Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation

Quarterly Employment Provider Capacity Survey

March 2022

PUBLIC
CONSULTING GROUP

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INTRODUCTION

BRS understands that Employment Service Providers have faced considerable barriers and challenges to maintaining qualified staff. To provide appropriate resources, BRS wishes to better understand gaps and needs of these providers. On behalf of the Indiana Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), Public Consulting Group facilitates Quarterly Employment Provider Capacity Survey. Each quarter, there will be a 2-week window for submissions. PCG will collect and analyze data over time to provide additional information and greater context to the needs of providers. This report represents the second installment.

The following results will be used to better understand the capacity needs of providers across the State. Ultimately, this information can be used to make decisions on how to support providers and how to optimize supports for program participants. The aggregated information will be available to providers on a regular basis to share information and trends and can be used by providers to inform strategic planning and capacity building.

SURVEY METHOD

PCG collaborated with BRS to develop survey questions to better understand employment service providers' capacity over time. PCG used Qualtrics, an accessible survey platform, to distribute the survey online from February 16, 2022, through March 3, 2022. PCG provided a survey link via email to its listserv. Other partners, including BRS and INARF also distributed this survey. PCG asked the survey to be completed by a representative of each location of an Employment Services Program. The survey provided the opportunity for respondents to share the survey with their colleagues as well. This method, called snowball sampling, increases the likelihood of responses from individuals in the field. One limitation of this sampling method is that it is not possible to calculate a response rate. Fifty-five (55) organizations submitted sixty-three (63) total entries for different locations. In the first release of this survey, forty-six (46) organizations submitted fifty-two (52) total entries, representing an approximate 20% increase in both the number of providers responding and the number of entries by location.

> The response rate increased approximately 20% in both the number of providers responding and the number of entries by location.

The survey did not require answers to individual questions and the number of responses varies by question. Subsequently, each table lists the total number of responses to that question. These results are described and analyzed in the following text. Following analysis, PCG provides recommendations to for BRS consideration.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Results and analysis from the survey are organized in the following sections: service area, staffing, employment services, and open responses. Analysis is provided by question for each question asked in the survey. Based on this analysis, recommendations are provided for BRS' consideration.

SERVICE AREA

Respondents identified where their organization provides employment services. Respondents identified locations by county and could select all that apply. Figure 1**Error! Reference source not found.** illustrates the density of responses by county. As expected, the greatest number of respondents identified Marion County (16) and surrounding counties, which is the most populated area of the State. High concentrations of responses also came from the northern and southwestern sections of the State. This trend follows the same trend as the December survey results. However, compared to December, there is greater representation across counties in the north.

Overall, results indicate that the respondents represent employment providers across the entire state with distribution across all of VR's 5 regions. It should be noted that several respondents indicated their organization serves numerous counties across different VR regions. While respondents represent providers delivering services across the state, the data is limited by those who responded.

FIGURE 1 RESPONDENT SERVICE
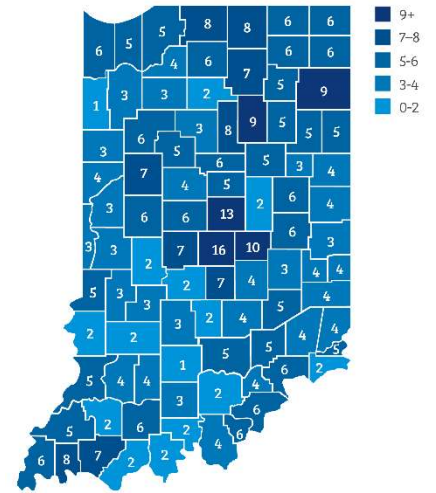
STAFFING

The next series of questions asked respondents about staffing needs. The results are summarized by question below.

1. How many positions are on your employment services team?

The survey asked respondents 'How many positions are on your employment services team?' Sixty-Two (62) individuals responded to the question. The greatest number of respondents reported that they have either four to seven positions (38.71%) or one to three (37.1%) positions on their team. Three (3) survey respondents indicated that their teams are comprised of twenty or more individuals. While there were 24% more respondents in March compared to December (62 vs. 50), trends did not vary. Figure 2 and Table 1 reflect all responses.

