

June 2024

# Customized Employment Pilot Project

**ARIZONA @WORK™**

Innovative Workforce Solutions

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Vocational Rehabilitation

# Philosophy

At VR, we believe that those with significant disabilities can work with the right supports.

- Customized Employment is a service under the umbrella of Supported Employment

Customized Employment is a universal employment strategy designed to foster employment outcomes for those with the most significant disabilities. This is done through a personalized approach that focuses on the individual strengths, needs and interests of the job seeker. Those elements are matched to the needs of the employer, leading to a competitive integrated employment opportunity for the individual.



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## Project Partner

Vocational Rehabilitation has partnered with the University of Arizona Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities (Sonoran Center) for the implementation of this project.



# TEAM MEMBERS



Lorie Sandaine, CESP, CWIC  
Systems Change Liaison  
(Sonoran Center)



Stephanie Johnson, Ed.D  
Strategic Initiatives Manager  
(RSA/VR)

# Project Information



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In December 2023, VR partnered with the Sonoran Center to pilot a customized employment scope of work.

A scope of work and exhibits were developed.

In January 2024, the Sonoran Center brought Lorie Sandaine on to assist with the delivery of the customized employment pilot project.

# Project Information Cont'd

In February 2024, an announcement was sent out to all Vendors who provide JDR services with VR. The announcement provided information about the pilot project and sought Vendor applications for participation.

Requirements for participation included:

- Ability to serve both DDD and VR clients
- Ability to offer extended services
- A commitment from Leadership to participate and be a champion for customized employment



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# Selection of Vendors

12 applications were received

Based upon a rubric developed and reviewed by the Sonoran Center, only 5 Vendors met the criteria mentioned.

After further conversations, only three Vendors could provide the services outlined in the pilot expectations.

Final choices were based on the Vendor's capacity to offer diverse services, addressing the needs of urban, rural, and potentially tribal job seekers as outlined in the pilot's objectives.



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## The Following Vendors Were Selected

WorkAbility- serving Nogales and Yuma

La Frontera- serving Tucson

Odyssey- serving Maricopa and Northern  
Rural AZ

\*\*A virtual kickoff meeting was held on 5/21 and the content was well received by all parties. Appreciation for the detailed development of materials was shared by the Vendors



# Training for Pilot Vendors and Staff

We have partnered with WISE to develop and offer an Arizona specific online learning platform for Vendors and VR staff in this pilot.

The 9 week training consists of self-paced, interactive modules that are taught asynchronously.

Support is available throughout the modules via digital communication/virtual office hours.

An in person 1 day training/application of the learning and review of the material is provided after completion of each 3 week module.



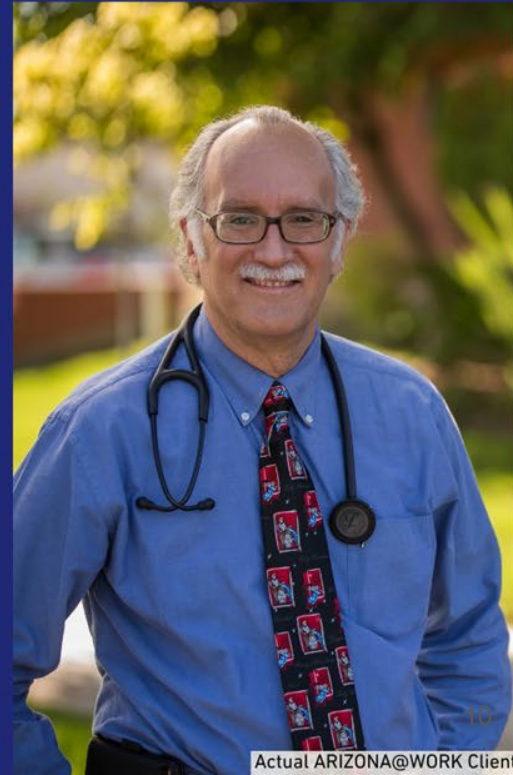
# Training Cont'd

The training is titled ACE (Arizona Customized Employment).

Within the training there will be AZ specific content, language and resources. (This will continue to be developed throughout the pilot).

The training will not lead to ACRE certification, but does follow the ACRE competencies.

The full training is scheduled to take 12 weeks to complete.



