Exploring Creative Talent Solutions with Vocational Rehabilitation: Partnering with MRS

November 16, 2026 Hidden Talent Conference

Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Opportunity
Michigan Rehabilitation Services

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF LABOR & ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

MRS PROMOTING ABILITIES
Michigan Rehabilitation Services

Welcome



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Business Relations Consultant
Michigan Rehabilitation Services



Justin Skibin, MA, ADACC
Business Relations Specialist
Michigan Rehabilitation Services

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Housekeeping



- Thank you to everyone involved with this event!
- Use microphone for any questions.
- Follow-up materials will be sent to SBAM for retention purposes
  - Or reach out to Christine and Justin, as well

About Michigan Rehabilitation Services

- Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) is a bureau within the Department of Labor & Economic Opportunity.
- We help individuals with disabilities to prepare for, find and maintain competitive and integrated employment.
- All services provided are directly in support of addressing barriers to employment as it relates to the disability.

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Divisions of Michigan Rehabilitation Services

Business Network Division

- Business Relations Consultants
- Occupational Therapists
- Main client is organizations of all types.

MRS District Office

- Main client is the individual with a disability
- Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and Coordinators
- Rehabilitation Assistants

Both are statewide at https://www.michigan.gov/mrs

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What Does Business Services Do in (VR)?

- A coordinated set of strategies, tools, and activities designed to support businesses with their workforce needs.

- **Services can include:–** Talent pipeline development– Customized training and upskilling– Disability awareness and inclusive hiring support– Job analysis, accommodation guidance, and retention strategies– Recruitment support and direct connections to qualified candidates



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What does the Dual Customer Mean?

In Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), the term Dual Customer refers to the understanding that VR serves two equally important customers:

1. **Jobseekers** with disabilities, who receive services, supports, training, and guidance to prepare for employment.

2. **Businesses,** who receive workforce solutions, talent development support, and assistance in building inclusive workplaces.

The Dual Customer model recognizes that successful employment outcomes happen when both sides of the employment equation are supported. VR aligns jobseeker strengths and training with the real workforce needs of businesses, creating a mutually beneficial partnership.



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Benefits to Business

- Higher retention rates and lower turnover
- Increased attendance, morale and team culture
- Stronger customer connections
- Increased engagement, productivity and performance
- More innovation due to diverse perspectives
- Improved problem solving and creativity
- Increased revenue
    - 1.6 times more revenue, 2.6 net income, 2x higher profit and outperform industry peers in productivity by 25% compared to those with less inclusive practices



Citation: Business.com (2025) Forbes, Minnesota DEED; Australian Human Rights Commission

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What We Will Discuss

- On-The-Job Evaluation (OJE)
- On-The-Job Training (OJT)
- Trial-Work Experience (TWE)
- Fidelity Bonding
- Additional resources MRS provides for businesses

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Understanding MRS Lingo and the acronyms

- Business Relations Consultant (BRC's) role in the work experiences
- Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC's) role in the work experiences
- Vendor's role in the work experiences
- MRS District Management's role in the work experiences.
- Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)
- Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE)

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On-The-Job Experience (OJE)

- **On-The-Job Evaluation** is a community-based evaluation completed in a *Competitive Integrated Employment* setting to assess a customer's capability, or potential to acquire skills, knowledge, or experience in employment activities towards support of a potential *IPE* employment goals. The employer has no commitment to hire.

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OJE Incentive for the Dual Customer

- Allows our MRS jobseekers a chance to explore careers, skills or network in their industry
- Business' can utilize some cost-free short-term assistance and trial a potential employee
- No obligation to hire our MRS jobseeker
- MRS provided services guide the process and set up of the experience, with or without an external vendor.

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On-the-Job Evaluation Details

- Each OJE is customized fit the needs of both the Jobseeker and Business Customer
- 2-4 weeks in length; can be full or part time.
- An Evaluation Plan with performance tasks is agreed upon and used to identify progress of the MRS Jobseeker
- Can use accommodations if identified by MRS Counselor and Jobseeker; this may include the use of Job Coaching

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On-The-Job Evaluation Process

- Agreement signed with MRS Jobseeker, Business, MRS and Vendor (if applicable)
- Business reserves the right to terminate agreement
- Business will provide technical assistance, location and feedback related to performance of the MRS Jobseeker based on Evaluation Plan

Trial Work Experience

- **Trial Work Experience** is an *IPE* where services are structured to address if a customer has the potential ability to benefit from Vocational Rehabilitation services which can lead to a *CIE* outcome.

TWE Incentives

- MRS Customer can assess their vocational skills within a competitive employment setting within an environment they can trial accommodations.
- Business can use this opportunity as a way of assessing employee training or onboarding, assess internal accommodation process for employees, add to inclusive culture and connections with community partners.

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Trial Work Experience Details

- Jobseeker must be an MRS Customer and a MRS vendor is involved and will facilitate the day-to-day logistics and communication.
- Business has wages supported by MRS, if the position being trialed is typically a paid position.
- TWE are typically 4 weeks per job seeker

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Trial Work Experience Process

- TWE Agreement with all parties and MRS Customer has a goals for the experience
- During TWE communication is completed with the Vendor
- Experience is temporary with MRS Customer then starting their *CIE* plan with MRS.

