



DEVELOPING A BUSINESS FOCUSED MESSAGE AND EMPLOYMENT FIRST STANDARDIZED PRACTICE

A unified message to employers about the bottom line benefits of recruiting, hiring and advancing employees who have disabilities must be clear across vocational rehabilitation providers. In order to better support inclusive hiring practices, the job development process should focus on mutually beneficial relationship creation and research-based human resource solutions.

A skilled supported employment workforce will need to create and foster strategic partnerships with employers. Developing an understanding of an employer’s workforce needs and challenges in the context of regional labor market trends is essential. Effective assessment of the knowledge, skills, abilities and interests of people with disabilities served is equally important. Matching these elements while providing continuous support and quantifying benefits to the employer builds capacity and illustrates added value. This tool will help supported employment career consultants develop effective employer engagement strategies.

#1 CREATE AN INFORMED EMPLOYER OUTREACH AND EDUCATION STRATEGY

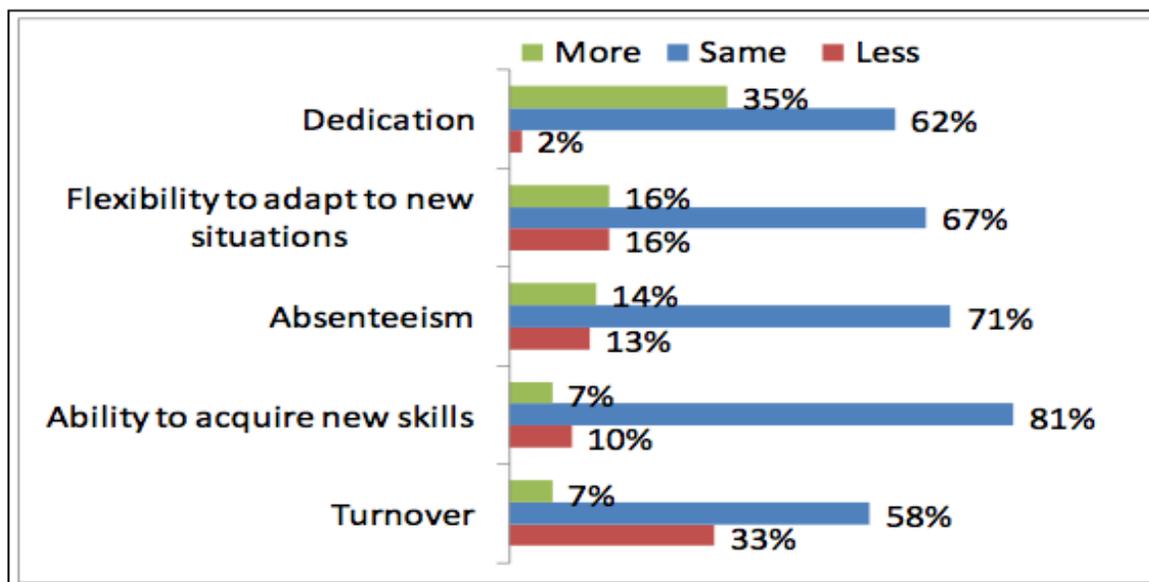
The key features of engaging business relationships according to “What is Business Engagement”¹ by Alexandra Waugh and Jeanne Miller are:

<p>Continuous: cultivating long-term relationships, rather than episodic, one-time, or short-term transactions on an as-needed basis.</p>	<p>Strategic: approaching business in the context of specific plans, opportunities, and objectives, rather than on a spot basis, when the agency needs assistance.</p>	<p>Mutually valuable: solving problems and creating value for both sides of the labor market: businesses (the demand side) and VR providers and consumers (the supply side).</p>	<p>Wide-ranging: engaging a variety of businesses by using varied methods to recruit and involve a large number, rather than relying on one or a few of the usual representatives.</p>
<p>Comprehensive: engaging businesses in a variety of issues and activities ranging from program development and competency</p>	<p>Intensive: engaging businesses substantively and in depth, moving the conversations from a high level (“We need higher-skilled candidates”) to an in-depth dialogue about</p>	<p>Empowering: encouraging businesses to develop and assume leadership roles in pathway development and other initiatives; approaching potential partners from business</p>	<p>Institutionally varied: engaging business through a number of channels, including industry or professional associations, public workforce entities (Workforce Investment Boards, One-Stop Career Centers), chambers of</p>

