

**Vermont**

**State Rehabilitation Council**

**Annual Report 2022**



**WHERE ABILITY  
MEETS OPPORTUNITY**



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# State Rehabilitation Councils (SRCs)

## Joelle Brouner, Washington State Rehabilitation Council Executive Director, (used with permission)

State Rehabilitation Councils were born out of the tradition of effective advocacy by people with disabilities committed to the success of the publicly- funded Vocational Rehabilitation program. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was the first disability civil rights law to be enacted in the United States. The victory was marred when the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) delayed endorsement of the regulations needed to implement the law.

By April of 1977, frustration mounted and disability- rights advocates took direct action by leading sit-ins in Washington, D.C., New York, and San Francisco to pressure HEW to issue the regulations. While the protests in Washington and New York were short- lived, advocates in San Francisco persisted. They occupied the offices of HEW for four weeks.

As a consequence, Joseph Califano, the secretary of HEW, endorsed the regulations.

The Rehabilitation Act is the federal law that establishes the publicly-funded Vocational Rehabilitation Program as we know it today.

The advocacy did not end in 1977. Since that time disability-rights advocates have continued work in service of a system that affords opportunities for customers of the Vocational Rehabilitation program to have more choices on their journeys toward employment.

During the reauthorization process of the Rehabilitation Act in 1993, advocates built on their tradition of effectiveness by persuading Congress to create State Rehabilitation Councils (under Title I, section 105) as a mechanism to support people with disabilities receiving vocational rehabilitation services to take an active role in shaping the services they receive.



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# The Vermont State Rehabilitation Council

Vermont's State Rehabilitation Council advocates for consumer-directed and effective vocational services and for the creation of resources and services that will result in equal opportunities for Vermonters with disabilities.

Under its mandate in the Rehabilitation Act, it "shall review, analyze and advise the designated state unit regarding the performance of the responsibilities of the unit... particularly responsibilities relating to...eligibility (including order of selection); extent, scope and effectiveness of services provided; and functions performed by state agencies that affect or that potentially affect the ability of individuals with disabilities in achieving rehabilitation goals..."

To meet its mission, the Council meets on a bimonthly basis five times a year. (There are no meetings in July or August.) SRC committees meet between full Council meetings to help conduct Council business, For more info visit: [www.src.vermont.gov](http://www.src.vermont.gov)



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# From the Chair of the Vermont State Rehabilitation Council

Greetings Friends,

It is with immense pride that I get to present this Annual Report for the Vermont State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) for the year of 2022.

What a fantastic year it has been, and a humbling time to serve as Chair of the Vermont SRC. While our sister organization, Vermont VocRehab, evolved into Vermont HireAbility, the institution built to serve the disability community has continued to help Vermonters in need. The amazing HireAbility continues to impress and inform. Alongside other advocacy organizations, we are working together with HireAbility to ensure that more Vermonters with disabilities are employed and educated.

Additionally, our respective committees are doing wonderful work. One of our crowning achievements of the year has been the successful lobbying (of Vermont legislators) to ensure hearing aid insurance becomes mandated in our brave little state. We pushed our elected officials to pass the law which was signed into law by the Governor. When we take action, things get done.

Thank you so much to everyone who is involved in the Vermont SRC. You all have made being Chair a phenomenal experience and I am eager for the future.

From the Heart,  
Asher Edelson  
Chair of the Vermont SRC



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# From the Director of Vermont HireAbility

Dear Reader,

We completed a rebranding and marketing effort this past year and we are now **HireAbility Vermont *Where Ability Meets Opportunity***. It has been an exciting process of redefining our look and feel and our message for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Our new identity has been incredibly well received by partners, staff, and the general public. Please check out our new website [Home - HireAbility \(hireabilityvt.com\)](http://hireabilityvt.com).

We remain in very solid fiscal shape. We were awarded significant reallocation funds for the second consecutive year. These funds allow us to expand and serve more Vermonters with disabilities more effectively towards employment and career pathways.