FIGURE 2 POSITIONS IN EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

TABLE 1 EMPLOYMENT TEAM SIZE

Number of Positions	%	Count
1-3	37.10%	23
4-7	38.71%	24
8-12	12.90%	8
13-20	6.45%	4
21+	4.84%	3
Total	100.00%	62
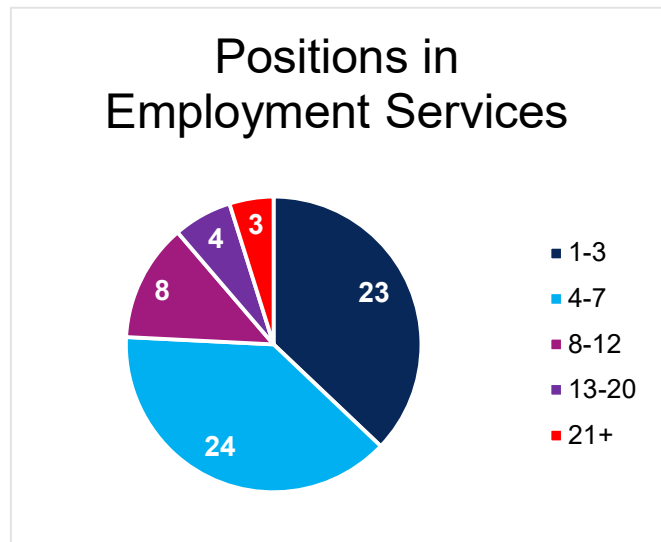
2. Please identify the greatest number of unfilled positions you have had at a given time over the last 3 months.

Sixty-three (63) individuals responded to the question. The greatest number of respondents (49.21%) indicated they had 1-2 vacancies on their team. The next highest group (26.98%) indicated they did not have any vacancies in the last three months. This is the same trend reported in December: 46% of respondents had 1-2 vacancies, and 30% did not have any vacancies. In December, 4 respondents indicated they had 5 or more vacancies. In the March release, 3 respondents indicated 5 or more vacancies. The two respondents who indicated 'Other', stated they were a department of one and they added positions and increased the rate of pay. Table 2 represents all responses most recently in March, and December data.

TABLE 2 GREATEST NUMBER OF UNFILLED POSITIONS OVER TIME

Number of Unfilled Positions	March		December	
	%	Count	%	Count
+5	4.76%	3	8%	4
3-4	15.87%	10	14%	7
1-2	49.21%	31	46%	23
None	26.98%	17	30%	15
Other (please tell us)	3.17%	2	2%	1
Total	100.00%	63	100%	50

Table 3 further analyzes this information by the size of the program. Trends indicate that the larger the program, the more openings there are. Trends across program size are similar to results from December. Results also indicated that all programs report openings, regardless of the size of the organization.

TABLE 3 OPEN POSITIONS BY SIZE OF PROGRAM

| Program size (n)	Number of Open Positions			
	0	1-2	3-4	5+
1-3 (23)	10	10	1	
4-7 (24)	6	15	2	1
8-12 (8)	1	6	1	
13-20 (4)			3	1
21+ (3)			1	1

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

The next questions ask about the length of time from referral to first billable employment service, not including intake.

3. On average, how long does it take from receipt of referral from VR for program participants to receive their first billable employment service? (does not include intake)

Sixty-three (63) individuals responded to the question. The greatest number of respondents (44.44%) indicated it took 'Up to 2 weeks' from receipt of referral form VR for program participants to receive their first billable employment service. The next largest group (31.75%) indicated it took 2-4 weeks. Figure 3 and Table 4 represent all responses.

