



The Essential Elements of Customized Employment: Results from a National Survey of Employment Providers

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Introduction ●

Customized employment (CE) was initially defined in the Federal Register as a blending of services and supports to include job development or restructuring strategies that result in job responsibilities being customized and individually negotiated to fit the needs of individuals with disabilities (Federal Register, June 26, 2002, Vol. 67, No. 123 pp. 43154-43149). In 2014, customized employment was added to the Rehabilitation Act's definition of supported employment in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). CE is defined in the final WIOA regulations, Federal Register, 361.5 (c) (11) as "competitive integrated employment for an individual with a significant disability that is based on the unique strengths, needs, and interests of the individual with a significant disability; designed to meet the specific abilities of the individual with a significant disability and the business needs of the employer; carried out through flexible strategies." Flexible strategies include job exploration; customizing a job description based on current employer needs or on previously unidentified and unmet employer needs; developing a set of job, duties, a work schedule, work arrangement and the specifics of supervision, and determining a job location; and providing services and supports at the job location.

Callahan, Griffin, and Hammis (2011) described a 2001 model demonstration program initiative by the Office of Disability Employment Policy's (ODEP) to provide a foundation for the concept of customized employment. Elinson and colleagues evaluated the outcomes of ODEP's demonstration program that included 31 demonstration sites within Workforce Investment Act One-Stop Centers (Elinson, Frey, Li, Palin, & Horne, 2008). They reported that 44.8% of program participants with disabilities achieved competitive employment using the model. For those participants in round one of data collection with a two-year follow-along, 44.5% retained employment for 12 months or longer; for those in round two with a one-year follow-along, the 12-month retention rate was 73.6%. Citron and colleagues (2008) presented outcomes from a seven-year systems change effort that emphasized customized employment. The project served 198 participants across a range of disabilities, with 141 (71%) achieving an employment outcome. Of the 141 individuals with employment outcomes, 73 (52%) were placed into positions where negotiation was critical to successful placement. Similarly, Rogers, Lavin, Tran, Gantenbein, and Sharp (2008) reported findings from a five-year demonstration project for transitioning youth and young adults with various disabilities emphasizing customized employment. They reported that among 475 participants from 7 school districts, 62% of all enrolled students and 72% of out-of-school participants had individualized job placements in the workforce at competitive wages.

Riesen, Morgan, and Griffin (2015), conducted an extensive review of customized employment literature. These authors identified 15 non-databased and 10 databased articles on CE published between 2006 and 2013. The authors found it noteworthy that published research on CE did not include experimental or quasi-experimental research designs. While the articles did not use experimental, quasi-experimental, or single subject methodologies, positive outcomes associated with CE were consistent among the studies reviewed. Reported outcomes included increased quality of life, wages higher than minimum wage, attainment of part-time or fulltime employment and consistency in wage earnings and hours worked up to a 2-year follow-up period.

As states integrate customized employment into their service delivery systems, they will need guidelines about what is considered CE best practices and how to ensure fidelity to these practices (Riesen et al., 2019). For example, Hall, Keeton, Cassidy, Iovannone, and Griffin (2016) developed a Discovery Fidelity scale to guide CE implementation. The development of the fidelity scale relied significantly on literature and research reviews, interviews, focus groups, case studies, and surveys with education and adult service professionals, and national organizations, Griffin-Hammis Associates (GHA), and Mark Gold and Associates (MGA) with demonstrated knowledge and experience in discovery implementation.

Inge and her colleagues conducted a series of focus groups with nationally recognized experts in CE to identify the practices that are associated with customized employment (Inge et al., 2018). Although the focus groups were intended to gather information about the entire process, much of the dialogue focused on discovery. Twelve themes, or core practices, were identified from the analysis. Riesen and his colleagues (2019) used a 3-step, modified online Delphi method to obtain consensus regarding the discovery fidelity scale from a panel of experts in CE discovery. The Delphi panel rated items on a discovery systems and discovery services fidelity scale over three iterations. The authors concluded that the Delphi process provided valuable insights about what experts believe are best discovery practices.

In 2017, The Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC) and the Youth Technical Assistance Center (Y-TAC) released the Essential Elements of Customized Employment for Universal Application. The document outlines elements that subject matter experts determined as essential to the practice of CE. One of the goals for producing the document was to increase the capacity and sustainability of CE as a service for individuals with disabilities (WINTAC, 2017).

All of these efforts and related resources provide guidance on customized employment as a service to support competitive integrated employment (CIE) outcomes for individuals with disabilities. However, there is limited information on how practitioners in the field are implementing customized employment. The objective of this research was to describe the current status of customized employment service delivery as viewed by the rehabilitation providers that implement these services using an online survey. The survey endeavored to answer the following research questions.

1. What are the critical features of customized employment service delivery as identified by vocational rehabilitation providers?
2. How effectively is customized employment implemented as reported by vocational rehabilitation providers in their agencies?
3. What is the relationship between the demographic characteristics of the service providers (e.g., training, agency affiliation, years of experience) and their perceptions of how they view the critical features of customized employment?
4. What is the relationship between the demographic characteristics of the service providers (e.g., training, agency affiliation, years of experience) and their perceptions of how effectively customized employment services are being implemented?

Methodology ● Sample

The survey sample was identified using email lists from Virginia Commonwealth University's Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (VCU-RRTC) and the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE). The VCU-RRTC email list included individuals who registered for the Supported Employment Online Course with VCU-RRTC between 2003 and 2019. At the time of the survey, the database contained 4,388 emails of participants who completed the course

and received the Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) Basic Certificate in Employment Services and those who did not complete the course. Of this number, 1,665 emails were returned as undeliverable when the first request to complete the survey was sent leaving 2,723 valid emails. APSE identified 1,056 employment providers' emails on their current membership role. Therefore, the sample for the study consisted of 3,779 individuals identified as employment professionals from agencies in the United States.

Survey Development and Description

The survey was developed by reviewing the customized employment literature, obtaining recommendations from personal contacts, and conducting audio conferences with three of the primary authors of this article. After a draft survey was finalized, five nationally recognized employment professionals were asked to review and make recommendations on the survey. These recommendations were reviewed, revisions made, and the survey finalized.

The survey consisted of four sections. Section One contained 18 items describing the unique characteristics of discovery that have been identified as critical to the implementation of CE. The respondents were asked to select how critical they perceived each activity to be on a five point Likert-type scale:

1. unsure 2. not at all critical 3. not very critical 4. critical 5. very critical

Next, they were asked to select how well this activity is being implemented:

1. not at all 2. poor 3. fair 4. good 5. excellent

Section Two contained 16 items describing the unique characteristics of CE job development. As in Section One, the respondents were asked to select how critical they perceived each activity to be and how well each activity was being implemented on two separate Likert -type scales.

For data analysis, the Likert-type items in Sections One and Two assessing the perceived importance of each CE element were grouped by combining the responses of "unsure", "not at all critical", and "not very critical" into a "not critical activity" category and "critical" and "very critical" as a "critical activity" category. The responses as to how well each CE element was being implemented of "not at all", "poor", and "fair" were combined into a category of "not well" and responses of "good" and "excellent" were combined into a category of "well". Table 1 and 2 present the survey items for the essential elements of discovery and job development.

TABLE 1 *Section One Discovery Items*

1.	Discovery activities are individualized. All job seekers do not participate in the same activities.
2.	Discovery replaces standardized vocational assessments as the method to identify the job seeker's interests, skills, and work preferences.
3.	Discovery begins with a home visit.
4.	During the home visit, the employment specialist learns about the job seeker's interests and preferred activities or hobbies, including how he or she spends time.
5.	During the home visit, the employment specialist learns the history and background behind the employment seeker's valued possessions and expressed interests.
6.	During the home visit, the employment specialist gathers information about the job seeker's daily life.
7.	The employment specialist meets job seekers with disabilities in familiar, community locations of their choice.
8.	The employment specialist gathers information about the job seeker from personal connections that can provide information on his or her interests, preferred activities, and skills.
9.	Conversational interviews are completed with family members and individuals who know the job seeker well to gather information on his or her interests, skills, and work preferences.

TABLE 1 (continued)

10. Employment specialists replace agency checklists with open ended informal conversations to gather information on the job seeker's work preferences.
11. Employment specialists observe and participate with job seekers in familiar activities where job seekers actively participate and demonstrate their strengths, interests, and preferences. (These activities are selected by the job seeker; take place one-to-one in the community; and are not in a facility-based program or in groups with other individuals with disabilities.)
12. Job seekers have the opportunity to "shadow" employees in businesses that match their interests and work preferences.
13. Community rehabilitation provider (CRP) agencies do not use the same pre-determined work experiences that all job seekers rotate through to identify work preferences.
14. Employment specialists create opportunities at local businesses for the job seeker to participate in work duties related to his or her skills or emerging vocational interests. (These opportunities are identified based on the job seeker's interests and not used agency-wide for everyone who is looking for a job.)
15. Employment specialists observe job seekers trying new tasks in businesses to learn about their interests and skills.
16. The amount of time spent on discovery activities is guided by the needs of each individual and not determined by the agency or funding source.
17. A narrative and descriptive document is written in a positive and affirming manner to summarize discovery and to guide job development.
18. A meeting is held with the job seeker, his/her support network, VR counselor, and the employment specialist to discuss and develop the job seeker's plan for employment.

TABLE 2

Section Two Job Development Items

1. Discovery findings are used to guide job development.
2. Job development activities are individualized through conversations with the job seeker and families.
3. The employment specialist does not identify open positions in businesses for the purpose of customizing jobs.
4. Businesses are contacted on behalf of only one job seeker.
5. The social connections of the job seeker are used to identify businesses matching the job seeker's work preferences.
6. The CRP has a community presence and established relationships with the business community.
7. Informational interviews are completed with employers for the sole purpose of getting to know business needs.
8. The employment specialist conducts informational interviews with businesses without apparent job openings that match specific job seeker's skills and vocational interests.
9. The job seeker participates with the employment specialist in conducting informational interviews.
10. Businesses selected for informational interviews match the preferences of specific job seekers.
11. The employment specialist spends time in businesses to identify employer needs that match the strengths and interests of a specific job seeker.
12. Job duties are identified as a result of negotiations with employers.
13. The employment specialist and the job seeker develop and present an employment proposal to an employer.
14. Job descriptions are customized based on employer needs that match the job seeker's interests.
15. Customized employment may include resource ownership. Materials, equipment, or skills are acquired by the employee that generates profits for the employer and wages for the employee.

