

# Thank you for joining us for today's National Community of Practice webinar

Our program will begin promptly at  
3:00 p.m. ET. Until then, please sit  
back and enjoy the music!

# Community of Practice: The Power of Partnerships



*March 15, 2021*

**LEWIN GROUP®**

**TASH**

*This presentation was prepared by The Lewin Group/TASH under the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Administration on Disabilities (AoD) Contract HHSP2332015000881 / 75P00120F37007*

# Maximizing Your Webinar Participation: *Zoom Tips, 1/2*

- **Audio Settings:** You can change your [audio settings](#). You can also click the upward arrow (^) next to the microphone icon at the lower-left of the Zoom window to change your speaker.
- **Captioning:** Available in a separate browser window by clicking the [following page on Caption Texted](#).
- **Questions:** If you have a question for today's presenters, please type it in the Q&A box at any time during the presentation. You do not have to wait for the Q&A discussion to begin. Open the Q&A window, type in your question, and then press "send". You can also include questions in the chat box. You will receive a reply back via text in the Q&A window or the question will be answered live.

# Maximizing Your Webinar Participation: *Zoom Tips, 2/2*

- **During the Interactive Discussion**
  - **Raise Hand:** [Raise your hand](#) when the interactive discussion begins if you would like to provide feedback or make a comment regarding a specific question that has been asked of the participants.
  - **Unmute/Mute:** Once the host acknowledges you, you can unmute by pressing the “Mute/Unmute” button at the task bar at the bottom of your screen, and then provide your comments. All participants will be able to hear you during this time. Be sure to mute yourself again after you have made your comments.
- **Leave meeting:** Click **Leave meeting** to leave the webinar at any time. You can rejoin if the webinar is still in progress.

# Conceptual Framework

- **Purpose:** Provide evidence-based training and TA to AoD grantees across programs to improve capacity to effectuate increased employment and economic outcomes of individuals with disabilities across the nation.
- **Focus of TA:** Scalability/sustainability of evidence-based practices, provision of tools, skills-development, strategies, resource development, and partnerships/collaborations.
- **Desired Outcomes:** Demonstrable improvements in employment & economic outcomes for individuals with an array of abilities directly in connection with efforts by AoD grantees.

# Agenda

- **Welcome and Introductory Remarks**
- **South Carolina Team**
- **Tennessee Team**
- **Louisiana Representative**
- **Indiana Team**
- **Questions, Comments, and Interactive Discussion**

# South Carolina Speaker Introductions

Sandy Jordan,  
Able South Carolina



Cheryl Hubbard-George,  
Florence School District Three



# Able South Carolina, 1/2

- Able South Carolina (SC) reached out to state Department of Education (DOE) in 2018 for an additional school pilot site for the Partnerships in Employment (PIE) grant.
  - Data collection, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Developmental Disabilities (DD) Agency, family buy-in.

# Able South Carolina, 2/2

- Florence County is an unserved area for CILs in our state.
  - In 2019-2020, served 18 students with Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS).
    - Focus on students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). It's ok to start small!
  - In 2020-2021, expanded to other students with disabilities.
- Collaboration with Career & Technical Education (CTE).

# South Carolina Florence Three School District

- Buy-in from superintendent/board was critical.
- Dedicated time from the special education director to the school-based team.
- Shared accountability from each team member to commit to monthly meetings and agenda items.
- Think outside of the box – accomplishing team goals requires commitment, innovation, and bravery. **Be fearless!**

# Reach out for questions!



Cheryl Hubbard-George  
Special Education Director  
Florence Three School District  
Email: [chubbard@fsd3.org](mailto:chubbard@fsd3.org)

Sandy Jordan  
Director of Employment Programs  
Able South Carolina  
Email: [sjordan@able-sc.org](mailto:sjordan@able-sc.org)

# Tennessee Speaker Introductions



**Wanda Willis,**  
Tennessee (TN) Council  
on Developmental  
Disabilities (CDD)



**Lauren Percy,**  
TN CDD



**Elise McMillan,** Vanderbilt Kennedy  
Center (VKC) University Center of  
Excellence in Developmental  
Disabilities (UCEDD)

# Tennessee Partnerships

- Tennessee partnerships built and sustained Employment First across the broader workforce system. Key partnerships:
  - [Employment Roundtable](#) of state agencies, led by Council on Developmental Disabilities **for the past decade+**.
  - [Governor’s Employment First Task Force](#), following Employment First Executive Order in 2013.
  - [TennesseeWorks](#) is the over-arching partnership connecting all public and private groups, led by Vanderbilt Kennedy Center.