identification to consumer advising and placement, and policy advocacy on critical issues.	specific skill sets, long-term economic needs, and strengths and weaknesses of educational and VR programs in meeting them.	at the outset of the process, rather than near the end.	commerce, labor-management training partnerships, and economic development authorities (Wilson, 2015).
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#2 CLEARLY ARTICULATE THE BENEFITS OF DIVERSITY HIRING & RETENTION INITIATIVES

Employment First messaging to employers includes business-focused benefits associated with the employment of persons who have disabilities. Statistics showing the direct and indirect benefits of hiring and retaining employees with disabilities have been collected. Share these statistics and gather new data on the benefits to employers in your network.



ii

Source: NOD –Kessler/Harris Poll 2010

Statistics from Walgreens Initiative to hire people with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities reinforce business reasons to hire employees with disabilities:

- 48% greater tenure, decreasing recruiting/training costs
- 34% fewer safety incidents
- 90% perform equal to or better than those without disabilities
- Absenteeism is 40% less

A Job Accommodation Network (JAN) Study reveals the direct and indirect benefits of implementing accommodations. The study also found that a high percentage (59%) of accommodations cost absolutely nothing to make, while the rest typically cost only \$500.ⁱⁱⁱ

Direct Benefits of Implementing Accommodations	%	Indirect Benefits of Implementing Accommodations	%
Retained a valued employee	90%	Improved interactions with co-workers	64%
Increased the employee's productivity	73%	Increased overall company morale	63%
Eliminated costs associated with training a new employee	61%	Increased overall company productivity	56%
Increased the employee's attendance	56%	Increased workplace safety	46%
Increased diversity of the company	40%	Improved interactions with customers	45%
Saved workers' compensation or other insurance costs	38%	Increased overall company attendance	40%
Hired a qualified person with a disability	13%	Increased profitability	27%
Promoted an employee	9%	Increased customer base	16%

Source: Job Accommodation Network, askjan.org, 2016

#3 DEMONSTRATE COST SAVINGS

HOW TO QUANTIFY COST SAVINGS

In order to quantify cost savings associated with job placement strategies such as customized employment, Jennifer White, a 2017 Illinois Employment First State Leadership Mentorship Program (EFSLMP) Subject Matter Expert, suggests creating a personalized cost savings chart. An example from Able Opportunities, Inc. is included in this toolkit.

Able Opportunities, Inc. suggests, "Analysis allows an employer to understand the financial value of customized positions, based on assessment of work duties and work flow. To gather information needed: Observe a department and document data. Who is completing the task now? Meet with the staff of the department and ask questions.

- **What tasks tend to fall off and do not get completed?**
- **Are there areas that create conflict among staff because they are not standardized?**
- **Are there tasks that would support your whole team?**
- **Who is completing those tasks now?**

Once you know who is completing the tasks now, find out the hourly wage of each of these positions. Create the chart based on these numbers. Note that the employee with a disability is not worth less than the current employee, but they are not cross-trained for higher level work."

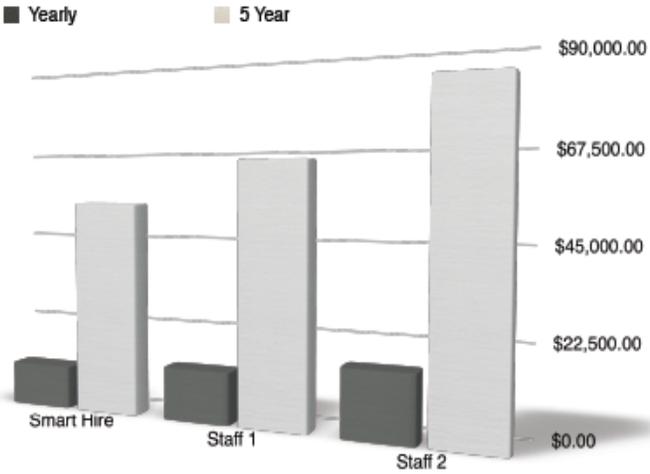
**YOUR COMPANY
LOGO HERE**

Your mission here.