Section Three asked respondents if they were currently providing CE services and how often they provided services. The Likert-type scale included five categories:

1. never 2. almost never 3. occasionally 4. almost every time 5. every time

The results are reported by combining the "never", "almost never", and "occasionally" levels into an "occasionally or less" category while the levels of "almost every time" and "every time" were

combined into a “most of the time” category. Only respondents who reported that they were personally assisting individuals with disabilities in finding and obtaining a job using CE were included in this analysis (n=273).

Section Four asked respondents to provide information on personal as well as agency demographics. They were asked to specify their job title to include Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Vocational Rehabilitation Manager / Supervisor, Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) Direct Staff, Employment Services Manager / Supervisor, Employment Specialist, Job Developer, Job Coach, or other. These categories were recoded into CRP Direct Staff, Direct Support Professional, VR Professional (includes VR counselor and VR manager), Employment Specialist (includes job coach and job developer) and other. The “other” category included primarily school personnel such as transition coordinators and teachers. Participants were also asked how long they had been employed; whether they had an ACRE National Certificate in Employment Services or CESP Certification; and if they personally provided employed services to individuals with disabilities.

Finally, participants were asked to identify the primary service provided by their agencies. A definition was included of facility-based non-work, community-based non-work, facility-based work, mobile work crew, enclave, individual supported employment, and customized employment to assist respondents in selecting a service. Table 3 provides the definitions that were included in the survey. For analysis, the respondents were grouped into two categories: integrated employment services and agency services. Integrated employment services included individual supported employment and customized employment. Agency services included those services in which the individuals supported were engaging in non-paid or sub-minimum wage activities. The survey is located in Appendix A.

TABLE 3 **Definitions of Employment Services**

Service	Definition
Facility-based non-work	This includes but is not limited to a skills training program, activities or daily living, recreation, and includes habilitation, day care, and day activity programs.
Community-based non-work	This includes programs where people with disabilities spend the majority of their day in the community in places where most people do not have disabilities. The primary focus of the activities may include general community activities, volunteer experiences, recreation and leisure, improving skills such activities of daily living.
Facility-based work	Includes sheltered workshops or extended employment programs including businesses that are owned and operated by your organization where most workers have disabilities. These workers are supported and paid by your organization.
Mobile work crew	Groups of individuals with disabilities who typically move to different / multiple work sites who receive continual support and supervision from your agency or organization. Individuals are employees of your agency and not of the business where the work is performed.
Enclave	Groups of individuals who have disabilities work together on a job site receiving continual support and supervision from your agency or organization's staff. Individuals are employees of your agency and not of the business where the work is performed.
Individual supported employment	Competitive employment at an integrated job site, making at least minimum wage; where most people do not have disabilities. The individual is an employee of the community business and receives ongoing supports from a provider or agency.
Customized employment	Competitive integrated employment, for an individual with disabilities, that is based on an individualized determination of the strengths, needs, and interests of a job seeker as identified through Discovery. An individualized job description is negotiated that matches the abilities of the individual and meets the business needs of the employer.

● Administrative Procedures

The survey was developed using ColdFusion, which is a web application development framework that enables development of dynamic web-based applications. ColdFusion was leveraged to build the online survey as an HTML form on a web page. When respondents submitted the survey, a ColdFusion handler page containing code extracted the survey responses and inserted them into a database table. At the end of the survey, participants were asked if they would like to enter their email address to enter a random drawing for a \$25 gift cards. Emails for survey participants who chose to enter the drawing were stored separately from the raw survey data to ensure participant confidentiality.

The private link to the survey on the Center's website was sent directly in an email to the two email lists previously described. The first author sent the email to the individuals on the VCU-RRTC list, and APSE staff sent the email to their list. The initial email explained the purpose of the study as gathering information from individuals (e.g., vocational rehabilitation professionals, employment specialists, job coaches, direct service providers) who provide employment services specifically to ask questions on CE services and its implementation in the United States. Participants were told that they must be 18 years old to participate and live in the United States. The initial email was followed by a second email within one week and finally with a third at the end of one month. After which, the survey link was disabled. Gift cards were mailed to 50 respondents randomly selected from the participants who complete the survey after the link was disabled.

● Statistical Methods

Frequencies and standard deviations were used to describe the demographic and employment characteristics of each of the respondents. Similar measures were used to summarize each survey item. Separate summaries of the item responses were reported based on whether a respondent received or did not receive an ACRE certificate or CESP certification and whether a respondent was employed at an agency that primarily supported individuals with disabilities in supported employment, customized employment, or in non-work or sub-minimum wage activities. Pearson chi-squared tests were used to assess differing responses between each of the aforementioned respondent characteristics. A Type-I error rate of 0.05 was used for identifying important differences in the item responses between the characteristics of interest.

Results ●

Five-hundred twenty seven respondents out of the 3,779 individuals receiving an email participated in the survey for a 14% response rate. However, 27 respondents did not complete at least half of the perceived importance or implementation items in Sections One and Two and were removed from all analyses. Table 4 on the following page provides information on the respondents' demographic characteristics. Slightly more than half of the respondents (52.1%) reported that they were employment specialists, which includes those who identified themselves as job developers and job coaches. The "other" category allowed respondents to write in a job title. The write-in responses were reviewed and distributed across the other categories such as moving the survey responses of a respondent who wrote in that they were a job coach to the employment specialist category. After write-in survey responses were re-categorized in the database tables, 165 respondents were left in the other job title category (34.8%), which included primarily school personnel such as transition coordinators and teachers as the main write-in responses. A small percentage of the respondents identified themselves as CRP direct staff or direct support professionals (4.0%). The remaining respondents indicated that they were Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) professionals to include counselors and managers (9.1%).

Approximately 36% of the respondents had been employed for 1 to 4 years; 20.4% had 5-8 years of experience; and 36% reported being employed for greater than 8 years. The smallest percentage, 7.5%, indicated that they had less than 1 year of experience.

TABLE 4 **Participant Demographics**

Job Title	n (%)
CRP Direct Staff	8 (1.7%)
Direct Support Professional	11 (2.3%)
VR Professional (includes VR counselor and VR manager)	43 (9.1%)
Employment Specialist (includes job coach and job developer)	247 (52.1%)
Other	165 (34.8%)
Years of Experience	n (%)
< 1 year	33 (7.5%)
1-4 years	155 (35.7%)
5-8 years	88 (20.4%)
>8 years	157 (36.4%)
Primary Service Provided by Agency	n (%)
Individual Supported Employment & Customized Employment Services	253 (57.4%)
Agency-based Services (facility-based services, group placements, non-work)	188 (42.6%)
Certification	n (%)
ACRE National Certificate in Employment Services only	149 (35.1%)
CESP™ certification only	39 (9.2%)
Both ACRE & CESP	76 (17.9%)
None	160 (37.7%)
Education	n (%)
Associate degree or Less	130 (26.4%)
Bachelor degree	218 (44.3%)
Graduate degree	144 (29.3%)
APSE Membership	n (%)
Yes	163 (36.8%)
No	280 (63.2%)

Approximately 26% of the respondents reported having an associate degree or less; while 44.3% reported having a Bachelor's degree. Twenty-nine percent of the respondents reported that they had an advanced degree beyond a Bachelor's. Respondents were asked if they had an ACRE Certificate in Employment Services (35.1%) or a Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP) certification (9.2%). Approximately 18% of the respondents had both the ACRE certificate and CESP certification. The remainder, 37% of the sample, did not have an ACRE certificate or CESP certification. When asked if they belonged to National APSE, 63.2% of the respondents indicated that they were not members, while 36.8% reported that they were. Slightly less than half (42.6%) reported that their agency primarily supported individuals with disabilities in non-paid or sub-minimum wage activities. Conversely, the remainder of the respondents (57.4%) reported that their agency primarily provided integrated employment services to include individual supported employment or customized employment.

Sections One and Two Results

Table 5 below presents the results for Section One of the survey. About 90% of the respondents identified the majority of the CE elements as critical for discovery. However, several exceptions were apparent. For example, 69.5% of respondents identified “discovery begins with a home visit” as a critical component, while less than half, 42.7% reported that this essential element is being implemented well. Please note that the items in Table 5 have been organized beginning with those reported by the lowest percentage of respondents as “implemented well” and do not represent the order in which they were presented in the survey.

TABLE 5 *Discovery Activities**

Discovery Activities	Critical Activities	Implemented Well
Community rehabilitation providers (CRP) do not use the same pre-determined work experiences that all job seekers rotate through to identify work preferences.	358 (72.3%)	179 (36.6%)
The amount of time spent on discovery activities is guided by the needs of each individual and not determined by the agency or funding source.	454 (91.0%)	198 (39.8%)
Discovery begins with a home visit.	347 (69.5%)	212 (42.7%)
Discovery replaces standardized vocational assessments as the method to identify the job seeker's interests, skills, and work preferences.	409 (82.0%)	226 (45.3%)
Employment specialists replace agency checklists with open ended informal conversations to gather information on the job seeker's work preferences.	412 (82.7%)	231 (46.6%)
Employment specialists observe and participate with job seekers in familiar activities where job seekers actively participate and demonstrate their strengths, interests, and preferences. These activities are selected by the job seeker; take place one-to-one in the community; and are not in a facility-based program or in groups with other individuals with disabilities).	450 (90.2%)	233 (46.7%)
Job seekers have the opportunity to “shadow” employees in businesses that match their interests and work preferences.	454 (91.5%)	239 (48.1%)
A narrative and descriptive document is written in a positive and affirming manner to summarize discovery and to guide job development.	444 (89.3%)	243 (48.8%)
During the home visit, the employment specialist learns the history and background behind the employment seeker's valued possessions and expressed interests.	437 (87.8%)	243 (49.1%)
Conversational interviews are completed with family members and individuals who know the job seeker well to gather information on his or her interests, skills, and work preferences.	458 (91.8%)	255 (51.2%)
Employment specialists observe job seekers trying new tasks in businesses to learn about their interests and skills.	469 (94.6%)	258 (51.9%)
The employment specialist gathers information about the job seeker from personal connections who can provide information on his or her interests, preferred activities, and skills.	458 (92.0%)	263 (52.9%)
Discovery activities are individualized. All job seekers do not participate in the same activities.	469 (94.0%)	266 (53.3%)
Employment specialists create opportunities at local businesses for the job seeker to participate in work duties related to his or her skills or emerging vocational interests. (These opportunities are identified based on the job seeker's interest and not used agency-wide for everyone who is looking for a job)	466 (93.4%)	268 (53.7%)
During the home visit, the employment specialist learns about the job seeker's interests and preferred activities or hobbies, including how he or she spends time.	458 (92.0%)	270 (54.3%)
The employment specialist meets job seekers with disabilities in familiar, community locations of their choice.	440 (88.4%)	270 (54.3%)

TABLE 5 (continued)

Discovery Activities	Critical Activities	Implemented Well
During the home visit, the employment specialist gathers information about the job seeker's daily life.	464 (93.2%)	286 (57.7%)
A meeting is held with the job seeker, his/her support network, VR counselor, and the employment specialist to discuss and develop the job seeker's plan for employment.	480 (96.2%)	292 (58.5%)

*Items in this table have been organized based on the lowest to greatest % of respondents who reported the item as implemented well.