# Details

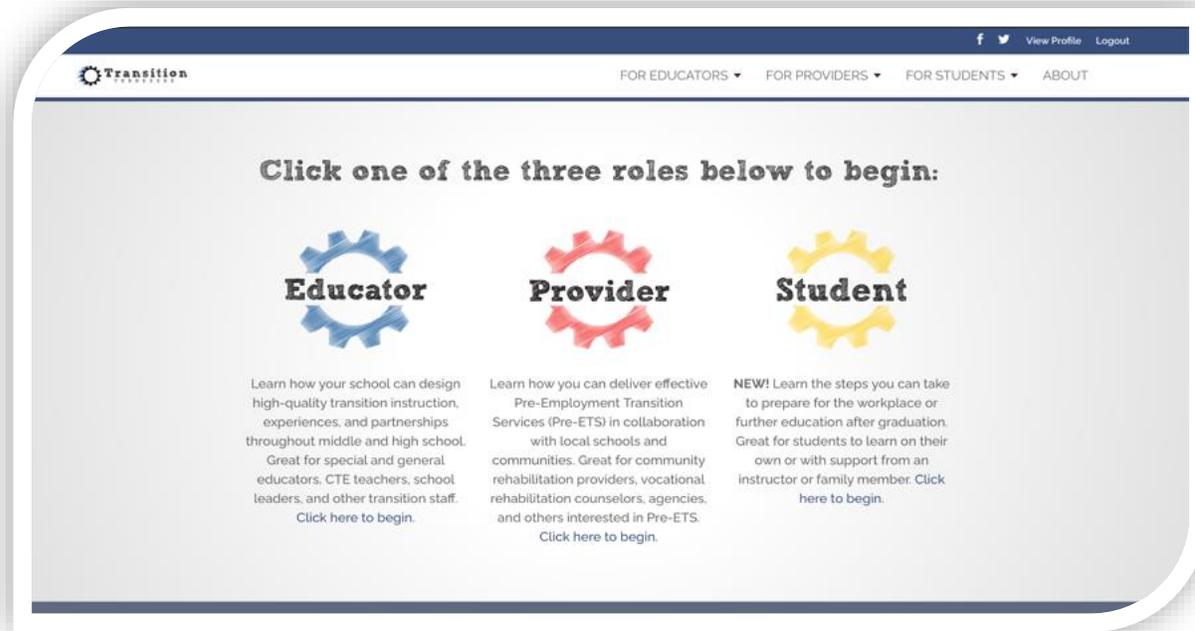
- A [strategic plan](#), carried out through the TennesseeWorks Partnership, organizes and guides all work statewide.
- The TennesseeWorks Partnership publishes [data and research](#) to inform statewide efforts.
- Employment efforts are carried out in subgroups, both formal and informal. For example: the Mental Health subgroup, the American Job Center (AJC) subgroup, and the Employment Roundtable.

# TennesseeWorks

The screenshot shows the TennesseeWorks website homepage. At the top left is the TennesseeWorks logo, a stylized star made of overlapping triangles in blue, green, and orange. To its right is the tagline "Elevating Employment Outcomes for People with Disabilities". Further right are social media icons for Twitter, Facebook, and Email, along with a search bar. Below the logo and tagline are four colored navigation buttons: "SELF-ADVOCATES & FAMILIES" (blue), "EMPLOYERS & PROVIDERS" (orange), "EDUCATORS" (yellow), and "POLICYMAKERS" (grey). Underneath these are five menu items: "SUMMIT", "COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS", "RISE TO WORK BLOG", "HIRE MY STRENGTHS", and "ARCHIVED NEWSLETTERS". On the left side, there is a vertical yellow sidebar with a list of links: "ABOUT US", "GETTING TO WORK", "SUCCESS STORIES", "RESOURCES", "BY THE NUMBERS", "EVENTS", "VIDEOS", "CONTACT US", and "SUBSCRIBE". The main content area features a large group photo of diverse people. Below the photo is a headline "Disability Employment Benefits Us All" followed by a short paragraph of text. At the bottom left, there is a "Welcome to TennesseeWorks" section with a short introductory paragraph. At the bottom right, there is a blue "Subscribe eNewsletter" button with a "Sign Up Today" link below it.

- [www.tennesseeworks.org](http://www.tennesseeworks.org): online hub for employment and disability.
- Provides resources for employers, state agencies, educators, providers, self-advocates, and family members.
- Highlighted features:
  - “Rise to Work Blog” for parents.
  - “The Landscape Podcast.”
- Think Employment! Summits.

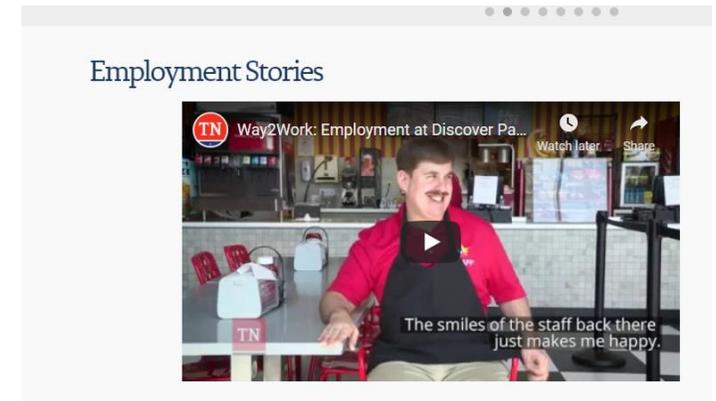
# Transition Tennessee



- [www.transitiontn.org](http://www.transitiontn.org).
- Provides training, technical assistance, and resources on preparing students for life after school.
- Collaboration between Vanderbilt, TN DOE, and TN's VR program.

# Employment First Task Force

Annually, the Employment First Task Force reports data, progress and goals to the Governor in the [Expect Employment Report](#).



# The Employment Roundtable

The [Employment Roundtable](#) convenes 10+ state agencies monthly to coordinate programs, services, and the Employment First approach.



# Examples of Impact

- **2014:** Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with 8 state agencies delivering transition services.
- **2016:** Employment and Community First CHOICES program for people with I/DD in the state's Medicaid 1115 waiver.
- **2017:** TransitionTN launched; 9,500+ registered users.
- **2019:** “Everyone Can Work” training for 400+ VR staff.
- **2020:** Updated Employment First training for all American Job Centers across Tennessee, reaching 1,000+ staff.
- **2021:** Community-Based Transition grant to create local Roundtables.