	Pay/Hr	Hr/Wk	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly	5 Year
Smart Hire	\$10.50	20	\$210.00	\$909.30	\$10,911.60	\$54,558.00
Staff 1	\$12.60	20	\$252.00	\$1,091.16	\$13,093.92	\$65,469.60
Staff 2	\$16.10	20	\$322.00	\$1,394.26	\$16,731.12	\$83,655.60
SAVINGS					\$5,819.52	\$29,097.60

Matching tasks to the gifts and strengths of your employees makes good business sense.

Based on a 20hour position a Smart Hire could save you up to \$29,097.60 over a five year period!



Contact Information

* Fill In Logo, Mission and Contact Information. Fill in the starting rate of the Smart Hire and the title and hourly rate of two staff who are currently completing these tasks. Delete this instruction.

#4 IDENTIFY MISCONCEPTIONS & MEET EMPLOYER NEEDS ACROSS PHASES OF EMPLOYMENT

Illinois' Employment First State Leadership Mentorship Program (EFLMMP) Subject Matter Expert, Jennifer White, indicates that statistics are not enough. Misconceptions about vocational service providers, employer views and beliefs about the abilities of job seekers exist on both the demand and supply side of disability focused workforce initiatives. Based on polling data collected between 2007-2017 by Able Opportunities, Inc., most often, service system providers believe that discrimination by the employer is the biggest barrier to employment opportunities.

Ironically, employers perceive a lack of self-advocacy from the potential employee, in other words the fact that supported employment service providers speak for the job seeker, as the biggest barrier. They

note that they most often hire the support team, and do not always develop a strong relationship with their own employee. They also report frustration with a lack of consistent professional practice and accountability in service system providers.

These variables can reinforce a charity model, something to do when a company feels they have the bandwidth for a special project. Business minded standardized practice allows for a shift in this perception.

Employer Quote: “The business perspective may be different than the service provider perspective. As much as we want to do what is compassionate...we have to meet the bottom line. Any employee has to contribute to the bottom line. Our question is, what can you (service providers) do to help the bottom line?”

<p>According to Transcen’s Technical Report, “Strategies Used by Employment Service Providers in the Job Development Process: Are they consistent with what employers want?”^{iv} A mismatch exists between what supported employment service providers offer/perceive and what employers want/perceive. Employers are searching for specific services and supports throughout phases of the employment process. These services and supports are detailed in Table 2, Employer Perspectives on the Employment Process, of the report.</p>		
<p>Developing and Maintaining Relationships</p> <p>Employers want:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information/clarity about scope of agencies’ services, supports • Information on the benefits to the business’ bottom line • Attract broader customer base • Meet the needs of growing global and diverse markets • Recognition as being socially responsible • Education, preparation and training (informal learning) that is timely with focus on real workplace activities • Access to experts and trusted, credible sources of information/data related to disability employment (i.e. cost of accommodations, the laws/equal opportunities, tax incentives) 		
Recruiting	Hiring	Advancing
<p>Employers value:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attaining visible top management commitment • Demonstrating how applicants add value to the business • Using testimonials to document performance • Demonstrate how the applicant will adding value to the bottom 	<p>Employers value:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of applicant performance • Testimonials from other senior personnel regarding hiring issues • Employees with previous work experience • Disclosure information that is 	<p>Employers value:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance with performance appraisals & assessments • Follow-up communication • Coaching and support for supervisors • Reducing staff turnover • Return on investment • Information/resources on disability policies and accommodations

line	credible and linked to accommodations and performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3rd Party assistance / support (e.g., job accommodations, customized solutions) • Hiring solutions, not hiring needs 	
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#5 DEVELOP YOUR CONTENT AND A FRAMEWORK FOR EMPLOYER CONTACT

Preparation is the key to success for Supported Employment Professionals. The workforce development field is complex and employers do not always know the interplay between systems or funding sources. Your understanding of these systems and complimentary services offered within them will help educate employers and build trust in your capabilities and services.