On-The-Job Training (OJT)

- **On-The-Job Training** is a written agreement between a customer, employer, rehabilitation service provider, and MRS to provide supplemental training wages to an employer when it is determined that there is a need for greater assistance or time to learn required job skills above and beyond what is typically provided by the employer when starting a new employee. The OJT agreement may include authorizing for a job coach to assist in providing training to a new employee in a Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) setting.

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OJT Incentives

- MRS Jobseeker has opportunity to enhance their skills to meet essential functions of the role after the training period at the onboarding phase of employment.
- Business has wages supported by or shared with MRS for up to six weeks and to get an employee from MRS that can meet the essential functions of the role.

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On-the-Job Training Details

- Jobseeker must be an MRS customer
- Business hires the job seeker prior to the start of the OJT and with the intention to retain the employee
- Use of Job Coaching is available
- Training period may not exceed 240 hours

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On-the-Job Training Process

- OJT Agreement has Measurable Outcomes
- The goal is retention of this hire after all measurable outcomes are achieved by the MRS Jobseeker
- Formal meeting with the Business, MRS Jobseeker, MRS Counselor, the BRC, and external vendor or job coach (as needed) to review Measurable Outcomes and outline details about the OJT.
- During OJT communication with MRS is ongoing.

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Fidelity Bonding Details

- The Federal Bonding Program (FBP):
- Employers can receive fidelity bonds free of charge when hiring certain job applicants.
- The bonds reimburse the employer for any loss due to employee theft ($5,000 up to $25,000) and cover the first six months of employment at no cost to the job applicant or the employer ($0 deductible).
- Fidelity bonds can be applied to ANY job, ANY state, and to ANY employee (excluding a self-employed individual) who is paid wages and has Federal taxes automatically deducted.
    - To date, FBP has issued over 50,000 bonds.

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Fidelity Bonding Details, Continued

- Justice-Involved Citizen.
- Range of $5,000 – $25,000 depends on severity of the felony.
- “Trial Insurance Policy”
- Also includes:
    - Recovering substance abusers
    - Dishonorably discharged from the military
    - Youth apprentices
    - Those who cannot be commercially bonded
    - TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) recipients
    - ALICE population
        - Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed, earning above the Federal Poverty Level but still unable to afford basic living expenses.

Fidelity Bonding Process

- Process:
  - Employer must complete a phone intake with Michigan Works! Fidelity Bonding Coordinator.
    - Call your closest Michigan Works! location.
  - Michigan Works staff will work to locate and process the paperwork.
  - New hire will bring a letter of intent to hire his/her closest Michigan Works location.
  - Business will be notified within a few weeks if Fidelity Bonding has been approved.
  - Link to Fidelity Bonding process will be included in the follow-up.
  - Disclaimer: Michigan Works puts Fidelity Bonding into practice; MRS staff present the incentive to businesses.
  - Website: https://www.michigan.gov/leo/bureaus-agencies/wd/programs-services/fidelity-bonding-program

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MRS Resources for Businesses: Hiring Needs Support

Hiring Needs Support:

- Talent Acquisition Portal
- Business Spotlights
  - Multi-Employer and Single-Employer
- Facility Tours
- Special events
- Informational Interviews
- Job Shadows
- Mock Interviews
- Employability Skills Cohorts
- Career Fairs (in coordination with Michigan Works! and local community colleges).

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MRS Resources for Businesses: Recruitment Support, Continued

Hiring Needs Support:

- Candidate Referrals (after online application is submitted)
- Presentations in your business' staff meetings
  - About MRS
  - About Business Relations Consultant role
  - About Disability Awareness
- Presentation from you in MRS district staff meetings
- Tour of our training school, Michigan Career and Technical Institute

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MRS Resources for Businesses: Disability Awareness Presentations

BRC Disability Awareness Presentations:

- Intro to MRS/Disability Etiquette
- Disability Awareness Training (Customized Topics)
- Reasonable Accommodations
  - Retention Cases
- Neurodivergence in the Workplace
- Mental Health and Mindfulness
- Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) Knowledge and Compliance

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MRS Resources for Businesses: Connecting You to Other Key Partners

- Workforce Development agencies
  - Michigan Works, nonprofits, and more
  - Work-Opportunity Tax Credit (current unactive, but open to apply).
- Higher Education partners
- Business Development partners
- Economic Development partners
- Other government agencies
- MCTI faculty and staff

Results of From Partnering with MRS

- Over 700 businesses have partnered with MRS Business Network Division in 2025.
- Twenty-one (21) current employment outcomes and counting from our Employability Skills Cohort groups; almost all of those participants are still with those employers.
- Over 50 companies have participated in our Employability Skills Cohort groups.
- Over 60 companies have joined my Business Spotlight events.
- Seven (7) companies have toured our MCTI training school in 2026.
- Over 50 different partner agencies have joined different MRS initiatives in 2026.
- Over 75 testimonials recorded from businesses, jobseekers, and partner agencies that have partnered with MRS in 2026.

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Creative Talent Solutions w/ Vocational Rehabilitation: Post-Event Information Request Form

Next Steps?

- The next steps for interested businesses after attending:
  - Follow-up email will be sent to all attendees.
  - If you want to proceed with MRS BND resources, you'll be linked to your closest Business Relations Consultant after filling out this form.

Questions?



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