# Tennessee: Lessons Learned

Tennessee's partnerships act as 'bookends' to all of our employment work:

- Partnerships **Initiate** Ideas: Many of our projects were initiated *because of* the relationships developed through these partnerships. When stakeholders know each other and understand what other programs do, ideas are born.
- Partnerships **Sustain** Ideas: Distinct projects are connected and sustained by the partnerships. It is the difference between temporary initiatives and a broader Employment First 'movement.'

# Tennessee: Contact Information

Elise McMillan, Co-Director, VKC UCEDSD: [elise.mcmillan@vumc.org](mailto:elise.mcmillan@vumc.org)

Wanda Willis, Executive Director, TN CDD: [wanda.willis@tn.gov](mailto:wanda.willis@tn.gov)

Lauren Percy, Public Policy Director, TN CDD: [Lauren.j.Pearcy@tn.gov](mailto:Lauren.j.Pearcy@tn.gov)

# Louisiana Speaker Introduction

**Christopher Rodriguez,**  
Disability Rights Louisiana



# Disability Rights Louisiana

**Mission:** Disability Rights Louisiana protects and advocates for the human and legal rights of all children, adults and seniors with disabilities. Our work aims to empower the disability community to live an integrated life, free from abuse, neglect and exploitation.

# Priorities

- Community Integration and Healthcare
- Physical/Programmatic Access
- Autonomy
- **Employment**
- Voting
- Rights Protections and Institutions
- Strengthening Protections for Beneficiaries of Social Security
- Education



# Ongoing Partnerships

- Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP)
- Governor's Advisory Council on Disability Affairs (GACDA)
- Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council
- Louisiana Rehabilitation Council
  - Workforce Commission



# Opportunity to Enhance Partnership: *Background*

- This program first examined, on a very deep level, the extent in which successful employment outcomes were being obtained and sustained by individuals with serious mental illness and other mental health challenges.
- This was necessary in order to solidify our assumptions that this is an area of concern and to begin to exercise thoughtfulness with respect to possible solutions.

# Process to Validate the Presumed Area of Need

- Review existing systems and current quality metrics related to the employment of individuals with serious mental illness (SMI).
- Look at referral workflow and associated payment mechanisms of individuals with SMI into Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS).
- Review for potential reverse incentives and other barriers to employment:
  - Within the existing systems.
  - **Goal:** Implementing systems change and new outcome measures.

# Work Products

- Research Paper on State of the Issue.
- Development of Executed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Louisiana Office of Behavioral Health (OBH) and LRS.
- Development of Strategic Plan of Communication between OBH and LRS.

# Research Paper

- The research paper was the product of months of individual and collaborative discussions amongst the partners and other stakeholders with the subject matter expert (SME).
  - About: Current state of employment outcomes within the target population.
- Paper was written by SME:
  - Provided objective and professional perspective on the extent in which the perceived issue existed within the state.
  - Also provided insight with regards to best practices and tailored solutions.

# Opportunity to Enhance Partnership: *Memorandum of Understanding*

It was concluded that increased collaboration and communication between LRS and OBH would yield improved employment outcomes for the target population. In order to provide specific direction and to build accountability the partners felt that an MOU was necessary.

# Opportunity to Enhance Partnership: *Key Components and Objectives of the Memorandum of Understanding*

- An agreed upon and defined purpose of the MOU
- Set regular meetings between the two agencies to discuss progress
- Development of an inter-agency referral process
- Declared principal contacts
- Joint marketing and communication strategies
- Shared cross agency information and data tracking
- Cross agency training

# Strategic Communications Plan

Document was developed by the partners, with support of the SME:

- Outlined in detail how each state agency partner and others would work to communicate with the target population, with each other, and the public.

# Key Components of Strategic Communications Plan

The primary components of the plan identified the following:

- Target population of the communication.
- Which partner is responsible for which communications.
- The form of the communication (e.g., memo, social media post, press conference/public event).
- Frequency of communication.

# Final Thoughts: Keys to Successful Partnership, 1/1

- You need to have a diverse set of partners at the table.
- Having a third party objective facilitator and/or SME can be extremely beneficial.
- Holding partners accountable for participating is important.
- Understanding the extent of the presumed issue before developing a solution is vital.

# Final Thoughts: Keys to Successful Partnership, 2/2

- Understanding that identifying a need or problem area is not about assigning blame or pointing fingers, but about collectively being thoughtful about solutions.
- Creating realistic products that have universal buy-in from partners.
- Follow up on progress!

# Contact

Christopher Rodriguez, Executive Director, Disability Rights Louisiana:  
[crodriguez@disabilityrightsla.org](mailto:crodriguez@disabilityrightsla.org), (504) 522-2337

# Indiana Speaker Introductions

Peter Bisbecos,  
Rehabilitation Hospital of Indiana



Laura Trexler,  
Rehabilitation Hospital of Indiana



# Higher Level Systems

## Why Competencies are relevant

- The origin of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Systems versus Traumatic Brain Injury Systems.
- The explosion of knowledge regarding brain injury prevalence, chronicity, complexity, and treatment options.
- Why competencies are relevant to you.