We are officially in an approved hybrid work model with most people working two days in the office and three days at home. Staff really value the work life balance this provides to them and their families. We learned a great deal about how to most effectively serve our customers during the pandemic. With face to face being optimal for most people during the

early engagement, relationship building process and then consumer choice about how to conduct future meetings/ contacts. Our offices are open and staffed five days per week.

We continue the paradigm shift we began in response to the WIOA Common Performance Measures from jobs to career pathways. This focus on credential attainment and higher wage jobs in beginning to reap the benefits for our consumers. We have fully launched our DIF grant project, the Vermont Career Advancement Project. We have hired six Career Pathways Navigators who will lead the way for all counselors on to how to assist people most effectively with disabilities to believe they can successfully engage in education and training and attain a career. We have funded two staff with the Community College of VT and the VT Technical College to facilitate these goals with Vermonters with disabilities.



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# From the Director of Vermont HireAbility, Continued

We have begun a two-year journey of organizational change focused on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access with Social Contract, LLC. We are completing phase one of a four stage blueprint for change. Their assessment of our baseline efforts to diversify our workforce and ensure HireAbility welcomes everyone no matter who they are or where they came from is almost done. Our real

work will begin in earnest early in the new year.

As always, I look forward to continuing our robust and productive partnership with the VT State Rehabilitation Council.

Diane P. Dalmasse, Director, HireAbility VT

## Division Philosophy

The Division of HireAbility Vermont mission is to help Vermonters with disabilities prepare for, obtain, and maintain meaningful careers and to help employers recruit, train, and retain employees with disabilities. Consumer choice and self-direction are core values that drive DVR's approach to providing services and developing new programs. DVR's ability to help jobseekers succeed also depends on clearly understanding the needs of our other customers:

employers. To better reach both our consumers and employers, DVR rebranded as HireAbility in SFY 2022 and launched a marketing campaign to promote our services for both audiences. The HireAbility rebranding also reinforces our commitment to helping consumers access high wage and high-quality careers through training and education. It also communicates our goal of being a source of motivated and trained employees for Vermont employers.



# The Year in Review- Summary SRC Committee Reports

## Advocacy, Outreach, and Education Committee

### Cari Kelley, Chair

The Advocacy, Outreach, and Education (AOE) Committee has been hard at work with a number of priorities. We have had insightful presentations, worked on making our voices known through legislative advocacy, and helping our members find meaningful ways to engage. We were focused on legislative issues that truly matters to Vermonters with disabilities and being able to find meaningful employment with the supports that they need.

I want to thank the former Chair of the AOE, Asher Edelson, for his tireless work and congratulate him on becoming Chair of the SRC. He is still a member of the AOE and his energy and enthusiasm has made the SRC stronger.

The legislation that we watched carefully this year was H.266, the hearing aid bill, which requires Medicaid, the State Employees Health Plan, and large group health insurance plans to provide coverage for hearing aids beginning in plan year 2022. It also directed the Agency of Human Services to apply for federal approval to modify the essential health benefit package for Vermont's individual and small group health insurance plans to include coverage for hearing aids beginning in plan year 2023. We were one of many organizations

monitoring the progress of this bill and we were asked by these organizations to reach out to our legislators, which we did, and we all celebrated the signing of

the bill by Governor Scott on May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022. We also want to thank all the legislators that supported this piece of legislation and understanding the impact that this has on so many Vermonters...thank you!

I am honored and humbled to be Chair of the AOE and want to thank all of the members and HireAbility staff for their participation, encouragement of each other, and passion to the work that they show time and time again.

We have also been very focused on transportation this year. Transportation is a leading barrier for those who want to work to be able to find employment. For many of us, being able to jump in our car, or drive to the park n' ride to catch the commuter bus comes easily. For those with disabilities, this is not the case.



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# Summary SRC Committee Reports, Continued

## Advocacy, Outreach, and Education Committee, Continued

The Vermont Department of Transportation has been trying hard to develop Micro Transit options, and those have been helpful to some, but not the answer for everyone. Vermont is remote and the AOE is working on finding solutions for everyone. Through our discussions this year, we have had more representation at the Elderly & Disabled Committees through VTrans and have been continuing to build relationships and providing feedback. I look forward to continuing this work with the AOE in the coming year and working together to help solve the transportation issues for those with disabilities.