Although the majority of the respondents identified most of the discovery activities as critical, fewer than 60% of the participants identified any of the elements as being implemented well. The percentage of respondents indicating implementing each discovery activity ranged from a low of 36.6% to a high of 58.5%. Of the 18 items, nine were reported as implemented well by less than half of the respondents. For example, only 36.6% of the respondents reported the item, *“community rehabilitation providers (CRP) do not use the same pre-determined work experiences that all job seekers rotate through to identify work preferences,”* as implemented well. However, approximately 72% of the respondents reported that this is a critical CE activity. As another example, 42.7% of the respondents selected *“discovery begins with a home visit”* as implemented well. Approximately 47% reported that agency checklists are replaced with open ended conversations to gather information on job seeker's work preferences as implemented well. And, approximately 47% responded that *employment specialists observe and participate with job seekers in familiar activities* as being implemented well. Less than half of the respondents (48.1%) indicated that job seekers have the opportunity to *shadow employees in businesses that match their interests and work preferences* as implemented well. The item rated the highest as implemented well, at 58.5%, was *“a meeting is held with the job seeker, his/her support network, VR counselor, and the employment specialist to discuss and develop the job seeker's plan for employment”*. Interestingly, 96.2% of the respondents identified this as a critical CE activity.

A similar trend was noted in the CE job development elements, in that a greater percentage of respondents identified the activities as being critical than those who reported they were being implemented well (Table 6 below). The range across the 16 items was a low of 27.7% to a high of 62.2%. The fewest number of respondents (27.7%) selected the item, *employment specialists do not identify open positions in businesses for the purpose of customizing a job*, as being implemented well. The item, *individualizing job development activities through conversations with the job seeker and family* was reported as implemented well by the highest percentage of the respondents (61.2%). There were several items that were not identified as critical activities for customized employment by a lower percentage of participants. For instance, the *employment specialist identifying open positions for the purpose of customizing a job* (52.3%), the *businesses being contacted on behalf of only one job seeker* (62%), and that *CE includes resource ownership* (68%) were reported as critical by a lower number of participants than other activities. Please note that the items in Table 6 have been organized beginning with those reported by the lowest percentage of respondents as “implemented well” and do not represent the order in which they were presented in the survey.

TABLE 6
Job Development Activities

Job Development Activities	Critical Activities	Implemented Well
The employment specialist does not identify open positions in businesses for the purpose of customizing a job.	259 (52.3%)	135 (27.7%)
The employment specialist and the job seeker develop and present an employment proposal to an employer.	369 (74.4%)	176 (36.1%)

TABLE 6 (continued)

Job Development Activities	Critical Activities	Implemented Well
Customized employment may include resource ownership. Materials, equipment, or skills are acquired by the employee that generates profits for the employer and wages for the employee.	344 (69.4%)	181 (37.2%)
The job seeker participates with the employment specialist in conducting informational interviews.	350 (70.4%)	202 (41.1%)
Job descriptions are customized based on employer needs that match the job seeker's interests.	435 (87.5%)	219 (44.4%)
Businesses are contacted on behalf of only one job-seeker.	306 (61.6%)	226 (45.7%)
The employment specialist conducts informational interviews with businesses without apparent job openings that match a specific job seeker's skills and vocational interests.	426 (85.9%)	232 (47.2%)
The employment specialist spends time in businesses to identify employer needs that match the strengths and interests of a specific job seeker.	458 (92.3%)	235 (47.6%)
The social connections of the job seeker are used to identify businesses matching the job seeker's work preferences.	418 (84.1%)	236 (47.8%)
Job duties are identified as a result of negotiations with employers.	448 (90.1%)	247 (50.0%)
The CRP has a community presence and established relationships with the business community.	451 (91.1%)	247 (50.4%)
Informational interviews are completed with employers for the sole purpose of getting to know business needs.	443 (89.5%)	250 (50.6%)
Businesses selected for informational interviews match the preferences of specific job seekers.	430 (86.5%)	267 (54.4%)
The employment specialist assists employers in identifying specific ways that the business may benefit from hiring the job seeker.	476 (96.0%)	270 (54.8%)
Discovery findings are used to guide job development.	484 (97.2%)	287 (57.9%)
Job development activities are individualized through conversations with the job seeker and families.	469 (94.4%)	303 (61.2%)

No major differences or trends were identified when comparing the critical elements for CE based on the ACRE certificate or CESP certification status of the respondent for either the discovery or job development constructs (Table 8, Appendix B). However, respondents with a certificate were almost uniformly more likely to report implementing the elements of CE well. The magnitude of these differences ranged from 2-14% for both the discovery and job development elements. Overall, participants who had an ACRE certificate and/or CESP certification reported that CE practices were implemented well more often than those that did not (Figure 1 and 2, Appendix B). Participants with a certificate reported implementing the survey items well are represented by differences in percentages greater than 0. For discovery and job development, best practices of CE were reported as implemented well an average of 5-10% by participants who had a certificate than those who did not.

Seven of the 18 discovery activities in Section One were identified as more likely to be implemented well by respondents with an ACRE certificate or CESP certification than respondents who did not (Table 8, Appendix B). These activities included the following:

- Discovery activities are individualized. All job seekers do not participate in the same activities (58% vs. 46.2%; $P=.002$).
- During the home visit, the employment specialist learns about the job seeker's interests, preferred activities, or hobbies including how he or she spends time (58.2% vs. 47.8%; $P=.044$).

- During the home visit, the employment specialist gathers information about the job seeker's daily life (61.8% vs. 50.9%; $P=.033$).
- The employment specialist meets job seekers with disabilities in familiar community locations of their choice (58.5% vs. 47.8%; $P=.037$).
- Employment specialists replace agency checklists with open ended informal conversations to gather information on the job seeker's work preferences (50% vs. 38.8%; $P=.028$).
- Employment specialists observe and participate with job seekers in familiar activities where job seekers actively participate and demonstrate their strengths, interests, and preferences. (These activities are selected by the job seeker; take place one-to-one in the community; and are not in a facility-based program or in groups with other individuals with disabilities (49.5% vs. 39.4%; $P=.049$).
- Employment specialists observe job seekers trying new tasks in businesses to learn about their interests and skills (54.6% vs. 43.1%; $P=.025$).

In addition, other notable exceptions in discovery included items assessing the *"The employment specialist meets job seekers with disabilities in familiar, community locations of their choice"* and *"Community rehabilitation provider (CRP) do not use the same pre-determined work experiences that all job seekers rotate through to identify work preferences"* items, which were both assessed as more critical by respondents without an ACRE certificate or CESP certification than those that had one (86.8% vs 91.2%, $P=0.095$; 70.2% vs. 78.1%, $P=0.089$, respectively). The CE items of *"Job duties are identified as a result of negotiations with employers"* and *"Customized employment may include resource ownership..."* were indicated as more critical by respondents with an ACRE or CESP certification (93.5% vs. 85.0%, $P=0.005$; 72.7% vs. 63.7%, $P=0.061$, respectively).

Slightly less than half of the items in discovery were rated as implemented well, at least 10% higher, by respondents with a certification compared to those without. Only two items in discovery differed by less than 5% (*"Community rehabilitation provider (CRP) agencies do not use the same pre-determined work experiences that all job seekers rotate through"*; *"The amount of time spent on discovery activities is guided by the needs of each individual and not determined by the agency or funding source"*). Conversely, just less than half of the items in job development had differences between the certificate groups that were less than 5% whereas only two items had certificate group differences of at least 10% (*"Job development activities are individualized through conversations with the job seeker and families"*; *"The employment specialist and the job seeker develop and present an employment proposal to an employer"*).

Conversely, just less than half of the items in job development had differences between the certificate groups that were less than 5% whereas only two items had certificate group differences of at least 10% (*"Job development activities are individualized through conversations with the job seeker and families"*; *"The employment specialist and the job seeker develop and present an employment proposal to an employer"*). Only two out of the 15 job development activities were identified as differing based on certification status (Table 8, Appendix B). Respondents with an ACRE certificate and/or a CESP certification were more likely to identify *"job duties are identified as a result of negotiations with employers"* as a critical activity than those who did not have a certificate or certification. Respondents with an ACRE certificate and/or a CESP certification were more likely to report that *"job development activities are individualized through conversations with the job seeker and families"* was implemented well than those respondents who did not.

Similar results were observed when comparing respondents working at agencies that provide primarily supported and customized employment services when compared to ones that provided primarily agency services (Table 9 and Table 10, Appendix B). However, respondents in organizations providing predominately integrated employment services were more likely to identify *"Job development activities are individualized through conversations with the job seeker and families"* and *"The social connections of the job seeker are used to identify businesses"*

matching the job seeker's work preferences" as critical (96.4% vs 91.4%, $P=0.036$; 87.2% vs 79.5%, $P=0.045$, respectively). However, the opposite relationship was true for the item *"The job seeker participates with the employment specialist in conducting informational interviews"*, where more respondents in organization's providing predominately non-work and sub-minimum wage activities identified the item as critical (66.4% vs 75.2%; $P=0.045$).