FIGURE 3 LENGTH OF TIME TO SERVICES

Length of Time to Services (Weeks)

Up to 2	44.44%
2-4	31.75%
5-9	12.70%
10-12	4.76%
13+	
Other	4.76%
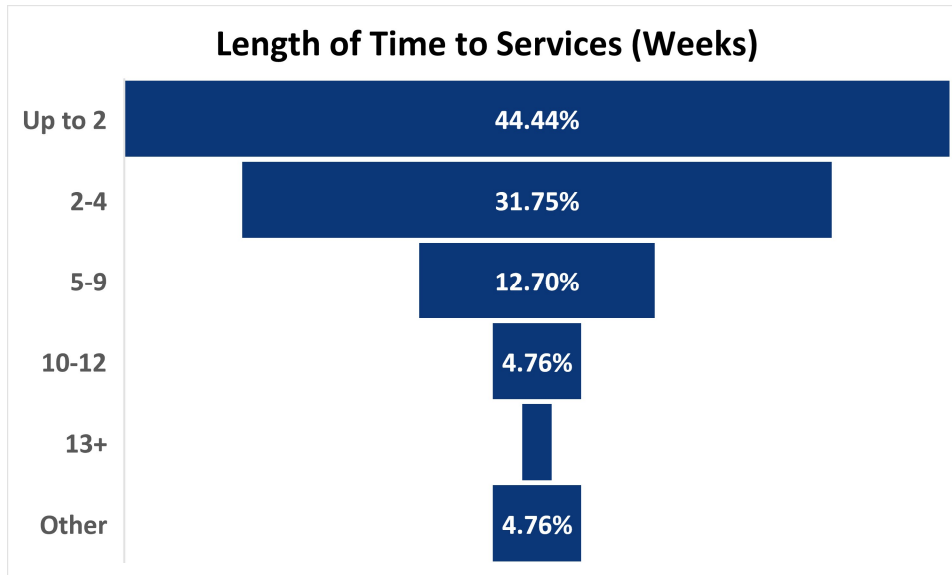
*13 or more weeks 1.59%

TABLE 4 LENGTH OF TIME TO SERVICES

Length of Time to Services	%	Count
Up to 2	44.44%	28
2-4	31.75%	20
5-9	12.70%	8
10-12	4.76%	3
13 or more	1.59%	1
Other	4.76%	3
Total	100.00%	63

Three (3) respondents indicated 'Other':

- 1-2 days
- Within a week
- Certain factors my increase the time period

There is a considerable difference when comparing the results of December and March results. In the December survey, 76% of respondents indicated that, on average, it did not take more than two weeks from date of referral to receive their first employment service. There were over 30% more providers who indicated that services occurred in up to two weeks compared to March results. However, the format of this question changed in two ways. First, the question now specifies that the first service is a billable service, and not an intake appointment. This change was intended to provide clarification in measurement. Provider responses may have shifted based on this clarification. Second, the March survey question combines two questions from the December survey. The first question asked in the December survey was, "On average, it takes program participants more that two weeks from the date of referral to receive their firs employment service." Respondents were prompted to answer in 'yes, no, or other.' If the provider

responded 'yes', they were prompted to specify the average length of time. It is unclear how the change in question format may have impacted responses. Subsequently, additional data will be needed to draw conclusions.

4. In the last three months, what is the longest it has taken to go from the date of referral to first employment service for all program participants?

Sixty (60) individuals responded to the question. One third of respondents (33.33%) indicated the longest it has taken to go from the date of referral to first employment service for all program participants was 'Up to 2 weeks'. The same percentage (18.33%) of respondents chose '2-4' and '5-9' weeks. Table 5 Longest Time Period to Service represents all responses.

TABLE 5 LONGEST TIME PERIOD TO SERVICE

Longest Time Period to Service	%	Count
Up to 2 weeks	33.33%	20
2-4 weeks	18.33%	11
5-9 weeks	18.33%	11
10-12 weeks	15.00%	9
13 or more weeks	10.00%	6
Other (tell us more)	5.00%	3
Total	100.00%	60

Based on provider feedback, the response choices presented to respondents was increased compared to the December survey to provide further detail in the length of time. Overall, respondents reported similar time periods between December and March results.

5. What delays services getting started? Please rank the below from the greatest impact in delays to the least.

Fifty-five (55) individuals ranked their perceptions of the greatest impact in delays from greatest to least, with 1 being the greatest delay. Table 6 summarizes responses by ranking for each delay. Most respondents (53%) identified not being able to reach the participant as the greatest delay. The second largest group (25%) felt that not having enough staff had the greatest impact. Transportation (33%) and not being able to reach the participant (29%) were the highest ranked two delay. While eight (8) individuals indicated 'Other', additional information was not provided.