The AOE is very excited about the rebranding efforts this year and look forward to continu-

ing our work with HireAbility. The Committee is very interested in helping to spread the work on the “Our Time is Now” Campaign. We look forward to educating our legislators, congressional representatives, constituents, clients, and community about the important role that HireAbility has in helping those with disabilities find meaningful employment and active community members.

I am honored and humbled to be Chair of the AOE and want to thank all of the members and HireAbility staff for their participation, encouragement of each other, and passion to the work that they show time and time again.

Respectfully,

Cari Kelley, Chair



### HireAbility Overview

HireAbility serves people with disabilities in Vermont who face barriers to employment. We help HireAbility consumers figure out what types of career pathways will work for them, through assessment, counseling, and guidance. We use our extensive networks in the employer community to create job opportunities, match employer needs with jobseeker skills, and help employers retain staff with disabilities. We also invest heavily in post-secondary training and education to help our consumers gain credentials that will lead to high wage and high-quality employment.

## Performance Review Committee

### Dominick Caputo, Chair

The Vermont State Rehabilitation Council's Performance Review Committee (PRC) is responsible for reviewing, analyzing, and advising the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) on its performance in fulfilling its mission and responsibilities.

This year the PRC reviewed, made recommendations and provided input on a range of topics affecting DVR's clients, including the following:

#### Employer Recruitment

The PRC reviewed the work of Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS), the public facing entity of DVR. CWS engages employers with the mission to help Vermonters with disabilities prepare for and maintain meaningful careers.

Over the course of 2021 DVR Business Account Managers contacted 939 unique businesses; conducted 3158 outreach activities; generated 3104 employment opportunities; and made 729 new individual points of contact. Successful outreach activities include: hiring events such as job fairs; informational and mock interviews; the very popular Summer Career Exploration program; continuing to provide employer recognition through the Spirit of the ADA awards; assisting with transportation solutions; and providing a myriad of

training opportunities through partners like Community College of Vermont and the Vermont Technical Center.

#### Vermont DVR State Plan

The PRC received updates on the goals and priorities from the 2020 DVR State Plan and the targets for program years 2022 and 2023.

The 10 goals and priorities outlined in the State Plan track progress on improved earnings; education and training; youth transition services; employment; expanded services to underserved populations and tracking how DVR services align with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act's (WIOA) common performance measures.

Overall, DVR was successful in meeting the majority of their goals despite the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. Only 4 of the 14 specific benchmarks within the goals fell short, and these were mostly related to in-person services affected by the pandemic.



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# Summary SRC Committee Reports, Continued

## Performance Review Committee, Continued

### Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Kate Parrish and Will Pendlebury from DVR's Deaf, Deaf Blind, and Hard of Hearing (HOH) Services presented information to the PRC on the services the state provides to the Deaf and HOH population.

The committee examined the overall caseload and staffing dedicated to serving the Deaf and HOH population as well as the employment services, hearing aid support, and counseling guidance provided.

Nationally, Deaf and HOH consumers are often put on a waitlist for services. Vermont has never had to take this step as we have adequate staff dedicated to serving this specific population.

### DVR Participants

The PRC often reviews information on participants based on age and disability type to ensure that any one group or disability is not being underserved. While there has been a focus on services to youth, the PRC wanted to ensure that the middle-aged group (30-55) was not being underserved.

During 2022 we received presentations on participant data to examine the services provided to the various age groups.

The data suggests that middle-aged populations are not being underserved.

### WIOA Performance Measures

PRC received a presentation on the current performance from program year 2021 regarding the WIOA Common Performance Measures. Presently, DVR is meeting or exceeding all targets and is on track to meet targets for the upcoming year.

### Serving Our Business Partners

DVR staff shared the results of the Employer Satisfaction Survey. The overall theme was that businesses who had interacted with DVR were very happy with the services they received. Nearly 60% of the businesses surveyed wanted to collaborate with DVR to create or learn more about opportunities to develop internships or apprenticeships.

