Job-Driven Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center (JD-VRTAC)
Request for Participation in Intensive Technical Assistance & the Learning Collaborative

Application Materials Due: April 15, 2016

Purpose of the JD-VRTAC:

The Job-Driven Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center (JD-VRTAC) is a national center for improving vocational rehabilitation (VR) responsiveness to job-driven needs. The Center strives to identify, adapt, embed, and sustain job-driven practices into vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies. These practices will lead to improved employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

The JD-VRTAC is focused on developing a knowledge base on the following four topical areas:
1. Labor market information (LMI)
2. Services to employers
3. Building and maintaining employer relations
4. Services to providers of customized and/or employer driven training

The JD-VRTAC will help support state VR agencies (SRVAs) to learn about and implement job-driven practices by providing general/universal technical assistance (TA), targeted TA, and intensive TA. To learn more about universal and targeted TA opportunities, contact Julisa.cully@umb.edu or visit www.explorevr.org.

Intensive Technical Assistance and the Learning Collaborative Overview:

The JD-VRTAC has released this Request for Participation (RFP) for intensive TA to solicit interest among the 80 SVRAs nationally. SVRAs seeking assistance shall receive intensive TA from the Center staff and partners. Additionally, those agencies will participate in a ICI learning collaborative with the other SVRAs involved in intensive TA. The learning collaborative will enhance the level and scope of TA through peer-to-peer knowledge exchange, resource sharing, and feedback.

The JD-VRTAC will provide TA to SVRAs to achieve the following outcomes:
- Improve the ability of SVRAs to work with employers and training providers to ensure equal access to and greater opportunities for individuals with disabilities to engage in competitive employment or training;
- Increase the number and quality of employment outcomes in competitive, integrated settings for VR-eligible individuals with disabilities, including broadening the range of occupations for such individuals in such settings, that result from job-driven strategies; and
- Increase the number of VR-eligible individuals with disabilities in employer-driven job training programs.

What you can expect from the JD-VRTAC:

Center staff with expertise in VR and job-driven strategies will deliver TA. Each agency will receive customized intensive TA to meet their agency needs identified in their proposal, including the evaluation of the impact of the TA on their agency. The JD-VRTAC will provide individualized intensive TA based on SVRA requests, need, and ability to implement changes.. The JD-VRTAC will use an individualized approach to help the SVRA affect change, rather than apply a set curriculum or content. This intensive TA will involve the following:

- At least two JD-VRTAC staff will be assigned to work with the SVRA to provide the intensive TA; others will be involved as needed
- The TA team will work with the SVRA staff to:
  - ✓ Identify the issues to address
  - ✓ Define TA needs
  - ✓ Identify desired short term and long term goals
  - ✓ Identify resources needed for implementation
- The JD-VRTAC team will work with the agency to develop a comprehensive project/TA plan. This plan will:
  - ✓ Describe activities, responsibilities, and resources to accomplish project and TA goals and objectives
  - ✓ Identify and establish agreement about measureable goals and objectives, including the data to be collected to track progress and success
- The JD-VRTAC team will help identify and implement new practices and policies, or enhance existing practices
- The JD-VRTAC team and the VR agency will communicate regularly in-person, by phone, and by email

About the Learning Collaborative:
Each SVRA selected to participate in intensive TA will automatically join the learning collaborative (LC)**.** The LC is a peer-to-peer knowledge exchange model that facilitates the identification, sharing, and application of practice-based solutions. SVRAs will join the existing learning collaborative comprised of 11 VR agencies working on job-driven issues.

The JD-VRTAC facilitates intra-agency collaboration through conference calls and in-person meetings. There will be bi-monthly conference calls that provide participants an opportunity to interact with their fellow agencies. There will also be the opportunity to meet in-person one to two times annually. Each agency will be asked to send two members from their team. During these meetings, the group will be able to share effective strategies and generate solutions for barriers they are encountering in their projects.

The goal of the JD-VRTAC Learning Collaborative is to create a sustainable infrastructure beyond the life of the Center by establishing a network of SVRAs implementing the four job-driven practices.

Who can receive Intensive TA:
This invitation to respond to the RFP for intensive TA is extended to all 80 state VR agencies in the United States and territories, including blind/general/combined agencies. Following the release of the RFP, the Center will open a phone consultation period from March 14, 2016 – April 8, 2016.

