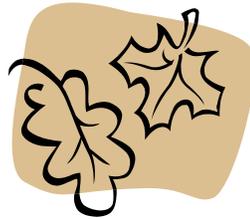


# Bi-Annual Newsletter

## Vocational Rehabilitation Return on Investment Project

Estimating Return on Investment in State Vocational Rehabilitation Programs

### End-of-Summer Greetings!



Volume 2, Issue 2

Hello from the VR-ROI Project! As we transition from fall to summer, we would like to share the latest in VR-ROI news in our September 2018 newsletter. This edition of the bi-annual newsletter brings you different perspectives from those involved in all aspects of the VR-ROI Project. We are thrilled to share contributions from two Learning Community members in Kentucky and Delaware. Kellie Scott and HariettAnn Litwin graciously share on their experience with the VR-ROI Project. We are so thankful for our wonderful Learning Community members, and are glad you get to hear from them! This issue’s Staff Spotlight highlights the dedication and service of Dr. Kirsten Rowe, a member of the VR-ROI Project Management team. We appreciate your continued support for the VR-ROI Project and hope you enjoy!

**Be sure to follow us on social media for all your latest news in VR-ROI!**

**Twitter:** [@VRROI](https://twitter.com/VRROI)

**Facebook:** [VR-ROI Project](https://www.facebook.com/VRROIProject)

**LinkedIn:** [Vocational Rehabilitation Return on Investment \(VR ROI\) Project](https://www.linkedin.com/company/vrroi-project)

#### Check it Out!

Be sure to check our website ([www.vrroi.org](http://www.vrroi.org)) to view the VR-ROI 101 Training Modules, and receive up to 3 free CRCs!

**3 FREE CRCs**

VRROI 101 Training Modules



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## VR-ROI in Action: Interview with Kellie Scott

Kellie Scott, a VR-ROI Learning Community member and Program Evaluator at Kentucky's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, shares her experience using ROI estimates to show how consumers on the waitlist could be served and placed as employees at Amazon's newly announced worldwide cargo hub in Northern Kentucky at the Cincinnati Airport. When determining whether to bring the cargo hub to Kentucky, Amazon had questions related to the order of selection and KY OVR's ability to serve all consumers on the waitlist. Scott, with assistance from the VR-ROI team, was able to conduct an ROI analysis to show what it would take to serve consumers on the waitlist. She was also able to show "that by serving those on the waitlist, the investment would be returned to the Commonwealth in the form of reduced benefits, increased tax revenue."

**Based on your experience in general, how does evaluation data guide decisions related to VR programs?** "We have been involved with other grants, and are always looking for 'better' ways of conducting Vocational Rehabilitation. When we try a new service or demonstration grant, it is important to later evaluate the success and whether it is cost-effective to continue that process or service. For instance, we have found benefits planning to be a very cost-effective way to increase the consumer's earnings as well as increase our social security reimbursement potential."

**What are some ways you see VR-ROI as being useful to you and your agency in the future?** "In the future, I would like a tool where I could simply put a dataset in and it could answer all the questions which I answered in my previous analysis. In this aforementioned analysis report, I was not able to go into great depth simply because I did not have the resources nor time to invest on this project."

**What led you to be involved and how has your involvement been beneficial?** "Since taking this job as Program Evaluator in 2011, I have always found return on investment a fascinating thought. I previously never thought of any Social or Customer Service as having a return on investment. I have since learned, whether it is a volunteer in a hospital, a teacher, or a vocational counselor, their time can be considered an investment - and the earning potential or cost savings can be factored as a return on that investment. Being a part of the Learning Community I hear about other states and how they work on this thought process of 'return on investment.' Different ways of calculating the ROI or factors which affect the ROI are discussed which I had not even considered. So it broadens my view of Return on Investment."

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## VR-ROI News

- The VR-ROI Project Team recently attended the Annual Summit on Performance Management Excellence in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma on September 4-6, 2018. The Learning Community met with the research team to discuss the latest on the project.
- The VR-ROI Project team members will be at the National Rehabilitation Association Annual Conference on October 11-14, 2018. We would love to connect with if you are attending the conference! Follow us on Twitter ([@VRROI](https://twitter.com/VRROI)) to track us down!