# Overview

## Administration for Community Living (ACL)

### Traumatic Brain Injury State Partnership Program Grants

- Overarching Aim
- Grant Workgroups and Partnerships
- Workforce Training Initiative
  - review grant legacy materials
  - identify gaps
  - develop new training materials aligned with core competencies

# Historical Perspective

Historical perspective – Indiana as a leader in return-to-work outcomes

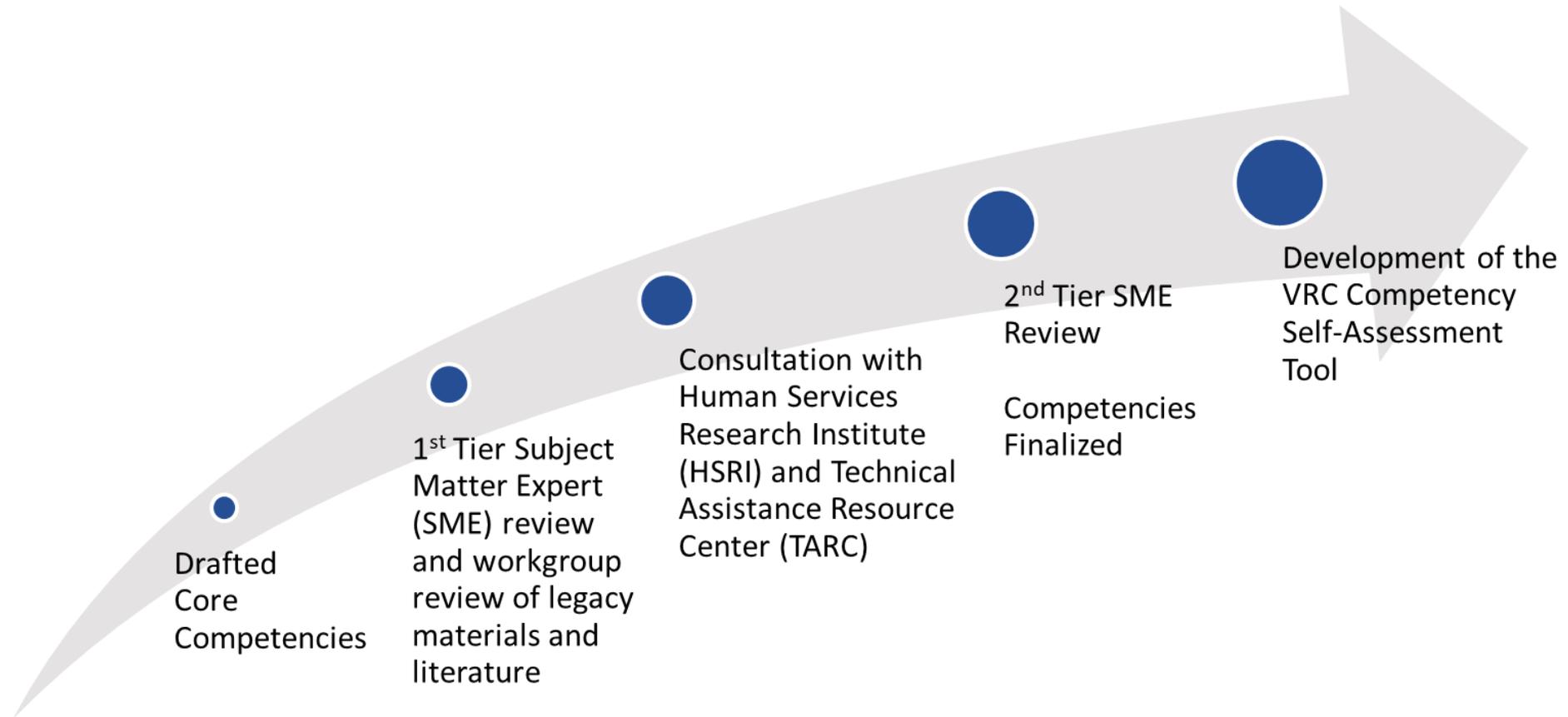
- 2008 Grant Award:
  - Lead Agency: Vocational Rehabilitation
  - Subcontractors:
    - Brain Injury Association of Indiana
    - Rehabilitation Hospital of Indiana