Supported Employment service providers should be aware of:

Trends in the local and regional labor market, internal connections-has your agency's Board been briefed on your SE Program? Is your agency a Chamber member?	How to increase access to programs and courses that prepare individuals with disabilities for the needs of specific industries and the general labor market	Confusing industry jargon and issues that impede advocacy and information transmission-is your client willing to disclose, do you have a release of information?	Job Accommodations, hiring incentives, tax credits, services and supports like on the job training and apprenticeship programs available through DRS and IL WorkNet Centers
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It is very important to be aware of the qualities of an engaged business relationship so that you can continually assess and improve your employer outreach and relationship maintenance plan. Compare this framework to your current business engagement process and think about long-term engagement

goals rather than short-term needs. See the key features of engaging business relationships highlighted in Section #1 when developing your employer contact content.

Before contacting an employer a Supported Employment Professional should:

Conduct basic employer research- know employer demographic facts, mission statement, shared network connections

Gather basic information about job tasks and environmental factors associated with positions. Understand the resources your team can provide and do not overpromise to an employer.

Understand the skills, abilities, known assistive technology used to maximize independence and interests of the job seeker

Inventory the technical assistance and resources you can provide to an employer. Examples may include ADA consultation, job coaching, and or disability awareness training

A Customized Employment element called Discovery is an effective, skills-based vocational assessment model that can promote independence. A 2017 Employment First Grantees in the Division of Developmental Disabilities found, “the more time spent on assessment and discovery with an individual the less job coaching they needed”.

Specific Strategies that can help strengthen employer relationships and illustrate bottom line gains were recommended by the Illinois EFSLMP Subject Matter Expert, Jennifer White. These strategies are:

- Include a brief outline of service system partners and incentives when engaging employers.
- Create cost analysis for each customized position outlining cost differentials that benefit the company bottom line and mission (see example in Section #3).
- Request visual or video resumes when an applicant is challenged to represent themselves directly with an employer. See Video Resume Sample at www.ableopps.com. Employers report video resumes allow them to see potential employees instead of potential barriers.

- Define options for employees to capture job task requirements, track performance and report their production directly to their supervisor. Production charts can be captured low tech using excel spreadsheets or high tech in the Work Autonomy app.
- Establish metrics to measure return on investment.

Be aware of things that may negatively impact business engagement and potentially damage your relationship with employers. Building trust is essential.

What Can Negatively Impact Business Engagement?

- Redundant contacts by your agency's vocational representatives-how are you tracking outreach and employer information?
- Lack of follow-up. Always do what you say you are going to do when you say you are going to do it!
- Not being respectful of the consultation time you requested of an employer-if you ask for 20 minutes, keep your meeting at 20 minutes or check in with the employer to see if they can accommodate additional time.
- Lack of preparation-not having a business meeting plan
- Overselling yourself or your agency's services
- Not being able to speak to successes-industry/size specific examples are most beneficial
- Not listening or not asking open ended questions that encourage information sharing
- Not recognizing the business as one of your customers
- Not doing research on the business before you engage with them
- Assuming you can "teach/train" your referral the position when you are not an expert on the job tasks

#6 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER, 3 CUPS OF TEA-AN INDIVIDUAL PLACEMENT AND SUPPORT (IPS), EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICE MODEL FOR ENHANCING EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIPS

Developing an individualized employer outreach plan that you are comfortable with is an important part of job development. Word choice and attitude convey much about your confidence and beliefs regarding the job seekers you represent. Creating and practicing a 30 second elevator speech or pitch about your services and the business reason for contacting the employer promotes success.

Consider creating a process and content framework similar to the IPS Supported Employment, 3 Cups of Tea model. Approach employers at local Chamber of Commerce events and leverage existing outreach

and advocacy arms of your organization so that their efforts advertise the successful vocational programs you represent. Remember that your organization's Board Members and Development Professionals have a broad range of contacts who may benefit from Supported Employment services.

Using techniques and tools like motivational interviewing and informational interviews with employers helps Supported Employment professionals gather important data on work related tasks, workplace culture, productivity demands and career ladder opportunities.

2017 Employment First Grantees in the Division of Developmental Disabilities found that, "creating relationships with employers through informational interviews was much more effective than responding to job openings" and that they "allowed them to more successfully determine which individual has the proper skills to match the needs of the employer".