## Training Modules Within ACE

(3 weeks virtual learning/1 day  
of in person application per  
module)

- Discovery and Person Centered Planning
- Introduction to Job Development and Marketing
- Introduction to Job Coaching and Systematic Instruction



Once the clients have been identified:

- VRC's will participate in a "live" virtual training that addresses strategies in working with families through the customized employment process.
- Parents/Guardians/Supported Decision Makers will participate in a "live" virtual training to address customized employment, answer questions and foster successful outcomes.



# Training Timelines

- Each of the Vendors will begin the training at a different time.
- The staggered approach allows the internal team to make adjustments as needed, based upon feedback from the Vendor participants.
- This will lead to the ability to offer customized employment statewide at the conclusion of the pilot.



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# Documentation

**\*\*This service will have both Appendices and Exhibits**

Appendices- for Vendors to guide them through the steps in the process.

Exhibit- for VRC's to have a condensed version of the information obtained throughout the customized employment process.

At statewide launch, both items will be submitted to Knowledge Services and be available for VRC review.



# What VRC's Can Expect

- VRC's will work closely with the three participating Vendors to identify clients who are in need of customized employment services.

Staff in the following areas may be contacted by one of the Vendors:

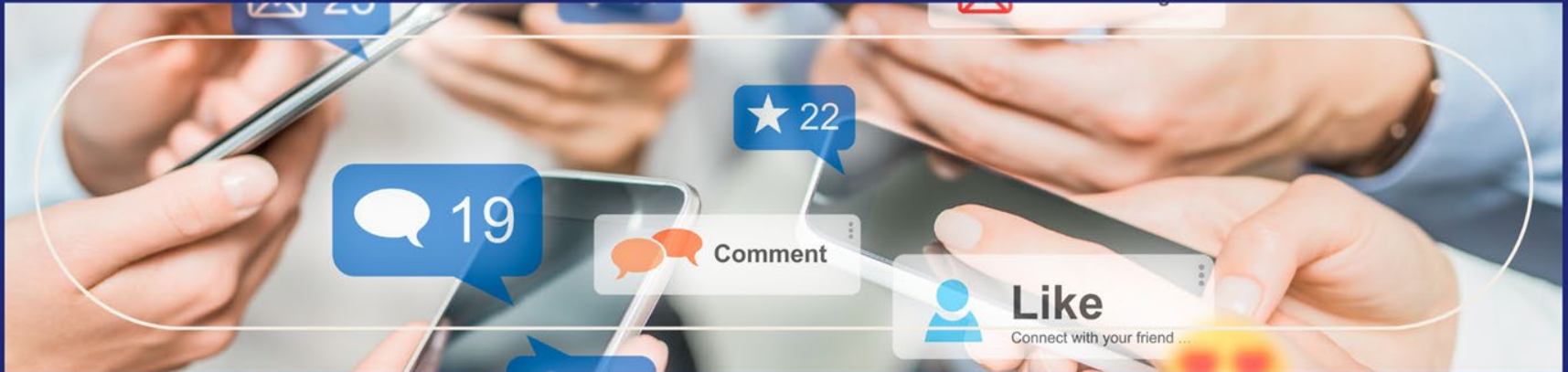
- Nogales/Yuma- Last week of July
- Maricopa/Rural areas- Middle of August
- Tucson-First week of September



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# Additional Timelines

This pilot will run through the early part of 2025





# Additional Information

- As clients are identified to participate in the customized employment pilot, VRC staff will be asked to participate in training, as well as, various elements of the service planning and delivery for the client.
- We will be working closely with our DDD partners to ensure continued client success through the use of extended services.



# This Is A Pilot

- Reminder: this is just a small pilot project at the moment.
- 6-8 clients will participate in the pilot.
- VR will be working closely with the Sonoran Center to update all elements of the customized employment training, exhibits, appendices, etc. throughout the pilot.
- We are being intentional with the development, in the hope to launch Customized Employment service statewide in 2025.



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# Looking Forward...

- Continuing to develop a robust ACE learning platform for providers and VR Staff
- Looking to offer individual modules to support Vendors with services.
  - Ex: Job Coaching, Task Analysis, Systematic Instruction



Thank you!

Employment IS an option for individuals with significant disabilities! Through partnerships, planning and an individualized approach (Customized Employment) anything is possible.