# Workgroup Accomplishments

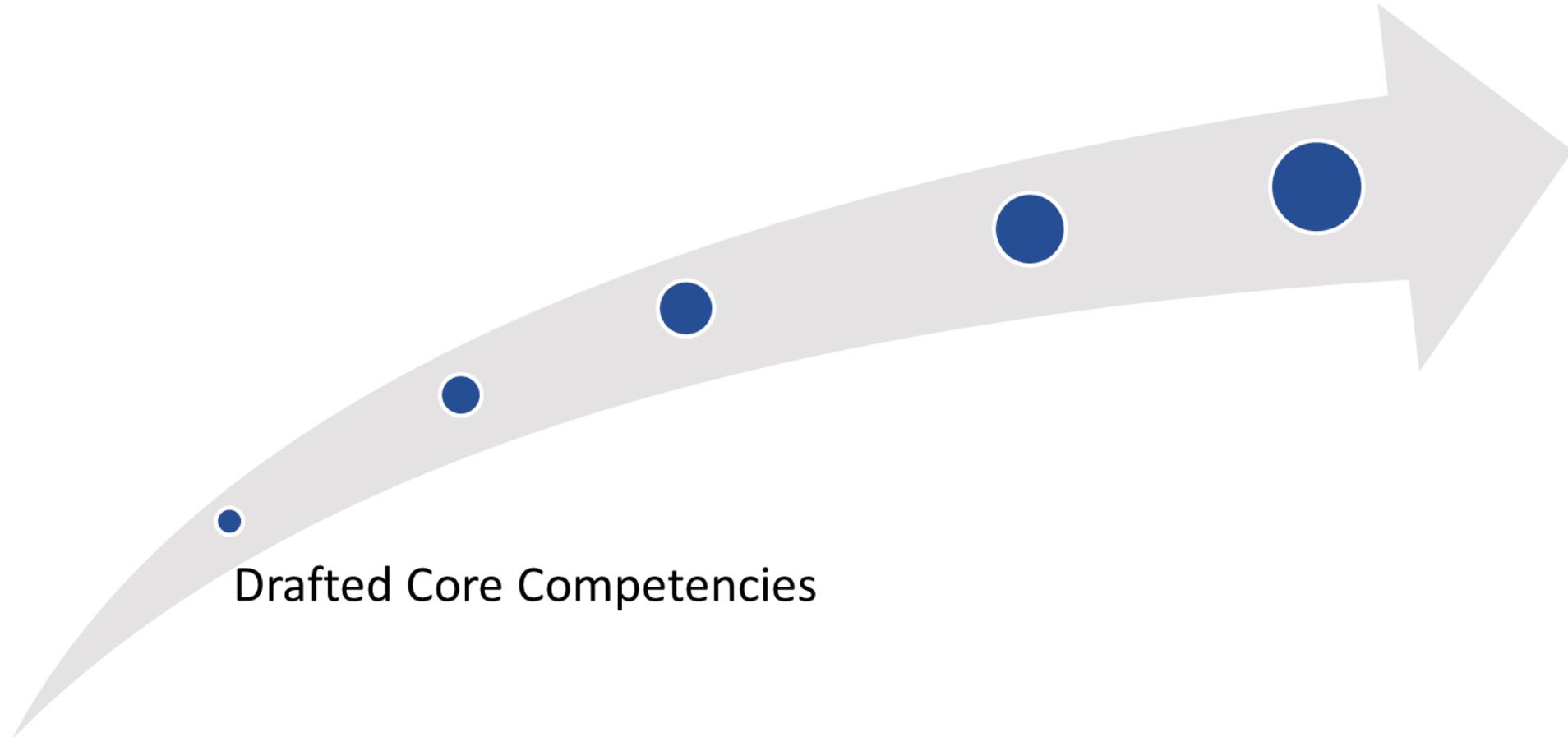
## The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) Competencies and the Competency Self-Assessment

How did we get here?