Respondents working in agencies that provide primarily supported and customized employment services reported implementing the discovery CE elements well more frequently than those that provided primarily agency services (Figure 3 and 4, Appendix B). Two items had a noticeably higher selection for respondents in organizations that provide primarily supported and customized employment services (*"Discovery activities are individualized. All job seekers do not participate in the same activities."*; *"Employment specialists observe and participate with job seekers in familiar activities where job seekers actively participate and demonstrate their strengths, interests, and preferences..."*) at a 14% differential while two other items showed practically no difference between the two groups (*"During the home visit, the employment specialist gathers information about the job seeker's daily life."*, *"The employment specialist gathers information about the job seeker from personal connections who can provide information on his or her interests, preferred activities, and skills."*)

Seven of the 18 discovery activities were identified as more likely to be reported as implemented well by respondents who worked at agencies that primarily provided integrated employment services. This included the following:

- Discovery activities are individualized. All job seekers do not participate in the same activities (60.5% vs. 45.2%; $P=.001$).
- Discovery replaces standardized vocational assessments as the method to identify the job seeker's interests, skills, and work preferences (51% vs. 39%; $P=.011$).
- The employment specialist meets job seekers with disabilities in familiar, community locations of their choice (59.3% vs. 49.8%; $P=.046$).
- Employment specialists observe and participate with job seekers in familiar activities where job seekers actively participate and demonstrate their strengths, interests, and preferences. (These activities are selected by the job seeker; take place one-to-one in the community; and are not in a facility-based program or in groups with other individuals with disabilities.)(54.3% vs. 39%; $P=.001$)
- Job seekers have the opportunity to "shadow" employees in businesses that match their interests and work preferences (53.8% vs. 41.6%; $P=.01$).
- Community rehabilitation providers (CRP) do not use the same pre-determined work experiences that all job seekers rotate through to identify work preferences (41.9% vs. 30.9%; $P=.018$).
- The amount of time spent on discovery activities is guided by the needs of each individual and not determined by the agency or funding source (44.7% vs. 34.8%; $P=.034$).

Seven of the 15 job development activities were more likely to be reported as being implemented well by respondents who worked at agencies that primarily provided integrated employment services than those who worked primarily in agencies that provided non-work and sub-minimum wage activities (Table 10, Appendix B). These items include the following:

- Discovery findings are used to guide job development (63.6% vs. 52.4%; $P=.017$).
- The employment specialist conducts informational interviews with businesses without apparent job openings that match a specific job seeker's skills and vocational interests.
- The job seeker participates with the employment specialist in conducting informational interviews (52.4% vs. 42.3; $P=.036$).
- Businesses selected for informational interviews match the preferences of specific job seekers (60.5% vs. 48.3%; $P=.01$).

- The employment specialist assists employers in identifying specific ways that the business may benefit from hiring the job seeker (59.6% vs. 50%; P=.046).
- The employment specialist spends time in businesses to identify employer needs that match the strengths and interests of a specific job seeker (53.2% vs. 41.8%; P=.018).
- Job duties are identified as a result of negotiations with employers (55.3% vs. 44.7%; P=.027).

● Section Three Results

Only respondents (n=273) who reported providing customized employment services were included in the analysis for Section Three. Table 7 below reports the percentages of respondents that indicated they complete the CE practice, “most of the time” or “occasionally or less”.

TABLE 7 *Frequency of CE Activities*

Service Delivery	Most of the Time	Occasionally or Less
How often do you develop and present an employment proposal to an employer for a specific job seeker?	106 (38.8%)	167 (61.2%)
How often do you negotiate individualized job descriptions with employers to “create” a position for a specific job seeker? (Not jobs negotiated from open existing positions within business.)	119 (43.6%)	154 (56.4%)
When meeting a new job seeker, how often do you conduct a home visit to learn about the individual’s interests, skills, and work preferences?	132 (48.4%)	141 (51.6%)
How often do you use the social connections of the job seeker to identify businesses matching the job seeker’s work preferences?	150 (54.9%)	123 (45.1%)
How often do you conduct informational interviews with businesses without apparent job openings that match a specific job seeker’s skills and vocational interests?	151 (55.3%)	122 (44.7%)
How often do you observe job seekers in familiar activities where job seekers actively participate and demonstrate their strengths, interests, and preferences?	161 (59%)	112 (41.0%)
How often do you create individualized opportunities at local businesses for the job seeker to participate in work duties related to his or her skills or emerging vocational interests?	170 (62.3%)	103 (37.7%)
How often do you select businesses for informational interviews that match the preferences of a specific job seeker? (Not generic job development for anyone in the agency’s pool of individuals looking for employment.)	176 (64.5%)	97 (35.5%)
How often do you gather information about the job seeker from his or her personal connections (e.g., friends and neighbors) who can provide information on the job seeker’s interests, preferred activities, and skills?	179 (65.4%)	94 (34.6%)
How often do you meet job seekers with disabilities in familiar, community locations of the job seekers’ choice?	188 (68.9%)	85 (31.1%)
How often do you replace agency checklists with open ended informal conversations to gather information on the job seeker’s work preferences?	211(77.3%)	62 (22.7%)

Approximately 39% to 77% of the respondents indicated that they practiced the CE elements in their service delivery most of the time. Conversely, 61% to 32% reported that they practice the CE elements occasionally or less. As an example, less than half of the respondents, 48.4%, reported that they conduct home visits to learn about the individuals’ interests, skills, and work performance most of the time. Only 38.8% of the respondents indicated that they develop and present an employment proposal to an employer, and 43.6% reported negotiating individualized job descriptions with employers most of the time. Conversely, 77.3% of the respondents indicated that they replace an agency checklist with open ended, informal conversations to

gather information on the job seeker's work preferences most of the time. Finally, 68.9% of the respondents reported meeting most of the time with job seekers with disabilities in familiar, community locations of the job seeker's choice.

Discussion ●

This study was designed to describe the current status of customized employment service delivery as viewed by rehabilitation providers. The study sample was identified using email lists that included individuals identified as employment providers; specifically, individuals who participated in an ACRE approved online course that included customized employment content and individuals who were members of National APSE. These individuals should be familiar with the activities described in the survey and therefore more able to identify elements that are associated with CE and report if the activities are being implemented effectively. However, the survey did not include questions to evaluate the knowledge of the respondents, and the results are the respondents' opinions as to CE implementation. In addition, the findings may not be generalizable to agencies whose employment staff have not participated in ACRE approved training nor are not members of National APSE. As such, the results should be interpreted with caution as to the status of customized employment service delivery.

Four basic research questions were addressed in this study related to the identifying the:

- a. critical features of CE employment service delivery,
- b. determining how effectively these features are implemented,
- c. determining the relationship between service provider perceptions and their views of the critical features of CE, and
- d. determining the relationship between the demographics of the providers and how well CE is being implementing.

In regard to research question one, CE service providers generally agree about what CE discovery and job development activities are considered critical. A majority of the respondents indicated that discovery activities outlined in the survey were critical with high agreement across all discovery activities with over 90% of respondents rating 11 of the 18 activities as critical, over 80% rating on 5 of the 18 activities, 72% rating on one of the 18 activities as critical, and 69% rating one activities of discovery as critical. Similarly, a majority of service provider respondents indicated that the job development activities outlined in the survey were critical with over 90% of respondents rating for 6 of the 16 job development activities as critical, over 80% rated five of the activities as critical, over 70% rated two of the 16 activities as critical, over 60% rate two of 16 activities as critical, and 52% rated one activity as critical. The high respondent agreement on the criticality of CE discovery and job development activities suggests that service providers are regularly accessing information to inform practice and how to implement provisions of CE. This finding is not surprising given the extant literature about CE (i.e. Keeton, Brooks-Lane, Griffin, Cassidy, 2015, Inge, et al 2018, Riesen et al. 2019, WINTAC, 2017) and the general availability of consultants and subject matter experts who provide training on the topic (i.e. Griffin-Hammis Associates, Marc Gold and Associates, Office of Disability Employments Policy).

In response to the second research question, the data indicated that there is a significant gap between what respondents identify as critical discovery activities and how well the activities are being implemented. Fewer than 60% of respondents reported that any of the 18 discovery activities were being implemented well and there were a number of discovery activities that respondents believed to be critical but were not implemented well. First, 72% of respondents indicated that it is critical that community rehabilitation providers (CRPs) do not rotate all job-seekers through pre-determined work experiences while only 36.6% of the respondents indicated that this was implemented well. Second, 91% of respondents indicated that time spent on discovery should be guided by the individual and not determined by the funding agency and only 39%

of respondents indicated this is implemented well. Third, 82% of respondents indicated that it is critical that discovery replaced standardized assessments while 45% indicated that this was implemented well. These gaps raise questions about the capacity of service providers to implement elements of CE with a high degree of fidelity. Each of the aforementioned discovery activities is considered an essential component of the discovery process and rotating customized job seekers through predetermined job sites and having a funding agency guide the discovery process contradicts the literature on CE discovery. Moreover, a fundamental principle of CE discovery is to move away from traditional employment assessment measures and use more qualitative observations (WINTAC, 2017) to discover an individual's assets, interests, skills and support needs to obtain and maintain gainful employment. Given that only 45% of respondents indicate that this discovery activity is implemented well, there may be issues on how providers distill information from the literature and training and apply it to applied CE discovery activities.

There were also significant gaps between what respondents believe are critical CE job development activities and how well these activities are implemented. Like the essential discovery activities, fewer than 60% of respondents reported that any of the 16 CE job development were being implemented well. The results from responses to several discovery activities are noteworthy. First, a low percentage of respondents (52%) indicated that employment specialists do not identify open positions in businesses for the purpose of customizing a job and only 27% indicated that this as being implemented well. Second, 61.6% or respondent indicated the businesses are contacted on behalf of only one job-seeker is critical and 45.7% indicated this was implemented well. Finally, 74.4% of respondents indicated that developing and presenting an employment proposal to an employer was critical but only 36.1% of respondents report this activity as being implemented well. The fact that respondents indicated that these activities are not implemented well is surprising, because CE is predicated on the idea jobs are indeed customized or created and not based on current job opening within a business. A customized job is individualized and based on the strength and interests of one individual, and the job should not exist before the job seeker and employment specialist approach a business. In order to effectively customize jobs, service providers must be proficient at developing an employment proposal to use as a starting point to negotiate a customized job (Inge, et al., 2018; Griffin, Hammis, Geary, 2007).