TABLE 6 GREATEST DELAYS

Delay	Ranking					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
We do not have enough staff	25%	16%	9%	15%	27%	7%
Cannot reach the participant	53%	29%	13%	4%	2%	0%
Barrier to transportation	4%	33%	29%	22%	13%	0%
Documentation/paperwork	4%	4%	33%	31%	27%	2%
High caseload	11%	13%	15%	27%	29%	5%
Other (tell us more)	4%	5%	2%	2%	2%	85%

■	**Greatest number of responses**	■	**Second greatest number of responses**

Compared to December results, responses followed similar trends. Notable trends are identified below.

- In both survey cycles, respondents reported 'cannot reach the participant' as the most frequent cause of delay in services. It may be considered that individuals who are referred to providers may be contacted by these agencies many weeks, or over a month, after they met with their VR counselor. This lag may be associated with reduced motivation to seek employment, or not knowing why the agency is reaching out.
- In line with December survey results, not having enough staff was the second most frequently reported cause of delays. As respondents reported similar trends in openings at agencies, this continued trend makes sense.
- One difference is in the frequency of respondents reporting high caseloads as a greatest cause of delay. In December, 26% of respondents reported a high caseload as the second greatest cause of delay in services. In March survey results, over half of respondents ranked this challenge as the fourth or fifth greatest cause of delay.

6. *On average, what is the caseload size for one employment specialist or job coach (1 FTE)?*

Fifty-nine (59) individuals responded to the question. The greatest number of respondents (44.07%) indicated the average caseload size at their organization was 16-20 individuals. The second highest response (20.34%) was 11-15 individuals on a caseload size. Figure 4 and Table 7 represent all responses.
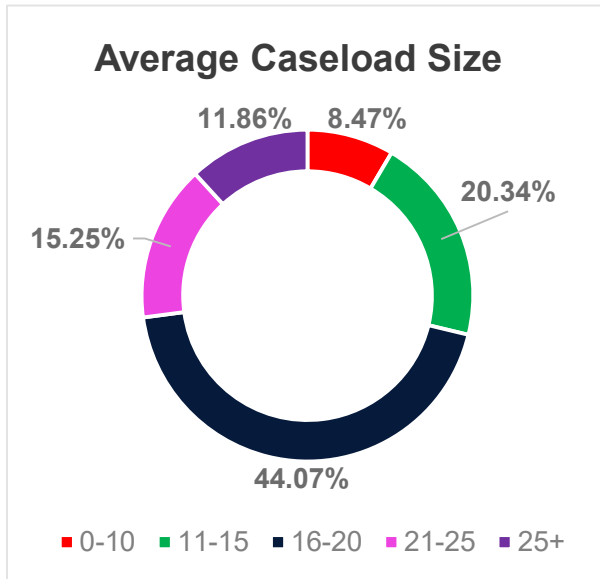
FIGURE 4 AVERAGE CASELOAD SIZE

TABLE 7 AVERAGE CASELOAD SIZE

Average Caseload Size

Average Caseload Size	%	Count
0-10	8.47%	5
11-15	20.34%	12
16-20	44.07%	26
21-25	15.25%	9
Greater than 25	11.86%	7
Total	100%	59

Seven respondents indicated that average caseload sizes are 25 and greater. Historically, this factor has had an impact on the retention rate of VR counselors in Indiana. While this only 12% of respondents, this factor may be impactful on retention for those providers. We further explored the relationship of caseload size with other reported characteristics of respondents. In particular, we were interested in gaining a greater understanding of the characteristics of respondents who reported average caseload sizes of 25 and greater. Table 8 provides further data for those respondents identifying a caseload of 25 or greater. The majority of these respondents (6) also report having a team of 1-3 people. These respondents reported having a wide range of open positions from 0 to the whole team, indicating that there may be several reasons that caseloads are large. It is possible that these caseloads include individuals who have completed VR services, and require minimal check-ins. In other cases, open positions on a small team may temporarily increase the caseload while the position is filled.