Note: The following steps and activities are examples of employer contact flow. This example is adapted from the IPS 3 Cups of Tea job development training. In order to be effective activities and verbiage must be individualized for each employer. It is important to note that employer contacts may not flow through "cups of tea" exactly as described. For example, a Supported Employment professional may be surprised by an employer indicating they have time to learn more at the initial point of contact-be prepared for a jump to the second cup of tea! If you would like to observe an IPS job developer in action, watch the job development demonstration on the IPS Works Site: <https://ipsworks.org/index.php/video-library/>

Plan to engage the business in a strategic manner throughout the entire 4 phase business relationship lifecycle.



The intention of this format is to promote initial information gathering, relationship formation and trust building. Communication with employers continues beyond the 3 cups and is always accompanied by value added contributions like offers of disability awareness training, ADA updates or public relations opportunities. Though some quotes are included to offer suggestions about what to say during each of the 3 cup phases, we recommend experimenting with tailored approaches that fit the nature of your unique employer relationships. The IPS Model recommends 6 face to face meetings with employers per week. These meetings should be a balance of initial employer contacts and established employer connections with hiring authority.

Consider conducting an on-line, local or regional resource scan to explore if existing tools or partnerships will help you create value added contributions. Free resources such as this video series, funded by the Disability Employment Initiative, cover the ADA, Reasonable Accommodations, Assistive Technology and more:
<http://www.illinoisworknet.com/disabilityworks/Resources/Pages/Videos.aspx>

	1 ST Cup of Tea	2 nd Cup of Tea	3 rd Cup of Tea
Status of Relationship	Introduction. The goal is to make initial contact with an employer who is involved in the recruitment process and has hiring authority at the business.	Acquaintances. The goal is to get to know each other/learn about the business. Also, can be an opportunity to begin to share information around evidence based supported employment IPS services.	Network/recruitment resource. The goals are to continue to build professional relationships and find ways to support each other. Also, a time to talk a little bit more about your services,

			needs, and candidates who might be a good fit.
Length of Contact	2-5 Minutes	10-20 minutes-Ask what your business contact has time for	10-20 min – Depends on activities
Measure of Success	To set an Appointment with a representative who has the authority to hire or can give directives on candidate sourcing.	To set another appointment and clarify employer preferences for future contact. Gain info about business; your role is to encourage them to talk more using motivational interviewing and frequent open-ended questions. Ideally the employer is doing 70% of talking. Relationship is being developed and employment specialists is beginning to understand the employer's needs.	Set another appointment/ interview for job seeker. Employer agrees to meet someone or take resume. Sharing an employment proposal that includes a customized employment cost savings chart based on your informational interview. Employer agrees to do a mock interview or give a tour of business etc. Employer introduces you to other Dept. Supervisors
You Prepare by:	Know your intro script & practice it. Have business cards and any marketing material you would like to share. Be ready to answer questions and share information if requested. Share your contact plans and historical SE outreach to this employer with your team to increase efficiency and reduce redundancy. Be prepared for 2 nd Cup of Tea. Remember:	Do Internet research on the business Know the mission statement and develop a business profile or informational interview template to provide a framework for your interview. Have informed questions to ask based on your research – at least 4 or 5; Consider asking clarifying questions about open positions you saw listed with the employer. “What are your goals for the next 3 years and what types of employee recruitment and retention activities are a part of those goals?” “What are your	Understand job seeker's disclosure preferences. Be ready to talk about the job seeker's skills, interests, and abilities. Be aware of a client's assistive technology needs/preferences. Review notes from last meeting. Know job seeker's work history, & personality; Be ready to respond to curiosity or concerns. Some employers may not have experience working with people who have disabilities. Even if an employer is not currently hiring they may be