These gaps may indicate knowledge translation issues about how service providers learn, acquire, and apply information about CE discovery and job development. This issue of knowledge translation is not a novel finding with respect to employment support professionals, and it aligns with calls to build the capacity of employment specialists to possess an array of highly sophisticated skills related to promoting positive employment outcomes for people with disabilities (Hall, et al. 2018; Rogan, P., Mank, D., 2011; Wehman et al. 2018).

Research question three and four examined the relationship between characteristics of service providers by (training, agency affiliation, years of experiences) and their perceptions of how they view the critical features of CE and how well these activities are being implemented. In regards to training, there were no significant differences between respondents who have an ACRE or CESP certification, however there was, on average, a five to 10% average difference on how respondents with a certificate rated how well discovery and job development activities are implemented compared to those without a certificate. The difference in responses between those with a certificate and those without reinforces the importance of having highly trained service providers who can deliver a provision of customized employment services.

When examining responses from service providers who work for agencies that provide supported and customized employment and agencies that provide facility-based or group agency services there were some noticeable difference. Respondents who work for service providers who provide primarily supported and customized employment reported that they implemented the CE discovery and job development well with more frequency as compared to agencies that provided primary agency services. The fact that there is a difference in how

well providers, based on agency affiliation, implement CE is not surprising as providers who only provide supported and customized employment are more likely to dedicate resources and training to effective implementation. However, when examining data from providers who only provide customized employment services an interesting finding contradicts the assumptions that providers who only provide SE or CE dedicate more resources to training. Specifically, there was a large range (39%-77%) of responses from respondents who indicated that they practiced the CE elements in their service delivery most of the time and large range (61% to 32%) who reported that they practice the CE elements occasionally or less. It appears that only small percentage of respondents who provide CE implemented two of the critical elements of CE job development well. That is, only 38.8% of the respondents indicated that they develop and present an employment proposal to an employer, and 43.6% reported negotiating individualized job descriptions with employers most of the time. Once again, the range in response from providers reinforce the notion that while service providers may be trained on the provisions of CE, there remains significant service provider capacity problems to effectively implement CE discovery and job development.

● Recommendations

Customized employment emerged as a promising practice that is producing positive outcomes for individuals with disabilities, particularly those with more significant disabilities. Similar to other employment support models for people with disabilities, CE requires highly trained and skilled professionals to ensure that key elements CE discovery and job development are implemented with fidelity. This study provided insights about the status of customized employment service delivery as viewed by the rehabilitation providers. The results suggest that while service providers largely understand critical elements of CE, these critical discovery and job development elements are not always implemented well. The inconsistent implementation may lead to a funded support strategy, codified in statute that does produce timely and desired outcomes. Therefore, it is critical that investments be made to ensure evidence-based training and technical assistance are provided to service providers on the provisions of CE discovery and job development. Training on CE should not only be didactic, classroom-based training, it should also be coupled with systematic follow-along and capacity building activities for both practitioners and supervisors. In addition, to ensure that CE discovery and job development is implemented well, CE fidelity scales for both discovery and job development should be developed and utilized at the provider and funder level. Utilizing fidelity scales at the provider level would help capture and delineate the essential practices and procedures for both CE discovery and job development. Fidelity scales at the funding level and can be used as an objective measure of performance to assist funding agencies determine which community rehabilitation agencies provide CE that aligns with best practice and to determine the efficacy of outcomes.

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Appendix A

Data Tables and Figures

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TABLE 8 *Section One by ACRE Certificate and/or CESP Certification / No Certificate or Certification*

Discovery Activities	Critical Activity			Implemented Well		
	Most of the Time	Ocasionaly or Less	Most of the Time	Ocasionaly or Less	Most of the Time	Ocasionaly or Less
Discovery activities are individualized. All job seekers do not participate in the same activities.	280 (94.9%)	152 (95.0%)	>0.999	171 (58.0%)	74 (46.2%)	0.022
Discovery replaces standardized vocational assessments as the method to identify the job seeker's interests, skills, and work preferences.	238 (80.7%)	137 (85.6%)	0.232	143 (48.5%)	65 (40.6%)	0.132
Discovery begins with a home visit.	207 (70.2%)	111 (69.4%)	0.945	131 (44.6%)	62 (39.0%)	0.297
During the home visit, the employment specialist learns about the job seeker's interests and preferred activities or hobbies, including how he or she spends time.	277 (93.9%)	145 (91.2%)	0.378	171 (58.2%)	76 (47.8%)	0.044
During the home visit, the employment specialist learns the history and background behind the employment seeker's valued possessions and expressed interests.	258 (87.5%)	141 (88.7%)	0.818	150 (51.0%)	70 (44.6%)	0.229
During the home visit, the employment specialist gathers information about the job seeker's daily life.	279 (94.6%)	147 (92.5%)	0.488	181 (61.8%)	81 (50.9%)	0.033
The employment specialist meets job seekers with disabilities in familiar, community locations of their choice.	256 (86.8%)	147 (92.5%)	0.095	172 (58.5%)	76 (47.8%)	0.037
The employment specialist gathers information about the job seeker from personal connections who can provide information on his or her interests, preferred activities, and skills.	270 (91.5%)	147 (92.5%)	0.869	167 (56.8%)	75 (47.2%)	0.062
Conversational interviews are completed with family members and individuals who know the job seeker well to gather information on his or her interests, skills, and work preferences.	274 (92.9%)	145 (90.6%)	0.503	160 (54.2%)	74 (46.5%)	0.142
Employment specialists replace agency checklists with open ended informal conversations to gather information on the job seeker's work preferences.	249 (84.7%)	128 (80.0%)	0.253	146 (50.0%)	62 (38.8%)	0.028
Employment specialists observe and participate with job seekers in familiar activities where job seekers actively participate and demonstrate their strengths, interests, and preferences. (These activities are selected by the job seeker; take place one-to-one in the community; and are not in a facility-based program or in groups with other individuals with disabilities).	268 (90.8%)	146 (91.2%)	>0.999	146 (49.5%)	63 (39.4%)	0.049
Job seekers have the opportunity to "shadow" employees in businesses that match their interests and work preferences.	270 (92.2%)	145 (91.2%)	0.862	146 (49.7%)	67 (41.9%)	0.136
Community rehabilitation provider (CRP) do not use the same pre-determined work experiences that all job seekers rotate through to identify work preferences.	205 (70.2%)	125 (78.1%)	0.089	107 (37.4%)	57 (35.8%)	0.822

TABLE 8
(continued)

Discovery Activities	Critical Activity			Implemented Well		
	Most of the Time	Ocasionaly or Less	Most of the Time	Ocasionaly or Less	Most of the Time	Ocasionaly or Less
Employment specialists create opportunities at local businesses for the job seeker to participate in work duties related to his or her skills or emerging vocational interests. (These opportunities are identified based on the job seeker's interest and not used agency-wide for everyone who is looking for a job)	281 (95.3%)	147 (91.9%)	0.212	164 (55.6%)	78 (48.8%)	0.194
Employment specialists observe job seekers trying new tasks in businesses to learn about their interests and skills.	276 (94.5%)	152 (95.0%)	>0.999	160 (54.6%)	69 (43.1%)	0.025
The amount of time spent on discovery activities is guided by the needs of each individual and not determined by the agency or funding source.	265 (89.8%)	147 (91.9%)	0.586	118 (40.1%)	58 (36.2%)	0.477
A narrative and descriptive document is written in a positive and affirming manner to summarize discovery and to guide job development.	260 (88.4%)	148 (93.1%)	0.158	152 (51.7%)	69 (43.1%)	0.099
A meeting is held with the job seeker, his/her support network, VR counselor, and the employment specialist to discuss and develop the job seeker's plan for employment.	286 (96.9%)	154 (96.2%)	0.901	181 (61.4%)	83 (51.9%)	0.063

TABLE 9 *Section Two by ACRE Certificate and/or CESP Certification / No Certificate or Certification*

Job Development Activity	Critical Activity			Implemented Well		
	ACRE/CESP (N=295)	No Certificate (N=160)	P	ACRE/CESP (N=295)	No Certificate (N=160)	P
Discovery findings are used to guide job development.	285 (96.9%)	158 (98.8%)	0.379	172 (58.7%)	86 (54.1%)	0.397
Job development activities are individualized through conversations with the job seeker and families.	277 (94.2%)	152 (95.0%)	0.894	189 (64.5%)	84 (52.8%)	0.020
The employment specialist does not identify open positions in businesses for the purpose of customizing a job.	155 (52.9%)	84 (52.8%)	>0.999	83 (28.5%)	39 (25.3%)	0.543
Businesses are contacted on behalf of only one job-seeker.	187 (63.6%)	95 (59.4%)	0.432	135 (46.1%)	69 (43.7%)	0.696
The social connections of the job seeker are used to identify businesses matching the job seeker's work preferences.	253 (86.1%)	129 (80.6%)	0.168	142 (48.5%)	72 (45.6%)	0.625
The CRP has a community presence and established relationships with the business community.	269 (91.5%)	145 (91.8%)	>0.999	154 (52.4%)	69 (44.8%)	0.155
Informational interviews are completed with employers for the sole purpose of getting to know business needs.	262 (89.4%)	145 (91.2%)	0.662	155 (52.9%)	72 (45.6%)	0.165
The employment specialist conducts informational interviews with businesses without apparent job openings that match a specific job seeker's skills and vocational interests.	254 (86.7%)	134 (83.8%)	0.476	145 (49.3%)	61 (39.4%)	0.055
The job seeker participates with the employment specialist in conducting informational interviews.	203 (69.0%)	114 (71.2%)	0.703	126 (43.0%)	54 (34.8%)	0.115
Businesses selected for informational interviews match the preferences of specific job seekers.	258 (87.8%)	136 (85.0%)	0.495	166 (56.7%)	78 (50.3%)	0.238
The employment specialist assists employers in identifying specific ways that the business may benefit from hiring the job seeker.	282 (96.2%)	152 (95.0%)	0.699	162 (55.3%)	80 (51.0%)	0.435
The employment specialist spends time in businesses to identify employer needs that match the strengths and interests of a specific job seeker.	272 (92.8%)	146 (91.2%)	0.675	139 (47.3%)	71 (45.2%)	0.751
Job duties are identified as a result of negotiations with employers.	275 (93.5%)	136 (85.0%)	0.005	156 (53.1%)	65 (41.4%)	0.024
The employment specialist and the job seeker develop and present an employment proposal to an employer.	221 (75.2%)	116 (73.0%)	0.687	103 (35.4%)	52 (33.8%)	0.811
Job descriptions are customized based on employer needs that match the job seeker's interests.	259 (88.1%)	137 (85.6%)	0.544	136 (46.4%)	61 (38.9%)	0.149
Customized employment may include resource ownership. Materials, equipment, or skills are acquired by the employee that generates profits for the employer and wages for the employee.	213 (72.7%)	102 (63.7%)	0.061	111 (38.1%)	52 (34.2%)	0.477

