of organizational change. They have a four-phase blueprint for this work. Once the contract is executed, we should invite them to an SRC meeting.

Kessler Project:

The Kessler Project is rolling in our Burlington and Rutland offices, and we have expanded to Newport and Barre. VABIR finally has access to contact information for all ticket holders in Vermont so we can direct market to them. We are learning already that we should not attempt to protect people’s benefits. It is their decision! Early outcomes are wonderful.

National Association of State Workforce Agencies: Amanda, Alice Porter and I were invited to meet with a subgroup of NASWA for Alice and Amanda to present their power point on our dashboard and systems change work driven by the WIOA Common Performance Measures. It was very well received, and the RSA member Chris Pope was very complimentary after the presentation. Go Amanda and Alice!

Winter is here. Happy Holidays. Diane