TABLE 8 FURTHER ANALYSIS ON CASELOADS 25 AND GREATER

Caseload size	Team size	# open positions	# respondents
25+	**1-3**	1-2	2
		3-4	2
		None	1
		Other	1
	4-7	1-2	1

7. We are interested in learning more about successful recruitment and retention practices. Does your organization engage in any of following activities? Please select all that apply.

Respondents were asked to select all activities they engage in regarding successful recruitment and retention practices. The practice that had the most responses (24.74%) was 'Flexible scheduling'. Raising

wages (19.47%), employee recognition (18.42%), and enhanced/revised training opportunities (16.84%) were close behind scheduling as best practices. It is notable that respondents indicated a mix of practices that include, but are not limited to, enhanced compensation. Figure 5 and Table 9 represent all responses.

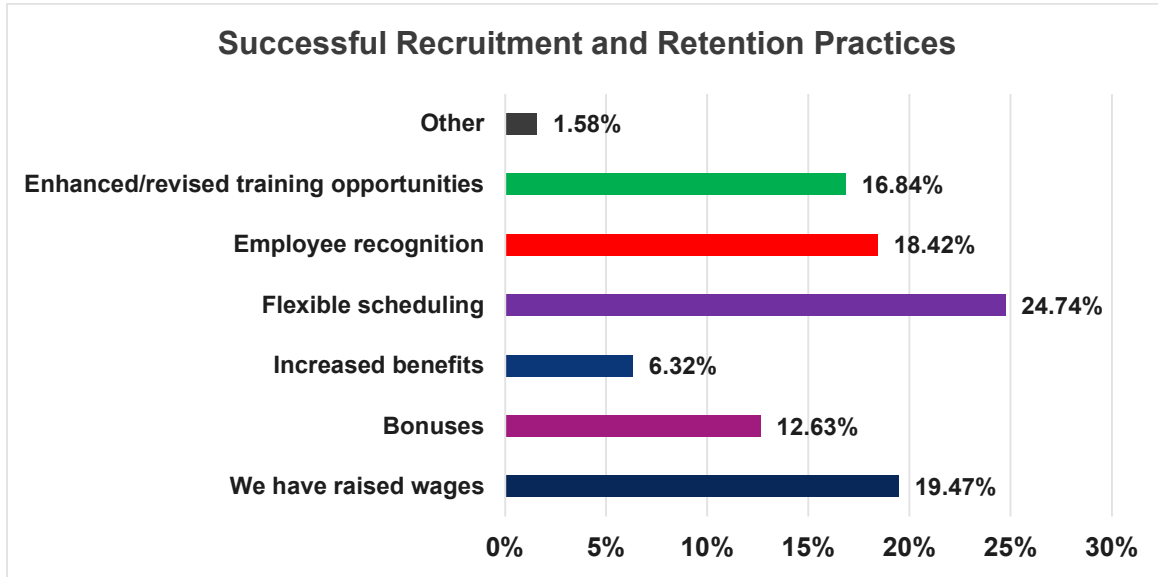**FIGURE 5 SUCCESSFUL RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PRACTICES**

TABLE 9 SUCCESSFUL RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PRACTICES

Successful Recruitment and Retention Practices	%	Count
We have raised wages	19.47%	37
Bonuses	12.63%	24
Increased benefits (PTO, healthcare, retirement, etc.)	6.32%	12
Flexible scheduling	24.74%	47
Employee recognition	18.42%	35
Enhanced/revised training opportunities	16.84%	32
Other (tell us more)	1.58%	3
Total	100.00%	190

Three (3) respondents indicated 'Other':

- Neon Grant for training staff
- Trying to recruit in high schools
- Pay staff fairly already, without raising wages

OPEN RESPONSES

The survey prompted respondents to answer an open-ended question to enhance the insight and information collected through this needs assessment. Responses to these questions have been reviewed and analyzed.

8. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding the capacity of your organization?

Twenty-two (22) individuals responded to the question. Across responses, the following themes emerged:

- Reimbursement rates make it hard to pay a higher wage
- Turnover and hiring appropriate staff make it hard to have a full staff

> *"We are working hard to expand the program so that we are able to serve more individuals successfully."*

These themes align with responses provided in December. All responses to this question are in Appendix 1.