### The work ahead

As we move toward 2023, the PRC has developed a significant list of goals and priorities which will explore additional avenues to serve clients of DVR. We look forward to the upcoming year and to serving the people of the State of Vermont.

Respectfully,  
Nick Caputo,  
Chair



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# Summary SRC Committee Reports, Continued

## Policy and Procedures Committee

### Sherrie Brunelle, Chair

At the close of 2022, VocRehab undertook a rebranding process to become HireAbility VT (HAVT). It has also completed a monitoring visit from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). RSA is the federal agency that monitors HireAbility VT's compliance with the Workforce Innovation & Opportunities Act or WIOA. Part of the audit was a review of HireAbility VT's Policies and Procedures (P&P). RSA found several policies and procedures that needed revision to comply with WIOA. The P&P Committee is addressing the RSA findings.



The Committee accomplished a great deal throughout 2021-2022. The Committee:

1. Finalized revisions to the Referral and Application and Eligibility Determination chapters.
2. Decided to separate the spending guidelines from the P&P Manual to permit updating them without going through the public comment process.
3. Worked on revisions to the Rehabilitation (Assistive) Technology chapter.
4. Reviewed all policies and procedures to edit to ensure gender neutral references.
5. Worked on revisions to the Self-Employment chapter.

The exciting news is that after working on the Self-Employment chapter for a couple of years, the Committee decided to solicit technical assistance from Griffin Hammis Associates (GHA), nationally recognized experts in the field of self-employment. Given the greater awareness that self-employment can be a highly successful path to higher wage employment for people with disabilities, the committee looks forward to working with GHA to develop not only policy but to create and implement a model that leads to successful outcomes for people with disabilities.

As Chair, I am immensely proud of the work that we have done. I am even more proud of and grateful for the contributions of the committee members.

Respectfully,  
Sherrie Brunelle, Chair

# Vermont State Rehabilitation Council Members 2021-2022

## Steering Committee

Asher Edelson, *SRC Chair*  
Sherry Brunelle, *Policy and Procedures Committee Chair*  
Nick Caputo, *Performance Review Committee Chair*  
Gina D'Ambrosio, *SRC Vice Chair*  
Cari Kelley, *Advocacy, Outreach and Education Committee Chair*  
Diane Dalmasse, *HireAbility Vermont Director*

## Advocacy, Outreach & Education Committee

Cari Kelley, *Chair*  
Emily Ahtúnan  
Courtney Blasius  
Sherrie Brunelle  
Asher Edelson  
Martha Frank  
Helena Kehne  
Cari Kelley  
Ana Kolbach  
Sarah Launderville  
Bill Meirs  
Calla Papademas  
Cara Sachs  
Laura Siegel  
Lexia Stanley  
Diane Dalmasse, *SRC Liaison*

## Policy & Procedures Committee

Sherrie Brunelle, *Chair*  
Emily Ahtúnan  
Andrea Bacchi  
Kristen Carpentier  
Rocko Gieselman  
Helena Kehne  
Cari Kelley  
Calla Papademas  
Laura Siegel  
Sarah Sterling  
Patricia Wehman  
James Smith, *SRC Liaison*

## Performance Review Committee

Nick Caputo, *Chair*  
Sherrie Brunelle  
Gina D'Ambrosio  
Laura Flint  
Marlena Hughes  
Robin Ingenthron  
Rose Lucenti  
Bill Meirs  
Amanda Arnold, *SRC Liaison*

## 2022 SRC Members (Including Recently Termed Off Members)

Ahtúnan, Emily, 09/30/23  
Bacchi, Andrea, 09/30/25  
Blasius, Courtney, 09/30/24  
Brunelle, Sherrie, 09/30/25  
Caputo Nick, 09/30/23  
Carpentier, Kristen, 09/30/22  
Dalmasse, Diane, (ex-officio, non-voting)  
D'Ambrosio, Gina, 09/30/25  
Edelson, Asher, 09/30/23  
Flint, Laura, 09/30/25  
Frank, Martha 09/30/2022  
Gieselman, Rocko, (ex-officio, non-voting), 09/30/23  
Hughes, Marlena, 09/30/24  
Ingenthron, Robin, 09/30/23  
Kehne, Helena, 09/30/25  
Kelley, Cari, 09/30/23  
Kolbach, Ana, 09/30/22  
Launderville, Sarah, 09/30/23  
Lucenti, Rose, 09/30/22  
Meirs, Bill, 09/30/24  
Papademas, Calla, 09/30/24  
Sachs, Cara, 09/30/23  
Siegel, Laura, 09/30/23  
Stanley, Lexia, 09/30/24  
Sterling, Sarah, 09/30/23  
Wehman, Patricia, 09/30/22