All interested SVRAs must schedule a one-hour teleconference with Center staff to discuss the proposed TA needs prior to submitting the electronic form. The purpose of this call is to help the SVRAs define the issue being addressed so the JD-VRTAC staff can begin identifying their TA needs.

ExploreVR
Informing Research, Policy, and Practice

This is also an opportunity for the VR agency to ask questions about the RFP and application and get support with the application if needed.

To schedule a teleconference, contact Julisa Cully at <u>Julisa.Cully@umb.edu.</u>

What we expect from recipients of TA:
The SVRA applying for intensive TA agrees to:
- Participate in intensive TA on one or more job-driven practices available through the JD-VRTAC for the project year: May 1, 2016 – May 30, 2017

- Participate in the JD-VRTAC Learning Collaborative of all JD-VRTAC intensive TA recipients, including attending all meetings and calls to provide progress reports, lessons learned, and share in problem solving with peers in the LC

- Document projects to be shared through ExploreVR, National Clearinghouse, and communities of practices.

The RFP Application Content
The intent of the RFP application is to provide the JD-VRTAC team preliminary information about the SVRAs' TA needs and to prepare for and structure the first in-person meeting. SVRAs that have gone through the application process report that it has assisted them in focusing on what they want to achieve. The RFP application contains the following required sections:
- Letter of Commitment on official letterhead, signed by the state VR agency director
- Narrative
- Data Collection Efforts
- TA Project Staff Roster

Letter of Commitment (LOC). SVRAs should use the template provided on official letterhead with the director's signature. This letter should indicate firm commitment for the SVRA to: participate in all aspects of the intensive TA; join the Learning Collaborative for one 12-month period; and support the completion of all activities as defined in the narrative. (A template shall be provided in the electronic RFP form).

Narrative. The narrative section includes open-ended questions. The SVRA should clearly define the need and requested TA as well as the agency's desired results or goals. Define in as much detail as possible the needs to be addressed including: need for the particular TA requested, the current agency activities related to the TA requested, and the desired end results of the TA. What would success look like? How will the VR agency commit agency resources to implement and complete the Intensive TA?

Data Collection Efforts. Description of the agency's case management system and additional job-driven data being collected.

Explore VR

TA Project Staff Roster. List the names and contact information of the key staff participating in the project. Include staff from all three levels (leadership, mid-management, and direct service) as key staff.

Intensive TA Application Periods:
Through this RFP, the JD-VRTAC is launching the intensive TA application process. The goal is to select state VR agencies to participate in intensive TA in 2016-17.

Please refer to the following timeline for key project dates:
- Request for Participation (RFP) in the Intensive Technical Assistance & Learning Collaborative information released: **March 14, 2015**
- The application link and consultation call will be provided to agencies that contact Julisa Cully at Julisa.cully@umb.edu
- Phone Consultation Period: All VR agencies must schedule a conference call with Center staff to discuss participation during the period from **March 14 – April 8, 2016**, prior to submitting their electronic submission form
- Electronic submission form due: **April 15, 2016 by 11:59 PM Eastern Time**
- Review of Proposals: Center staff will review submitted materials and may request clarification or additional information of VR agencies during the period of **April 18 - April 28, 2016.**
- Mandatory Site Visit: SVRAs meeting selection criteria will be notified by **April 29, 2016** and the initial site visit will be scheduled between **May 2 – June 17, 2016**
- Next in-person learning collaborative meeting is scheduled **July 12-13, 2016**
- Project Year: **May 1, 2016 – May 30, 2017**

Submission of the RFP Forms
- A Survey Gizmo platform will be used for all applicants to submit forms in response to the RFP. Simply enter in all necessary information and forms and hit the "submit" button.
- All submissions are due by **11:59 pm Eastern Time on April 15, 2016** to be considered.
- For technical support with the electronic form, contact Julisa Cully at Julisa.Cully@umb.edu

Contact Information:
Julisa Cully, PI, Institute for Community Inclusion: Julisa.Cully@umb.edu
Cecilia Gandolfo, PI, Institute for Community Inclusion: Cecilia.gandolfo@umb.edu