	<p>What can you do for the business? Purpose of Visit – learn employer needs Have a valid business reason to go back</p>	<p>current operational challenges- are certain tasks left undone_____? Are you aware of any specific policies or security protocol for checking in? Make sure to leave enough travel time.</p> <p>Tips: Being a patron of a business can help you build a relationship because it shows you support the business. Walking through a business ahead of time will help you learn about the work environment.</p> <p>Aim at Developing a relationship Have a valid business reason to go back</p>	<p>willing to do a mock interview.</p> <p>“Would you be willing to do a mock interview? You told me that (.....), I work with a person who (.....), Can I introduce them to you?”</p> <p>Have relevant, industry specific success stories to talk about Have a valid business reason to go back</p>
<p>What you Bring</p>	<p>Business Cards Brochure Have your calendar ready and up to date</p>	<p>Business card, information on services and resources you can offer, industry specific employer testimonials Job seekers resume Calendar</p>	<p>Resume of a match, materials/supports you introduced during the last meeting. Be ready to ask for a tour, mock interviews, job shadow etc.</p>
<p>What you might say</p>	<p>“Hello, I am an employment consultant who assists employers in meeting diverse recruitment needs. My services are free of charge. I would like the opportunity to speak with the owner or hiring manager about what your recruiting needs are and ways in which I may be able to assist you?”</p>	<p>“Hello, thank you for having me back to learn more about your business. Is now still a good time?”</p> <p>I noticed in the Chamber of Commerce Newsletter that you are a new member. I look forward to seeing you at some of the events. I also wanted to say congratulations on your</p>	<p>“Hi, it’s so nice to see you again. I brought a copy of our agency’s employment services newsletter-I mentioned it the last time we met. This month we featured a free 15 minute video on disability awareness. I hope it helps your staff members feel more comfortable with the</p>

	<p>A script example to consider was shared by a DRS colleague, John:</p> <p>“Hello, My name is John Marchioro. I am an employment consultant. One of our business customers, _____, who has also worked with your company, recommended I contact you.</p> <p>I’m reaching out to you because our agency assists businesses by providing solutions for their workforce needs as well as preparing talented, qualified job seekers for their chosen careers.</p> <p>I am very interested in scheduling a listening session so that I may be able to understand your company better and see how we can do the same for you.</p> <p>What times throughout the week do you think would be the best for us to do this?”</p>	<p>four star review in the Chicago Reader!</p> <p>I have prepared a few questions for you based on what I know about the field and what I learned from your website. My goal is to learn more about your business needs. Do you mind if I take some notes?”</p>	<p>disability etiquette concerns you mentioned during our last meeting. Please let me know if you have additional topics of interest because we want to tailor this resource to the needs of our employer partners.</p> <p>I know last time we met you had some questions about specific disability types and relevant accommodations. I have brought a list of potential job accommodations for you to review.</p> <p>I am thankful that you have time to give me a tour of the production floor.</p> <p>I reviewed some of the operational challenges you highlighted last week and believe that this tour will help me clarify your needs. Pre-assembling packing boxes might help the production team-perhaps we can discuss ideas with the floor manager after the tour?”</p> <p>After the tour: “Thank you so much for the tour. It helped me understand how to support your goals of increased efficiency. I work with a pool of talented job seekers who have skills that may help</p>
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			<p>resolve some of the challenges you highlighted.</p> <p>Would you be open to setting up a call or meeting to explore potential candidates? Based on what I learned during this tour I can review the skill sets of our job seekers to find strong applicant matches for referral.</p> <p>I have an excellent job seeker in mind- one applicant in particular has great manual dexterity and is really process oriented.”</p>
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ⁱ Waugh, Alexandra, and Jeanne Miller. “What Is Business Engagement?” *Explorevr.org*, 2018, www.explorevr.org/sites/explorevr.org/files/files/What%20is%20Business%20Engagement.pdf.

ⁱⁱ *Survey of Employment of Americans with Disabilities*. Conducted by Harris Interactive, 2010, *Kessler Foundation/NOD*

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://askjan.org/topics/costs.cfm>

^{iv} Simonsen, Monica, et al. “*Strategies Used by Employment Service Providers in the Job Development Process: Are They Consistent with What Employers Want?*” New Jersey Discover Ability Project, 2011, “*Strategies Used by Employment Service Providers in the Job Development Process: Are They Consistent with What Employers Want?*”

^v Marchioro, J. and Bedick, M. A., (2017). JDVRTAC Business Engagement Services Team 1 (BEST 1): Regional Meeting [PowerPoint slides].