# The Process – an Overview

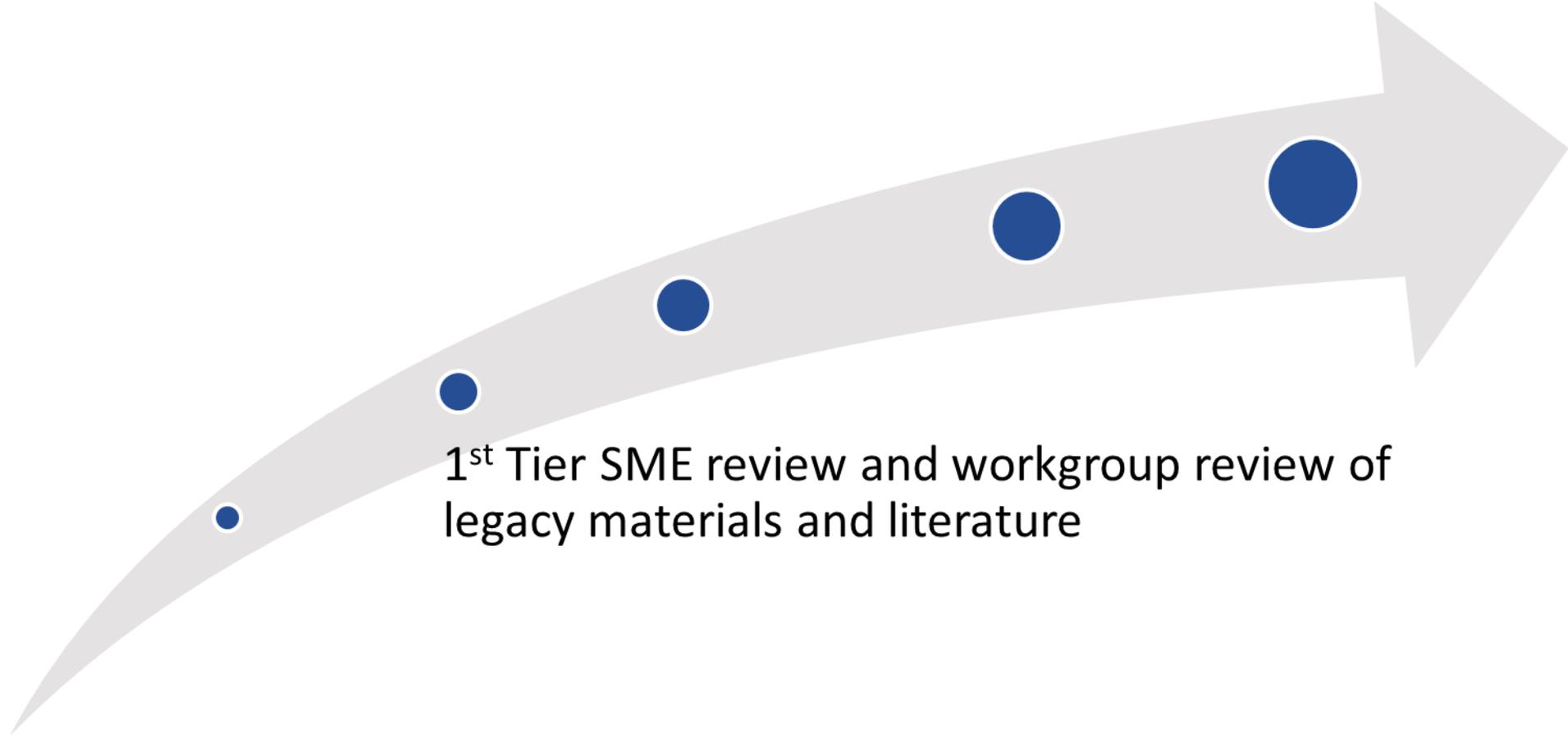


# First Step

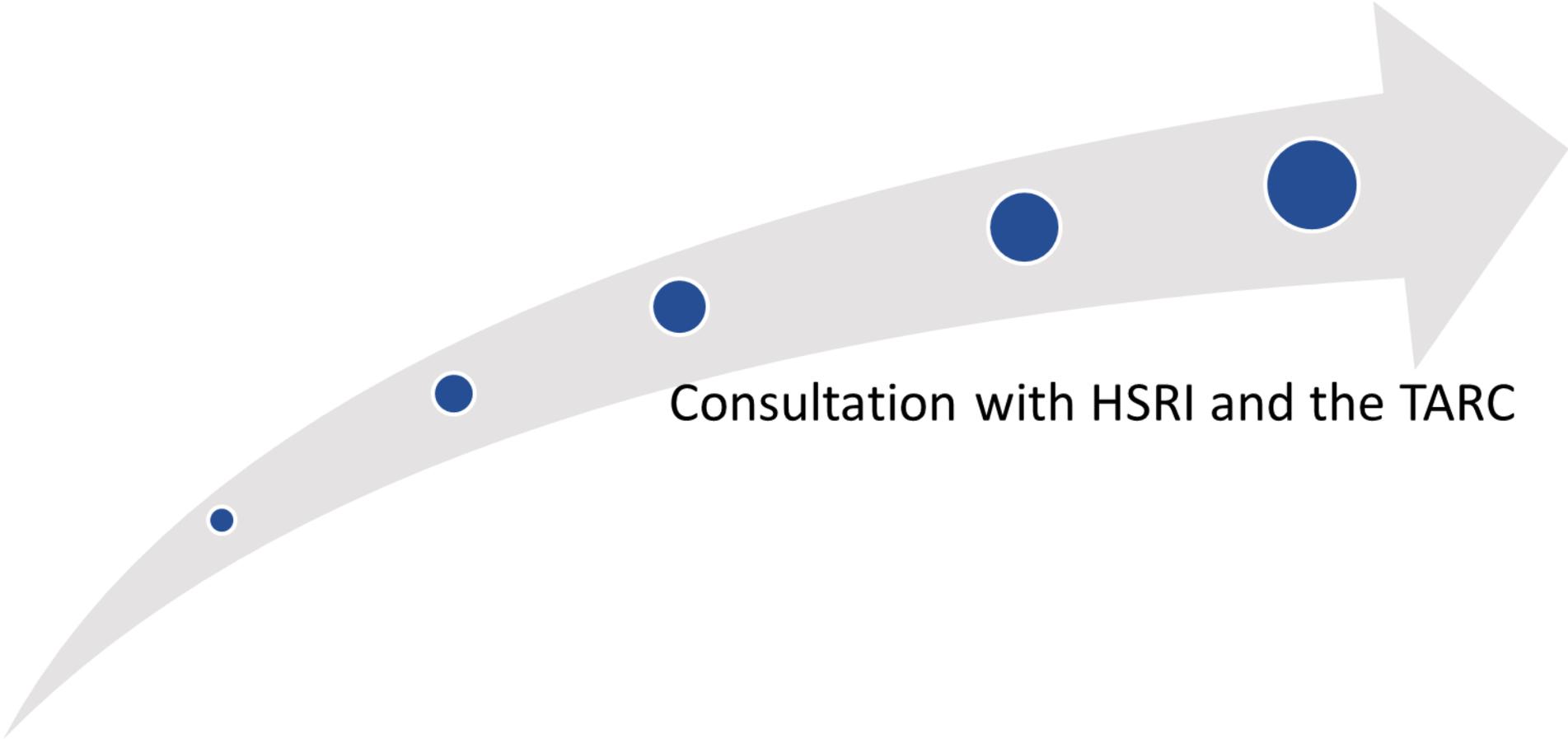