# HireAbility's Contribution to Vermonters and Their Communities

## Improving Consumer Outcomes Across Measures:

In 2014 the US Congress reauthorized the Rehabilitation Act via the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). WIOA introduced new Common Performance Measures (CPM) that core partners, including DVR, are evaluated on. The measures are:

- Job retention six months post program exit.
- Job retention twelve months post program exit.
- Median earnings six months post program exit.
- Credential attainment.
- Measurable skill gains.
- Employer satisfaction.

Prior to WIOA, HireAbility was measured primarily on how many people the program assisted in getting a job. This change from quantitative to qualitative measures required a major paradigm shift in our service delivery system. HireAbility implemented the Careers Initiative, a series of strategies to align program services with the new Common Performance Measures.

HireAbility tracks the Careers Initiative strategies through a Performance Dashboard. The Dashboard provides staff and managers with real-time information at the counselor, district, and statewide level. It also serves as a frame of reference to judge how they are doing and show them what they need to focus on to achieve the desired outcomes.

SFY 2022 Dashboard data indicates the Careers Initiative has had a positive impact

on practices, services, and outcomes:

- An 18 percentage-point increase in HireAbility consumers participating in career assessment within 180 days of application.
- A 4 percentage-point increase in HireAbility consumers with higher wage employment plan goals.
- A 3 percentage-point increase in HireAbility consumers earning over 125% of minimum wage at program exit.
- A post-pandemic rebound in services, with a 70% increase in applications taken and 77% increase in plans initiated, resulting in an overall 7% increase in the overall caseload.

We



# HireAbility's Contribution to Vermonters and Their Communities

## Programs and Services

**HireAbility Core Services:** Services for jobseekers are tailored to the person and driven by his or her own interests, job goals, and needs. Each person meets regularly with his or her counselor, who helps develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), and manages the services and supports needed to realize the person's career goals. The core services of vocational assessment, counseling and guidance, job training, and job placement provided by DVR staff and partners, are enhanced with a range of purchased services and supports.

**HireAbility Placement Services:** HireAbility has an ongoing partnership with the Vermont Association of Business, Industry, and Rehabilitation (VABIR) to provide employment services. DVR customers and counselors benefit from dedicated employment consultants who provide job development, job placement, and workplace supports to help people find and keep jobs.

**HireAbility Employment Teams:** HireAbility oversees 12 Business Account Managers (BAMs) who have active relationships with 2,500 employers statewide. The BAMs convene local teams of Agency of Human Service providers who deliver employment services across multiple populations. These CWS teams coordinate local employer outreach

across programs to better serve employers.

**Jump on Board for Success (JOBS):** The JOBS program is a HireAbility partnership with the Department of Mental Health. JOBS provides employment and mental health case management services for youth with severe emotional/behavioral disabilities.

**Work Incentives Counseling Program:** HireAbility work incentives counselors provide information and expertise to Social Security disability program beneficiaries about the impact employment will have on their benefits.

**Employee Assistance Program (EAP):** EAP has offered comprehensive Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services since 1986. EAP provides short-term counseling and referral, management consultation, wellness workshops, and resource information.

**Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf (RCD):** RCDs provide a wide range of services for Vermonters who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or late deafened.

**Assistive Technology Program:** The AT program helps individuals of all ages find accessible solutions to overcome disability and aging related barriers at home, work, and in the community.

# HireAbility's Contribution to Vermonters and Their Communities

## Results (How much, how well, better off), Continued

### **Number of People Served:**

- A total of 5,871 individuals were served in SFY 2022. 5,606 were served in SFY 2021.
- 5,234 people were served in the core DVR program in SFY 2022. 4,957 were served in SFY 2021.
- 1,281 high school students were served through the Pre-Employment Transition Services program in SFY 2022. 1,189 were served in SFY 2021.