TABLE 10 *Section One Integrated Employment Services / Agency Services*

Discovery Activities	Critical Activity			Implemented Well		
	Integrated Services (N=276)	Agency Services	P	Integrated Services (N=276)	Agency Services	P
Discovery activities are individualized. All job seekers do not participate in the same activities.	260 (94.2%)	196 (93.3%)	0.838	167 (60.5%)	95 (45.2%)	0.001
Discovery replaces standardized vocational assessments as the method to identify the job seeker's interests, skills, and work preferences.	229 (83.0%)	170 (81.0%)	0.649	141 (51.1%)	82 (39.0%)	0.011
Discovery begins with a home visit.	201 (72.8%)	134 (63.8%)	0.042	127 (46.4%)	82 (39.0%)	0.130
During the home visit, the employment specialist learns about the job seeker's interests and preferred activities or hobbies, including how he or she spends time.	254 (92.4%)	191 (91.0%)	0.694	156 (56.9%)	111 (52.9%)	0.423
During the home visit, the employment specialist learns the history and background behind the employment seeker's valued possessions and expressed interests.	239 (86.9%)	185 (88.1%)	0.801	143 (52.4%)	99 (47.4%)	0.318
During the home visit, the employment specialist gathers information about the job seeker's daily life.	257 (93.5%)	194 (92.4%)	0.780	160 (58.6%)	124 (59.0%)	0.997
The employment specialist meets job seekers with disabilities in familiar, community locations of their choice.	249 (90.2%)	178 (85.2%)	0.120	163 (59.3%)	104 (49.8%)	0.046
The employment specialist gathers information about the job seeker from personal connections who can provide information on his or her interests, preferred activities, and skills.	254 (92.0%)	191 (91.4%)	0.930	149 (54.2%)	112 (53.6%)	0.970
Conversational interviews are completed with family members and individuals who know the job seeker well to gather information on his or her interests, skills, and work preferences.	254 (92.0%)	191 (91.0%)	0.796	147 (53.5%)	105 (50.0%)	0.507
Employment specialists replace agency checklists with open ended informal conversations to gather information on the job seeker's work preferences.	236 (85.8%)	166 (79.0%)	0.066	140 (51.1%)	90 (43.1%)	0.097
Employment specialists observe and participate with job seekers in familiar activities where job seekers actively participate and demonstrate their strengths, interests, and preferences. (These activities are selected by the job seeker; take place one-to-one in the community; and are not in a facility-based program or in groups with other individuals with disabilities).	253 (91.7%)	184 (87.6%)	0.188	150 (54.3%)	82 (39.0%)	0.001
Job seekers have the opportunity to "shadow" employees in businesses that match their interests and work preferences.	253 (92.3%)	189 (90.4%)	0.562	148 (53.8%)	87 (41.6%)	0.010
Community rehabilitation provider (CRP) do not use the same pre-determined work experiences that all job seekers rotate through to identify work preferences.	211 (77.0%)	137 (65.9%)	0.009	114 (41.9%)	63 (30.9%)	0.018
Employment specialists create opportunities at local businesses for the job seeker to participate in work duties related to his or her skills or emerging vocational interests. (These opportunities are identified based on the job seeker's interest and not used agency-wide for everyone who is looking for a job)	260 (94.2%)	193 (91.9%)	0.415	159 (57.6%)	105 (50.0%)	0.115
Employment specialists observe job seekers trying new tasks in businesses to learn about their interests and skills.	258 (94.2%)	198 (94.7%)	0.942	150 (54.7%)	104 (49.5%)	0.295

TABLE 10
(continued)

Discovery Activities	Critical Activity			Implemented Well		
	Integrated Services (N=276)	Agency Services	P	Integrated Services (N=276)	Agency Services	P
The amount of time spent on discovery activities is guided by the needs of each individual and not determined by the agency or funding source.	255 (92.4%)	186 (88.6%)	0.200	123 (44.7%)	73 (34.8%)	0.034
A narrative and descriptive document is written in a positive and affirming manner to summarize discovery and to guide job development.	247 (89.8%)	184 (88.0%)	0.635	146 (53.1%)	94 (44.8%)	0.084
A meeting is held with the job seeker, his/her support network, VR counselor, and the employment specialist to discuss and develop the job seeker's plan for employment.	265 (96.0%)	202 (96.2%)	>0.999	173 (62.7%)	118 (56.2%)	0.176

TABLE 11 *Section Two Summaries by Integrated Employment Services / Agency Services*

Job Development	Critical Activity			Implemented Well		
	Integrated Employment (N=276)	Agency Services	P	Integrated Services (N=276)	Agency Services (N=210)	P
Discovery findings are used to guide job development.	268 (97.5)	203 (96.7)	0.810	175 (63.6)	109 (52.4)	0.017
Job development activities are individualized through conversations with the job seeker and families.	264 (96.4)	192 (91.4)	0.036	177 (64.6)	123 (59.1)	0.258
The employment specialist does not identify open positions in businesses for the purpose of customizing a job.	153 (56.2)	102 (48.6)	0.114	79 (29.4)	55 (26.6)	0.569
Businesses are contacted on behalf of only one job-seeker.	169 (61.7)	128 (61.0)	0.945	136 (49.6)	87 (42.0)	0.118
The social connections of the job seeker are used to identify businesses matching the job seeker's work preferences.	239 (87.2)	167 (79.5)	0.031	142 (51.8)	91 (43.8)	0.096
The CRP has a community presence and established relationships with the business community.	246 (90.4)	194 (92.4)	0.558	145 (53.5)	97 (47.1)	0.195
Informational interviews are completed with employers for the sole purpose of getting to know business needs.	244 (89.7)	188 (89.5)	>0.999	148 (54.4)	100 (47.8)	0.182
The employment specialist conducts informational interviews with businesses without apparent job openings that match a specific job seeker's skills and vocational interests.	239 (87.5)	174 (82.9)	0.187	142 (52.4)	88 (42.3)	0.036
The job seeker participates with the employment specialist in conducting informational interviews.	182 (66.4)	158 (75.2)	0.045	123 (45.4)	78 (37.7)	0.110
Businesses selected for informational interviews match the preferences of specific job seekers.	238 (86.9)	180 (85.7)	0.817	164 (60.5)	100 (48.3)	0.010
The employment specialist assists employers in identifying specific ways that the business may benefit from hiring the job seeker.	264 (96.7)	199 (94.8)	0.406	162 (59.6)	104 (50.0)	0.046
The employment specialist spends time in businesses to identify employer needs that match the strengths and interests of a specific job seeker.	256 (93.4)	189 (90.4)	0.297	145 (53.1)	87 (41.8)	0.018
Job duties are identified as a result of negotiations with employers.	252 (92.0)	183 (87.1)	0.111	151 (55.3)	93 (44.7)	0.027
The employment specialist and the job seeker develop and present an employment proposal to an employer.	198 (72.5)	161 (76.7)	0.354	99 (36.8)	74 (35.9)	0.919
Job descriptions are customized based on employer needs that match the job seeker's interests.	239 (87.2)	184 (87.6)	>0.999	132 (48.4)	84 (40.6)	0.109
Customized employment may include resource ownership. Materials, equipment, or skills are acquired by the employee that generates profits for the employer and wages for the employee.	187 (68.5)	149 (71.0)	0.630	108 (40.6)	71 (34.3)	0.191