Drafted Core Competencies

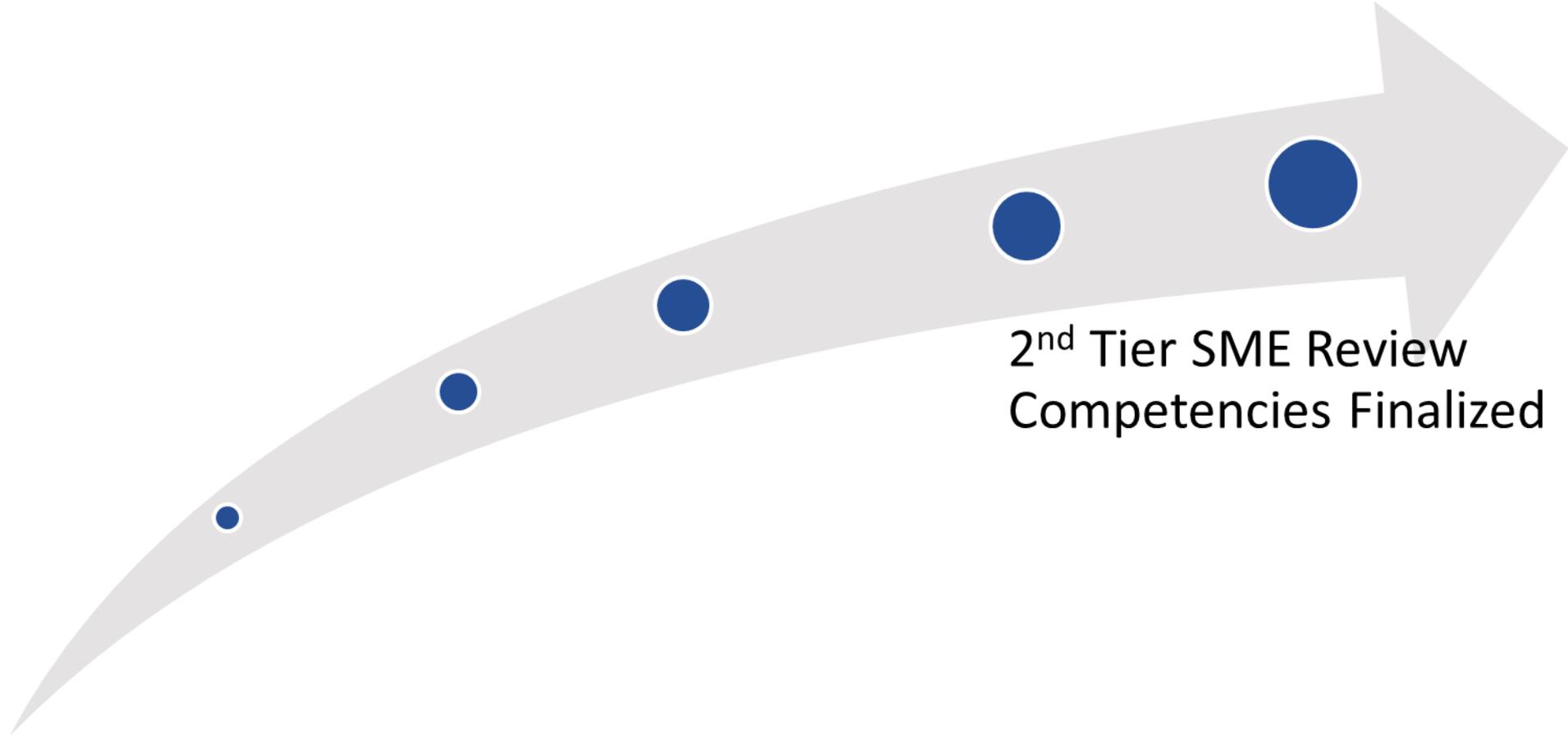
# Subject Matter Experts, Literature, Legacy Material Review