**How Well We Served Them:** The HireAbility Consumer Experience Survey is conducted every two years to determine consumers' overall satisfaction with the program. The survey is conducted by a third-party research firm, Market Decisions Research (MDR), who has an extensive background working with VR agencies nationwide. 646 consumers were contacted for our 2022 survey. This was the first survey conducted post-COVID, and has provided the Division with valuable information regarding consumers' reactions to remote and hybrid services.

The following are highlights from the 2022 results:

- 81% of consumers reported they were satisfied or very satisfied with HireAbility.
- 93% said that they would recommend that their friends or family members seek help from HireAbility.

- 90% of consumers responded that they are satisfied with their experience working with HireAbility staff and counselors. This is a two percent increase from our 2016 survey.
- 97% felt they were treated by staff with dignity and respect.
- 77% of consumers reported that it was very easy or somewhat easy to connect with their counselor, even during the times where services were being delivered entirely remotely.
- 63% of consumers reported that they would like to continue to receive services remotely.



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# HireAbility's Contribution to Vermonters and Their Communities

## Results (How much, how well, better off), Continued

**Employer Satisfaction with HireAbility:** In 2022 HireAbility contracted with MDR to develop a survey that would determine employer satisfaction with services. Between February and May 2022, MDR surveyed 72 employers that had contact with a HireAbility team member(s) within the last 18 months. The survey found that 93% of employers were satisfied with services, up from 77% in 2019, and 100% of employers would be open to working with HireAbility again in the future, up from 94% in 2022. One area of improvement that was identified, is that employers would like to be contacted more frequently.

Another focus area of this year's survey was apprenticeship and internship opportunities. Of the employers surveyed 60% do not currently have any apprenticeship or internship opportunities, however 76% are interested in partnering with HireAbility to create these opportunities in the future.

The survey results provided invaluable information that will help us continue to improve our services to employers, develop more connections, and better serve HireAbility customers.

**How People are Better Off:** The most apparent measure of successful consumer outcomes is their employment status when they leave the program. In SFY 2022, 435 individuals closed their cases with successful employment. This means they met their individual employment goals and were stably employed for at least 90

days. In addition, 237 of these individuals or 54%, had a wage above 125% of minimum wage.

Vermont's vocational rehabilitation programs also received data for the second time on all five WIOA Common Performance Measures. The SFY 2022 results show Vermont participants are achieving outcomes at a higher rate than the national average on all five performance measures. Additionally, Vermont's programs improved on all five performance measures in SFY 2022 compared to our SFY 2021 outcomes.

The employment rate four quarters post exit continues to improve, starting at 46.7% in SFY 2020, increasing to 48.3% in SFY 2021 and increasing again in SFY 2022 to 52.5%. Vermont's median earnings two quarters post exit jumped from \$3,901 in SFY 2020, which was below the national average, to \$4,630 in SFY 2021 and then \$5,213 in SFY 2022, both above the national average for those years.



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# Rebranding of DVR to HireAbility



We have long received feedback from both consumers and employers that the name “vocational rehabilitation” is off-putting to some participants, referral sources and employers. Also, the old name did not speak to the new mission of the Division as a career pathways and workforce development program.

To update the brand of the program, DVR used one-time excess federal funds to contract with the Place Creative. After extensive input from staff and

stakeholders, the Place Creative came up with the HireAbility brand. They also worked with DVR to create:

A modern and clean look and feel for all HireAbility materials;

- Marketing materials targeted specifically to different stakeholders: students/youth, adults, employers, parents/families, and referral sources;
- Video content in long and short form for television, social media, and other forums.

HireAbility was launched in the spring of 2022 with a marketing campaign on multiple platforms. We have received overwhelmingly positive feedback on the change from stakeholders.