FIGURE 1
Section One Discovery Items

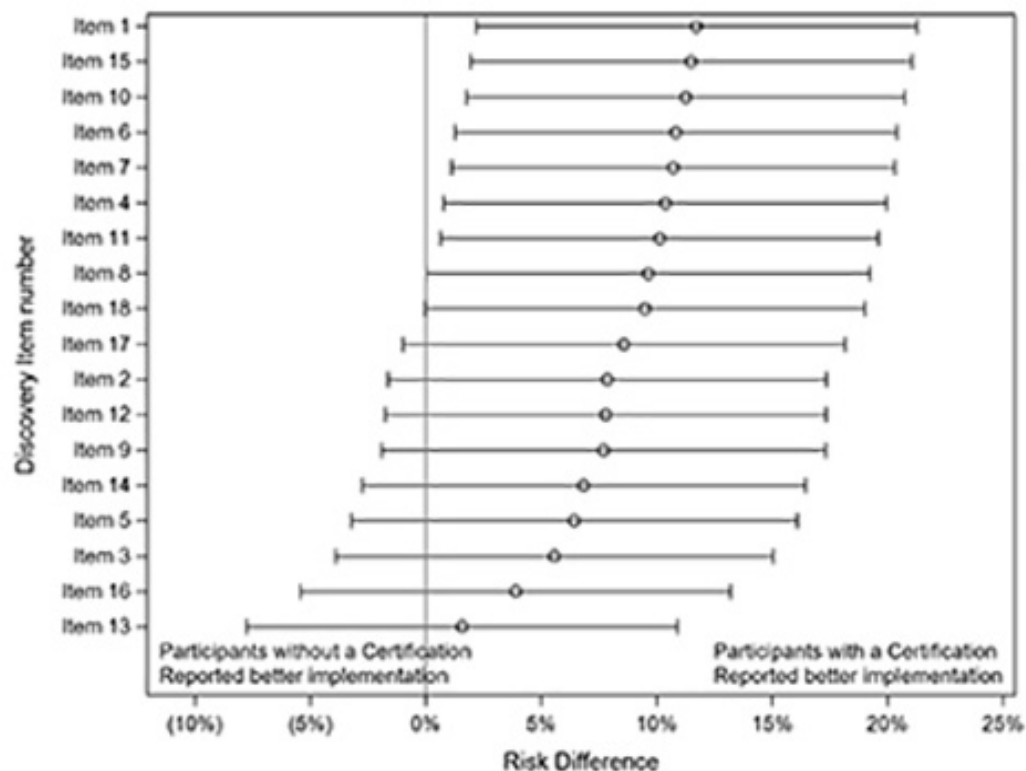


FIGURE 2
Section Two Job Development Items

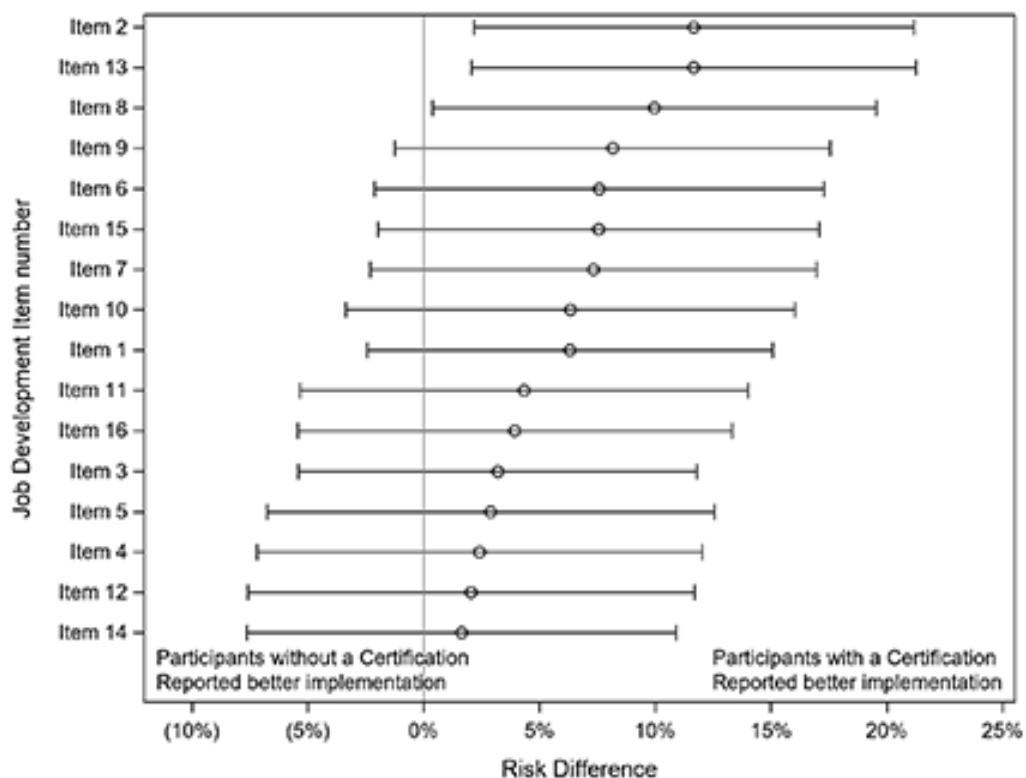


FIGURE 3
*Section One Discovery Items
 by Agency Type*

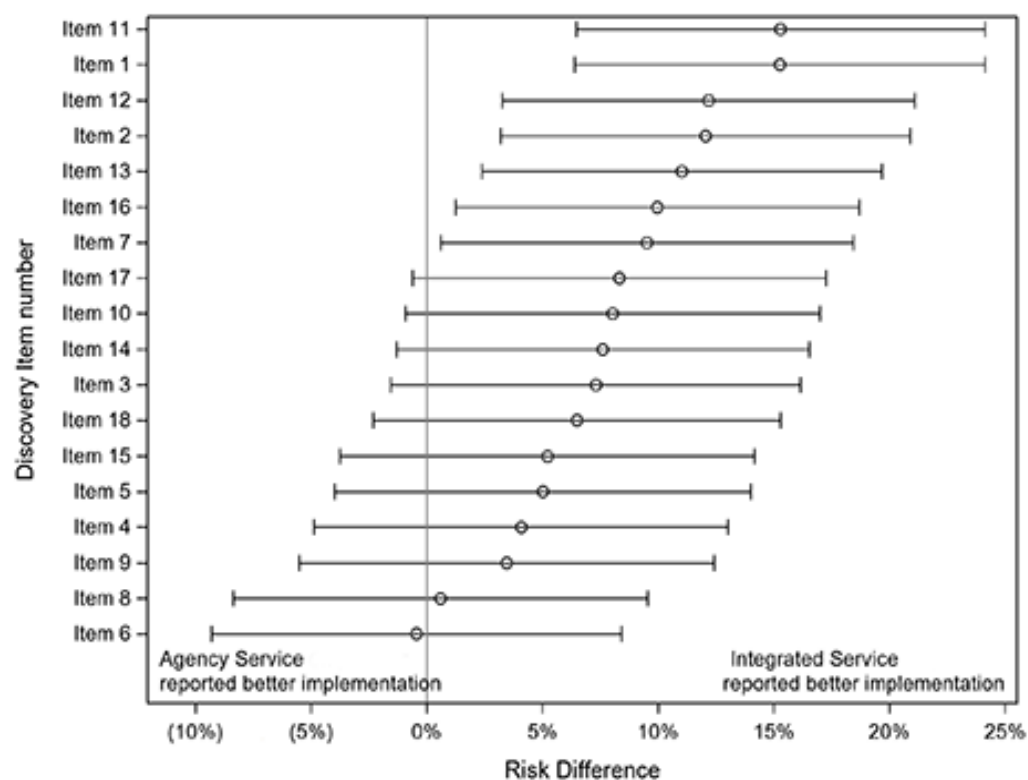
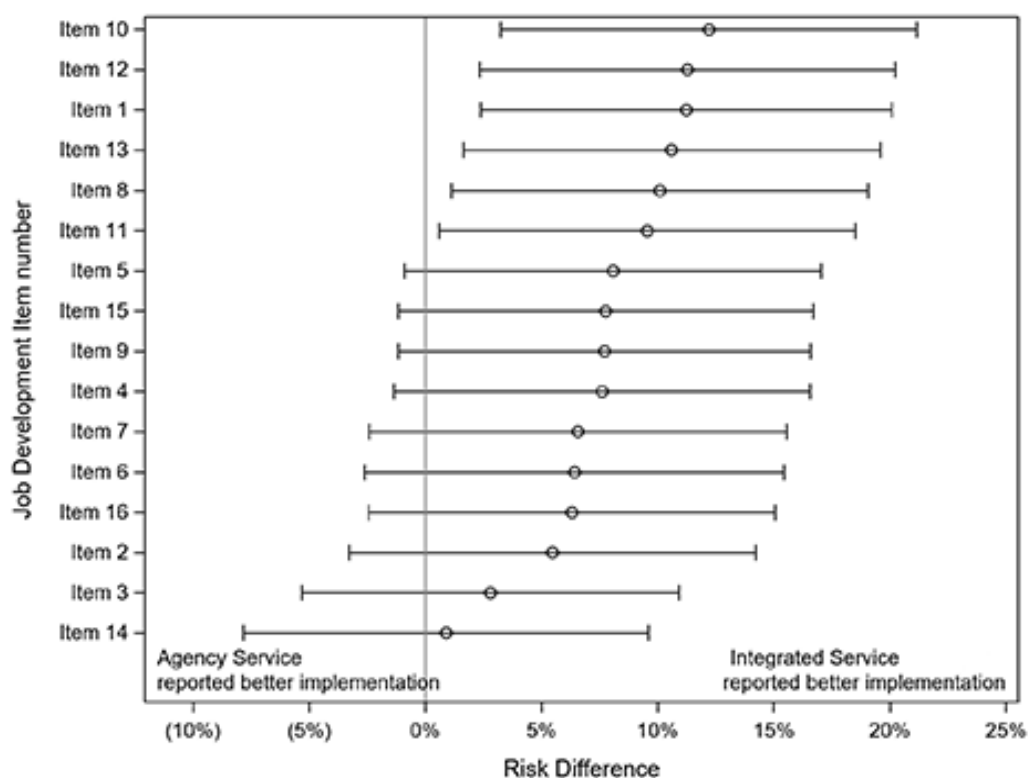


FIGURE 4
*Section Two Job Development
 Items by Agency Type*



Appendix B

Customized Employment Survey

Customized employment (CE) was added to the Workforce Opportunity and Innovation Act (WIOA) in 2014. While CE is listed under the **definition of supported employment**, CE has some different features or elements. Discovery and how job development is conducted are some of the **primary differences between the two services**. The items in this section describe some of the unique characteristics of discovery that have been suggested as critical to implementation. We would like to know how critical these features are to service delivery and how well you think they are being implemented. First, read the essential element in the left column of the table. Decide if you think this essential element is critical to implementing customized employment. Mark your answer in the center column. You can only click one answer. [unsure, not at all critical, not very critical, critical, very critical]. Then, you are asked how well this essential element is currently being implemented. Mark your response in the right column [not at all, poor, fair, good, excellent]. Continue until you have reviewed all the elements in the table.

[illegible]

VCU-RRTC Customized Employment Survey

[illegible]

VCU-RRTC Customized Employment Survey

CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS	How critical do you think this activity is for customized employment service delivery?					How well is this currently being implemented?				
	unsure	not at all critical	not very critical	critical	very critical	not at all	poor	fair	good	excellent
A meeting is held with the job seeker, his/her support network, VR counselor, and the employment specialist to discuss and develop the job seeker's plan for employment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING SECTION ONE.
YOUR ANSWERS ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO US. PLEASE CONTINUE.

Section 2: Customized Employment and Job Development.

The items in this section describe some of the unique characteristics of job development that have been suggested as critical to implementation in customized employment. We would like to know how critical these features are to service delivery and how well you think they are being implemented. First, read the essential element in the left column of the table. Decide if you think this essential element is critical to conducting a job search for an individual with disabilities. Mark your answer in the center column. You can only click one answer. **[unsure, not at all critical, not very critical, critical, very critical]**. Then, you are asked how well this essential element is currently being implemented. Mark your response in the right column **[not at all, poor, fair, good, excellent]**. Continue until you have reviewed all the elements in the table.