# Consultation with the Technical Assistance Center

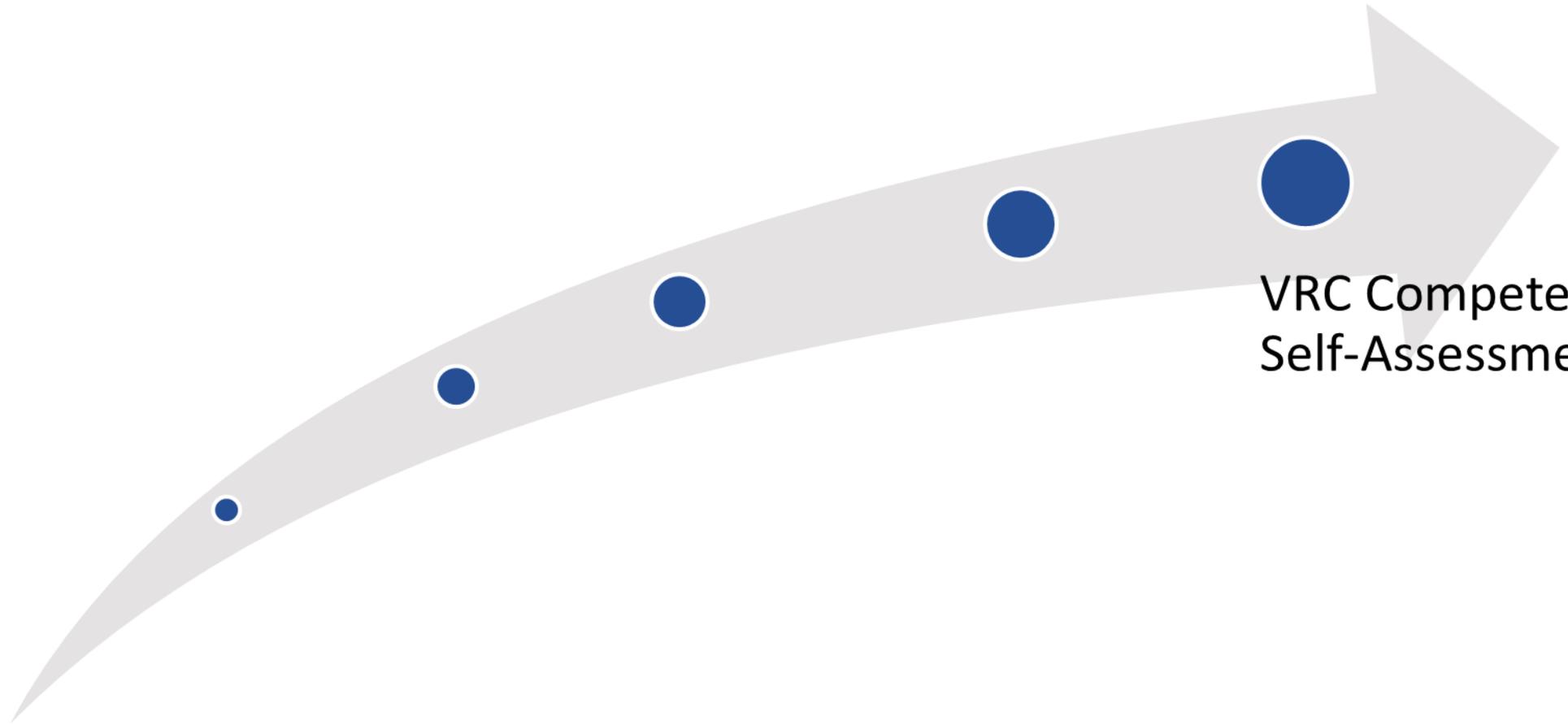


# Second Tier Subject Matter Experts



2<sup>nd</sup> Tier SME Review  
Competencies Finalized

# The VRC Competency Self Assessment



VRC Competency  
Self-Assessment

# VRC Competency Self-Assessment Rating Scale, 1/2

**0 – None:** no understanding of the competency.

**1 – Limited:** limited understanding of the competency, limited opportunity to apply the competency, competency has been **minimally demonstrated**.

**2 – Basic:** basic understanding sufficient enough to **handle routine tasks, requires** some **guidance** and **supervision** when applying this competency, can discuss terminology and concepts related to this competency.

# VRC Competency Self-Assessment Rating Scale, 2/2

**3 – Proficient: detailed knowledge**, understanding, and application of the competency; requires minimal guidance or supervision, **consistently demonstrates success** in the competency, **able to assist others** in the application of the competency.

**4 – Advanced: highly developed knowledge**, understanding, and application of the competency; is able **to coach or teach others** on the competency; can help **develop materials and resources** in the competency.

**5 – Expert: specialist/authority level** knowledge, understanding, and application of the competency; recognized by others an expert in the competency and is **sought by others** throughout the organization; **able to explain issues in relation to broader organizational** issues; **creates new applications or processes**; has a strategic focus.

# Sample Competencies:

## Brain Injury Medical and Rehabilitation Domain

- Understands medical and rehabilitation terminology pertaining to TBI.
- Recognizes how symptoms (fatigue, reduced auditory comprehension, impaired attention, impaired memory, decreased executive skills, and more) of brain injury can affect work performance in a variety of ways (e.g., interpersonal interactions, personal and home independence, and community re-entry).

# Sample Competencies: Employment

- Understands and accounts for factors, such as reduced self-awareness and memory impairment, that must be considered with other functional skills information in determining eligibility for Vocational Rehabilitation services.
- Partners with the individual to identify and employ accommodations to ensure success in Vocational Rehabilitation services.
- Understands the importance of integrating support persons and professional recommendations in employment planning and goal development.

# Sample Competencies: State & Local Systems, Resources, Service Coordination

- Understands state-specific initiatives and mandates related to employment (e.g., Governor proclamations, priorities, goals).
- Understands the importance of case management and system's navigation to facilitate goal attainment.
- Knows state, district, and local community employment support resources and associated referral processes.

# Sample Competencies: National Systems, Research, and Best Practices

- Understands relevant federal legislation, including but not limited to, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA), and any state-specific legislation related to return to work and work supports.
- Understands a wide variety of evidence-based vocational rehabilitation models and return-to-work approaches for persons with TBI.

# Current Status

- Survey closed February 12, 2021.
- 269 respondents in the final data set:
  - State one: 57 respondents
  - State two: 82 respondents
  - State three: 133 respondents
  - State four: 29 respondents

# Analyses Strategy for Publication, 1/2

## Authors

Keri Bennett, NE

Dr. Dillahunt-Aspillaga, FL

Carla Lasley, NE

Will Schmeeckle, NE

Dr. Lance Trexler, IN

Laura Trexler, IN

## Basic Analyses

- Are there differences between states for level of experience, education, & role?
- Are there differences for the total sample (n = 269) between the four domains (medical & rehabilitation, employment, state systems and services, national systems and best practices)?
- Are there differences between states for the four domains?

# Analyses Strategy for Publication, 2/2

## Statistical analysis

- To examine the relationship between experience, role, and education (separate) with perceived self-competency for the four domains.

## Recommendations:

- VR staff training
- Establishing best practices
- Implementation of fidelity metrics

# Indiana: Lessons Learned

The value of:

- Time
- Diversity
- Thoughtful Communication
- Flexible Approach



# Questions, Comments, and Interactive Discussion



# Contact Information:

[AoDEmploymentTA@gmail.com](mailto:AoDEmploymentTA@gmail.com)

## Website:

<https://aoddisabilityemploymenttacenter.com/>