# HireAbility New Initiatives

## **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access**

**(DEIA):** In 2021 Governor Scott announced the following proclamation: “Vermont seeks to achieve equality and equity and to create a culture in which racial, ethnic and other cultural disparities are openly acknowledged and addressed and where no one person is more likely to experience society’s benefits or burdens than any other person.”

To support this vision HireAbility has contracted with the company Social Contract to help the division become as welcoming and inclusive as possible. To that end Social Contract will:

- Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment of the HireAbility Program from a DEIA perspective;
- Assist HireAbility to develop a blueprint for organizational and cultural change; and
- Help HireAbility implement and sustain the change.

Social Contract began this work in the summer of 2022. We expect the needs assessment to be completed by the end of the year.

## **The Vermont Career Advancement Project**

**(VCAP):** HireAbility was awarded a \$6.5 million grant from the US Department of Education to support the Vermont Career Advancement Project (VCAP). VCAP will establish a robust partnership between HireAbility, the Vermont Department of Labor (VDOL), the Community College of Vermont (CCV), Vermont Technical College (VTC), and secondary Career and Technical Education Centers (CTEs), to build on-ramps enabling individuals

with disabilities to pursue high quality, good paying careers. The project will embed dedicated Career Pathways Student Advisors in these post-secondary programs to provide intensive support for VCAP participants. VCAP will also partner with other work force development organizations to expand paid, credentialed, occupational training programs in response to employer needs.

Utilizing the best available employment projections for high quality, high wage career pathway opportunities in Vermont, HireAbility identified the following five career sectors for the project: Advanced Manufacturing, Financial Services, Healthcare, Skilled Construction Trades, and Information Technology. VCAP will utilize its extensive network of employer contacts through its Business Account Managers to engage employers in offering opportunities in these sectors. CCV and VTC, which have program development experience and expertise, will provide the required Related Instruction for apprenticeships and other credentialed programs. These programs will be linked directly to secondary and adult programs offered through the State’s 17 Career and Technical Education (CTE) centers. The project will enroll 500 participants, with 375 earning Industry Recognized Credentials and 75 enrolling in Registered Apprenticeships. 75% of participants will exit their training programs employed and earning at least 150% of the state’s minimum wage.

HireAbility started enrollment in VCAP in August 2022. To date 70 individuals have been enrolled in the program.

# History of State Vocational Rehabilitation Councils

When the Rehabilitation Act Amendments were being considered by the 102nd Congress in 1992, disability rights activism had increased and recommended changes to the Rehabilitation Act that included persons with disabilities be at the table. As a result, Revisions to the act included individual dignity, self-determination, inclusion and full participation of persons with disabilities. In addition, this included the establishment of a State Rehabilitation Advisory Council with a majority of the members (51%) being persons with disabilities.

By the 1998 Amendments, SRC's role and empowerment were recognized and strengthened. The name and role of the body of advocates was changed from the State Rehabilitation Advisory Council to the State Rehabilitation Council. The role changed from being advisory, to being involved in developing policies, planning activities, evaluation the program effectiveness and carrying out other functions related to the vocational rehabilitation program. This also included that the SRC, in conjunction with the VR agency, jointly conduct the comprehensive needs assessment of individuals with disabilities in the state, develop (and agree to) the State's annual goals and priorities, and evaluate the VR performance toward the goals annually. The role of the SRC changed from advisory to working in partnership with the State VR agency.

Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (as amended) requires consumers, advocates and other representatives of individuals with disabilities to participate in the administration and oversight of a state's VR program. The SRC fulfills this mandate in all states and territories. This is required in order for Vocational Rehabilitation programs to be eligible for and maintain federal VR funds. The SRC must consist of at least fifteen (15) members. They cannot have less unless they are a commission. There is not a maximum number of members unless Council Bylaws note otherwise. Members are appointed by the Governor, representing a variety of perspectives from the VR program and disability community as outlined in the legislation.





# HireAbility

## VERMONT

The Vermont State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is appointed by the Governor. We seek new members who have a widerange of interests and talents to help improve the services offered by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to Vermonterers with disabilities. If you are interested in applying to become a member of the SRC, please contact Janice Leonard, Coordinator: [janice.leonard@vermont.gov](mailto:janice.leonard@vermont.gov)

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