9. What other information would you like us to gather from providers that could help with planning and capacity building?

Twenty-two (22) individuals responded to the question. Respondents requested to know how other providers:

- Provide bonuses and incentives to their staff
- Provide training for leadership
- Utilize best practices in recruiting
- Increase retention among their staff

All responses to this question may be found in Appendix 2.

RECOMMENDATIONS

PCG provides the following recommendations based on results and analysis of survey data.

1. ***Elevating Best Practices*** Respondents to the December survey identified several measures that would be helpful to gain information on, including average case load sizes and successful recruitment and retention practices. **In addition to the release of this report, PCG recommends the communication of these practices on a larger scale.** For example, this data could be released as a part of the upcoming Supervisor Toolkit, to be published later this spring.

2. ***Exploring the impact of rate increases*** On March 8, BRS announced rate increases for employment services to support the capacity of these providers, to be in effect beginning April 1, 2022. **PCG recommends that BRS and stakeholders consider adding questions to this survey that measure the impact of these increases on the capacity of providers.**

3. ***Understanding Barriers to Reaching the Participant*** In both survey cycles, respondents reported 'cannot reach the participant' as the most frequent cause of delay in services. It may be considered that individuals who are referred to providers may be contacted by these agencies many weeks, or over a month, after they met with their VR counselor. This lag may be associated with reduced motivation to seek employment, or not knowing why the agency is reaching out. While not directly related to the capacity of providers, the level of effort involved with reaching participants may take away from

employment specialists' time to deliver services. **PCG recommends that BRS consider exploration of the time it takes from initial eligibility to first service delivered to determine if this is having an impact on the response rate of participants.**

CONCLUSION

In the second deployment of this capacity survey, 61 respondents serving all counties across Indiana provided information about their capacity, examining multiple factors such as staffing as well as other barriers to timely service delivery. As the process continues, PCG has provided a set of recommendations to refine the process to maximize the impact and usability of the evaluation process.

APPENDIX 1

Is there anything else you would like to share regarding the capacity of your organization?
We have dedicated employees. The trick is recruiting good people who will stay.
Don't just hire to fill the position. Wait for the right person.
not at this time
Nothing at this time.
Have built in extra capacity to handle more referrals
Need better funding to pay staff higher wages
We have not staff. Reimbursement rates for services do not allow us to pay staff enough.
We do not have a waiting period to start working with the participants.
N/A
No
no
Searching for Employment Consultants has taken 6 months to fill positions for our last two openings
We are working hard to expand the program so that we are able to serve more individuals successfully
At our Pike County office there is only one employment consultant.
ES's have a small case load in order to spend more time with the participants each week. ES's spend 2-8 hours a week with each participant.
My organization is a non-for-profit and currently we only have one employment specialist
We do not have a problem with employee retention at the center. Most employee's have been here 5-20 years.
We cover many activities including: adult VR, Pre-ETs, Project Search, and Aim. Therefore, have many students to cover as well.
No
Still low wages due to low reimbursement rate for VR
We are struggling. Currently there are no ECs for our organization. One local employer pays $20 p/hr.
No
n/a

APPENDIX 2

What other information would you like us to gather from providers that could help with planning and capacity building?
How to successfully recruit good employees--target graduating students?
More information on recruiting and retention strategies/practices
There needs to be more training for leadership. The companies who are successful have good leadership.
none at this time
Suggestions on how providers are recruiting and hiring bonuses.
?
Average pay rates and any incentive/bonuses paid to staff by other organizations.
Average pay for a new EC and any incentive/bonuses that other providers offer.
Training for varying disabilities
none
none
Average wages and benefits from providers.
If there are different responsibilities, someone doing discovery and another employee doing trainings, what is the percentage of discovery types to training types?
Rate of pay. What types of training they provide.
What is the average length of time it takes to get a person from referral to VR services
Paperwork and billings take a lot of time and processing--Why do we as employment consultants have to constantly request auth. after the initial one.
Number of new clients referred monthly or quarterly.
NA
Please see data sharing group recommendations from Discovery Cohort.
We only hire when we have participants, yet if they exit VR without extended services we don't need extra staffing.
No
What are some recruitment strategies implemented to attract new employment specialists?