[illegible]

VCU-RRTC Customized Employment Survey

CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS	How critical do you think this activity is for customized employment service delivery?					How well is this currently being implemented?				
	unsure	not at all critical	not very critical	critical	very critical	not at all	poor	fair	good	excellent
The employment specialist conducts informational interviews with businesses without apparent job openings that match a specific job seeker's skills and vocational interests.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The job seeker participates with the employment specialist in conducting informational interviews based.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Businesses selected for informational interviews match the preferences of specific job seekers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The employment specialist assists employers in identifying specific ways that the business may benefit from hiring the job seeker.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The employment specialist spends time in businesses to identify employer needs that match the strengths and interests of a specific job seeker.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Job duties are identified as a result of negotiations with employers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The employment specialist and the job seeker develop and presents an employment proposal to an employer.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Job descriptions are customized based on employer needs that match the job seeker's interests.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Customized employment may include resource ownership. Materials, equipment, or skills are acquired by the employee that generates profits for the employer and wages for the employee.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

**THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING SECTION TWO.
YOUR ANSWERS ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO US. PLEASE CONTINUE.**

VCU-RRTC Customized Employment Survey

Section 3: Service Delivery

In this section, we are interested in knowing if you are currently using customized employment to support individuals on your case load in finding employment. You will be asked how often you provide an activity as part of customized employment services [**never, almost never, occasionally, almost every time, and every time**]. Please select one best response to each question. If you are not providing customized employment services, you will be directed to the final section of this survey. Thanks for continuing. Your responses are very important!

1. Are you personally assisting individuals with disabilities in finding and obtaining a job using customized employment?
☐ YES ☐ NO (If no or do not know, survey skips the questions in this section and goes to Section 4.) ☐ DO NOT KNOW
2. When meeting a new job seeker, how often do you conduct a home visit to learn about the individual's interests, skills, and work preferences?
☐ Never ☐ Almost never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Almost every time ☐ Every time
3. How often do you gather information about the job seeker from his or her personal connections (e.g., friends and neighbors) who can provide information on the job seeker's interests, preferred activities, and skills.
☐ Never ☐ Almost never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Almost every time ☐ Every time
4. How often do you meet job seekers with disabilities in familiar, community locations of the job seekers' choice.
☐ Never ☐ Almost never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Almost every time ☐ Every time
5. How often do you **replace** agency checklists with open ended informal conversations to gather information on the job seeker's work preferences.
☐ Never ☐ Almost never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Almost every time ☐ Every time
6. How often do you create **individualized** opportunities at local businesses for the job seeker to participate in work duties related to his or her skills or emerging vocational interests? (These opportunities are identified based on the job seeker's interests and not used agency-wide for anyone who is looking for a job.)
☐ Never ☐ Almost never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Almost every time ☐ Every time
7. How often do you observe and participate with job seekers in **familiar** activities where job seekers actively participate and demonstrate their strengths, interests, and preferences? (These activities are selected by the job seeker; take place one-to-one in the community; and are not in a facility-based program or in groups with other individuals with disabilities.)
☐ Never ☐ Almost never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Almost every time ☐ Every time
8. How often do you use the social connections of the job seeker to identify businesses matching the job seeker's work preferences?
☐ Never ☐ Almost never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Almost every time ☐ Every time

VCU-RRTC Customized Employment Survey

9. How often do you conduct informational interviews with businesses without apparent job openings that match a specific job seeker's skills and vocational interests?
- ☐ Never ☐ Almost never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Almost every time ☐ Every time
10. How often do you select businesses for informational interviews that match the preferences of a specific job seeker? (Not generic job development for anyone in the agency's pool of individuals looking for employment.)
- ☐ Never ☐ Almost never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Almost every time ☐ Every time
11. How often do you negotiate individualized job descriptions with employers to "create" a position for a specific job seeker? (Not jobs negotiated from open existing positions within business.)
- ☐ Never ☐ Almost never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Almost every time ☐ Every time
12. How often do you develop and present an employment proposal to an employer for a specific job seeker?
- ☐ Never ☐ Almost never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Almost every time ☐ Every time
13. Some agencies have policies that do not allow employment specialists to complete activities that have been identified as customized employment practices. Please review each of the following statements. For each statement, please tell us if your agency has a policy that prevents this customized employment practice. (Please answer each question).
- a. Go the individual's home.
- ☐ YES, my agency has a policy that prevents staff from going to the person's home.
- ☐ No, my agency does not have a policy on this practice.
- b. Transport an individual with a disability in your personal car to complete discovery activities.
- ☐ YES, my agency has a policy that prevents staff from transporting individuals with disabilities in personal cars.
- ☐ No, my agency does not have a policy on this practice.
- c. Meet a job seeker at a location of the person's choice that is not work related (e.g., community recreation facility, restaurant, mall, etc.)
- ☐ YES, my agency has a policy that prevents staff from meeting individual with disabilities in non-work related locations.
- ☐ No, my agency does not have a policy on this practice.
- d. Meet with the job seeker at locations other than the agency or job sites.
- ☐ YES, my agency has a policy that prevents staff from meeting individual with disabilities in locations other than the agency or job sites.
- ☐ No, my agency does not have a policy on this practice.

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING SECTION THREE. YOUR ANSWERS ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO US. PLEASE CONTINUE.

YOU HAVE ALMOST COMPLETED THE SURVEY

VCU-RRTC Customized Employment Survey

Section 4: Demographics

In this final section, we would like to know about you and your agency to help us understand the results of the survey! Remember, your answers are strictly confidential and they cannot be connected to you personally. We are not asking for any personal identifiers nor are we collecting information that could identify you specifically. Please continue! You have invested a great deal of time and effort in completing this questionnaire.

1. What is your job title?

- ☐ Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
- ☐ Vocational Rehabilitation Manager / Supervisor
- ☐ Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) Direct Staff
- ☐ Employment Services Manager / Supervisor
- ☐ Employment Specialist
- ☐ Job Developer
- ☐ Job Coach
- ☐ Other: (Please specify) _____
- ☐ Prefer Not to Answer

2. Education: What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, highest degree received.

- ☐ Less than a high school diploma
- ☐ High school degree or equivalent (e.g. GED)
- ☐ Some college, no degree
- ☐ Associate degree (e.g. AA, AS)
- ☐ Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)
- ☐ Master's degree (e.g. MA, MS, MEd)
- ☐ Professional degree (e.g. MD, DDS, DVM)
- ☐ Doctorate (e.g. PhD, EdD)
- ☐ Prefer Not to Answer

3. Have you earned a National Certificate in Employment Services by completing 40 hours of training approved by ACRE (Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Do Not Know
- ☐ Prefer Not To Answer

VCU-RRTC Customized Employment Survey

4. Do you have CESP™ certification (Certified Employment Support Professional) issued by APSE? To have this certification, you must have taken and passed the CESP™ exam.
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ Do Not Know
 - ☐ Prefer Not To Answer
5. What services does your agency provide to individuals with disabilities? (Please check all that apply.)
- ☐ **Facility-based non-work** (Definition: This includes but is not limited to a skills training program, activities or daily living, recreation, and includes habilitation, day care, and day activity programs.)
 - ☐ **Community-based non-work** (This includes programs where people with disabilities spend the majority of their day in the community in places where most people do not have disabilities. The primary focus of the activities may include general community activities, volunteer experiences, recreation and leisure, improving skills such activities of daily living.)
 - ☐ **Facility-based work** (Definition: Includes sheltered workshops or extended employment programs including businesses that are owned and operated by your organization where most workers have disabilities. These workers are supported and paid by your organization.)
 - ☐ **Mobile Work Crew** (Definition: Groups of individuals with disabilities who typically move to different / multiple work sites who receive continual support and supervision from your agency or organization. Individuals are employees of your agency and not of the business where the work is performed.)
 - ☐ **Enclave** (Definition: Groups of individuals who have disabilities work together on a job site receiving continual support and supervision from your agency or organization's staff. Individuals are employees of your agency and not of the business where the work is performed.)
 - ☐ **Individual supported employment** (Definition: Competitive employment at an integrated job site, making at least minimum wage; where most people do not have disabilities. The individual is an employee of the community business and receives on-going supports from a provider or agency.)
 - ☐ **Customized employment** (Definition: Competitive integrated employment, for an individual with disabilities, that is based on an individualized determination of the strengths, needs, and interests of a job seeker as identified through Discovery. An individualized job description is negotiated that matches the abilities of the individual and meets the business needs of the employer.)
6. Using the definitions provided in the previous question, what is the primary service provided by your organization or agency to individuals with disabilities? In other words, where are the most individuals with disabilities served? (Select only one service.)
- ☐ **Facility-based non-work**
 - ☐ **Community-based non-work**
 - ☐ **Facility-based work**
 - ☐ **Mobile Work Crew**
 - ☐ **Enclave**
 - ☐ **Individual supported employment**
 - ☐ **Customized employment**

VCU-RRTC Customized Employment Survey

7. What is the primary service that you personally provide to the individuals that you support? (Select only one service.)

- ☐ Facility-based non-work
- ☐ Community-based non-work
- ☐ Facility-based work
- ☐ Mobile Work Crew
- ☐ Enclave
- ☐ Individual supported employment
- ☐ Customized employment

8. In the past year, how many individuals with disabilities received customized employment services from your agency? _____

9. In the past year, how many individuals with disabilities obtained a job with the support of customized employment services? _____

10. In the past year, how many individuals did you personally provide customized employment services? _____

11. How long have you been employed supporting individuals with disabilities in finding and maintaining competitive integrated employment? _____

12. Have you participated in training provided by any of the agencies or organizations listed below?

- ☐ Center for Social Capital
- ☐ College of Direct Supports
- ☐ Griffin-Hammis Associates
- ☐ Marc Gold and Associates
- ☐ Virginia Commonwealth University, Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (VCU-RRTC)
- ☐ Other: _____

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY ON CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT.

If you have any comments or want to tell us information on customized employment that we have not asked, you may enter them in the following text box.