## Staff Spotlight: Kirsten Rowe

Dr. Kirsten Rowe brings 30 years’ experience in research and evaluation to her current role as the DARS Project Coordinator for the VR-ROI Project and Grants and Systems Development Specialist for the Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitation Services (DARS). Dr. Rowe has an impressive educational background, graduating magna cum laude in Spanish and German from Randolph-Macon Woman’s College in 1977 before going on to complete an M.A. and Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Virginia. Over her career, she has held positions with the U.S. Congress Office of Technology Assessment, the Virginia Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Services, and the School of Nursing and Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia. Before serving in her current position, she worked at DARS as Lead Management Analyst. She also served as a Scholar on the 38th IRI on VR-ROI, alongside the late Dr. David Dean.

Dr. Rowe has a wide-range of areas of responsibility. She works to access and make use of administrative datasets, such as those maintained by state VR agencies and state unemployment insurance programs. She interprets regulatory requirements for sharing, using, and protecting such data, and develops data-sharing agreements that satisfy both regulatory requirements and research needs. She facilitates discussions between research team and VR staff regarding VR service models, VR program participant data, approaches to estimating ROI, and results of ROI analyses. She participates in dissemination activities such as conference presentations and publications, helping to educate on the value of VR-ROI.

She has seen many changes in the field of VR over her 30 year career. Dr. Rowe admits that “the biggest changes have come—and are still coming— as a result of state VR programs fully implementing what WIOA requires.” She is dedicated to the VR-ROI Project because of its value, even amidst a changing landscape. She explains: “Developing accurate and meaningful ROI estimates for programs like VR is a very different – and much more challenging – endeavor than estimating ROI for many types of financial investments.” When she is not engaged in all things VR-related, Dr. Rowe spends her free time as a self-professed foodie, cooking and trying new restaurants and cuisines in her home of Richmond, Virginia. She also loves to travel, and hopes to have more time for it once she retires in a few years.

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**NEW FEATURE:**

## Learning Community Connection: HarrietAnn Litwin

*The VR-ROI Project would not be the same without the involvement of dedicated Learning Community members. They provide essential feedback and serve as a sounding board for the Project team. This issue will feature one such Learning Community member’s perspective.*

HarrietAnn Litwin, Management Analyst at Delaware Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, became a member of the VR-ROI Learning Community because her agency was “intrigued by the idea that we could identify what services lead to successful employment for the wide range of individuals for whom we provide services. In a time of doing more with less (or at least without more resources), it is important to know where to put our emphasis in order to help our participants to become successful.” She looks forward to seeing the Project’s findings and the development of the user-friendly ROI estimator that can be utilized by state agencies. She explains that her growing understanding of ROI has been beneficial to her agency. Educating all VR stakeholders on VR-ROI is a goal of the Project and a motivation behind the creation of the VR-ROI 101 Modules (Find at [www.vrroi.org](http://www.vrroi.org)).

According to Litwin, evaluation and program data are already being used to guide agency decisions related to investment of time and resources into services that help individuals to be successful. With WIOA’s emphasis on Common Performance Measures, there is a particular focus on the implementation of data-driven programs. When asked how VR-ROI relates to WIOA, Litwin responded: “ROI is about relationships between VR and the activities/expenditures that facilitate the employment of our consumers. Hopefully, with the ROI project, we can see how those activities/expenditures lead to employment success at the second and fourth quarters post exit and how the relationships with our WIOA partners lead (or don’t lead) to successful outcomes.”

# Be Sure to Check out...



Workforce Studio

Disability Employment:  
Education, Affirmation & Inspiration...  
**at Work**

## VR Workforce Studio Podcast

*Contributed by: Rick Sizemore*

Be sure to join Rick Sizemore and Anne Hudlow for the latest episode of the VR Workforce Studio Podcast. The VR Workforce Studio brings you up close and personal with people on the disability employment journey. You'll hear compelling VR stories from consumers about their career pathways and overcoming the obstacles to employment as well as reflections from the champions of business and industry who hire individuals with disabilities. The Podcast also features rehabilitation professionals who have dedicated their lives to helping individuals with disabilities. You can find a new episode on the 15th of every month at [vrworkforcestudio.com](http://vrworkforcestudio.com) or in iTunes as well as many of your favorite podcast apps. The VR Workforce Studio is a production of the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center Foundation; Executive Producer, Anne Hudlow. Here are some of their recent episodes:

[Spencer Clark](#) describes how Vocational Rehabilitation and Training prepared him for his job as a mill operator at IDX and Career Pathways staff discuss WIOA.

What a Sweet Deal! [Chris Hall](#) lands his dream job at Hershey as a registered apprentice following pre-apprentice training in VR.

Meet [Alex Haddad](#) and hear how about her new certification as a highly qualified paraprofessional as well as Dr. Rob Froelich and his reflections on RSA's long term training grants.



Spencer Clark



Emily West



Chris Hall



Alex Haddad