EVALUATION OF THE SCVRD INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TRAINING CENTER

Jacob L. Chorey, MA, CPM

South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department

Takeaways for VR Counselors & Administrators

- To measure effectiveness of a particular course, agencies should consider choosing participants for field-specific training who don't already have education and experience in the field.
- When conducting a cost-benefit analysis of agency-provided career training, organizations need to look at employment outcomes, field-specific employment outcomes, case closures, and the cost of the specific training program.
- If costs are too high in proportion to outcomes, agencies should consider partnering with other training providers like technical colleges.

Background

South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department offers career-specific training for jobs in the computer industry through the Information Technology Training Center (ITTC). The program began prior to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and made available training that would not have been accessible elsewhere. In contrast, present-day technical colleges have disability services and ADA coordinators to ensure compliance and help people with disabilities get training, certifications, and degrees in IT fields.

Current ITTC training offerings consist of courses in Business Application Plus, Computer Aided Drafting, network support, and server support. Trainings range in length from about six (6) months to about 14 months in duration, and the number of seats in each program are limited. Additionally, it is a comprehensive program, which means that lodging, meals, and nursing are provided on-site.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the project was to evaluate the ITTC to determine its effectiveness in delivering training that led to participants obtaining competitive, integrated employment outcomes in occupations related to the training received.

This study was conducted to determine whether or not the ITTC program was the most cost-effective means of delivering IT training to agency consumers, and whether the ITTC was producing better outcomes than could be attained via another alternative.

Methods

It was important for the agency to identify the program's strengths and limitations, to determine its value to consumers and potential employers, and to understand who could benefit from the program most. The agency wanted to make sure that the finite resources spent on the program would result in maximum positive impact. To find out, the study asked the following questions:

- What ITTC courses are leading to Successful Employment Outcomes (SEOs) related to the training?
- How do participant outcomes compare to outcomes of non-participant consumers with the same or similar vocational objectives?
- What are the ITTC program's costs per consumer served?
- How does this cost compare to the cost for non-participant consumers?

The evaluation used a non-experimental design, analyzing existing program data obtained from the agency case management system, program-specific records kept in Excel spreadsheets, and the agency accounting system.

Descriptive statistics looked at contrasts between a target sample of agency consumers who received training from the ITTC and whose VR cases had closed, versus a comparative sample of consumers who did not receive ITTC training but who had vocational objectives in common with members of the target sample.

Quantitative differences (i.e., hours worked per week and hourly wages at case closure) between the groups' employment outcomes were analyzed, and focused on occupations related to ITTC training courses, to determine statistical significance.

Average expenditures to serve ITTC participants and to serve general program consumers were calculated and compared.

Results

The Business Applications Plus course – which had the shortest duration – led to the highest number of successful employment outcomes and the highest proportion of SEOs related to the training (84.6%). Programming – the program with the longest duration – produced the highest rehabilitation rate (66.7%).

For occupations related to training, the target sample had mean hourly wages that were $1.64 higher than those of the comparative sample. At the $p < .05$ level, it was a difference that was not considered statistically significant.

The difference in mean weekly hours worked was 2.57 in favor of the target sample, which was considered statistically significant ($p < .05$ level).

Adjusted expenditures for ITTC consumers was, on average, 4.84 times those for consumers served in the general program.

Implication for Practice or Future Research

The findings will impact strategic planning decisions on how to best utilize agency resources to deliver quality VR services.

The study encountered several limitations when analyzing differences in outcome measures. One was the small size of the target sample, particularly when focusing on specific occupations. Additionally, data about participants' previous IT experience and training would have strengthened the analysis of outcomes data.

As a result of the study, viable alternatives to direct provision of IT training will be considered. One possibility is to co-sponsor training via technical colleges or other training providers, although a variety of options will be explored.