

# AIVRTTAC

Supporting American Indian  
Vocational Rehabilitation



# History of AIVRS

## What Is Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)?

Vocational rehabilitation consists of services that help people with disabilities prepare for and obtain gainful employment. These services vary depending on the needs of the individual.

## What Are AIVRS Projects?

AIVRS (American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services) projects are VR projects, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, that serve American Indians with disabilities living on or near federal and state reservations. Their purpose is to deliver culturally appropriate VR services to American Indians that respects their cultural beliefs, identity, and informed choices to achieve their vocational goals.

### ● 1975 Navajo VR Program is established

A study from the Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) shows an increased number of state VR referrals from individuals living on Navajo tribal lands. In response, Arizona RSA provides a three-year "Innovation and Establishment" grant to the Navajo Nation to establish the Navajo VR Program (NVRP).

### ● 1978 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act

The Rehabilitation Act (RA) of 1973 is amended to require states to provide adequate VR services to American Indians with disabilities. Under Section 130, the amended RA secures funding for American Indian tribes to develop the capacity to deliver VR services to American Indians with disabilities residing on or near tribal reservations.

### ● 1981 Navajo Nation becomes first AIVRS project

Under the amended RA, the Navajo VR Program receives the first AIVRS grant. VR cases from the Arizona and New Mexico state VR agencies are transferred to the NVRP, providing the Navajo Nation total autonomy in case management and delivery of services.

### ● 1985-86 RSA funds additional AIVRS projects

In 1985, the Northern Cheyenne and Chippewa Cree tribes in Montana receive RSA funding as AIVRS projects. In 1986, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes in Idaho and the Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes in Montana receive RSA funding as AIVRS projects.

## • 1992-94 Funding for AIVRS projects increases

In 1992, the AIVRS program moves from Section 130 of the Rehabilitation Act (RA) of 1973 to Section 121. New amendments to the RA result in increased funding for the AIVRS projects, and in 1994 the AIVRS project grant period is increased from three to five years.

## • 1993 CANAR is formed

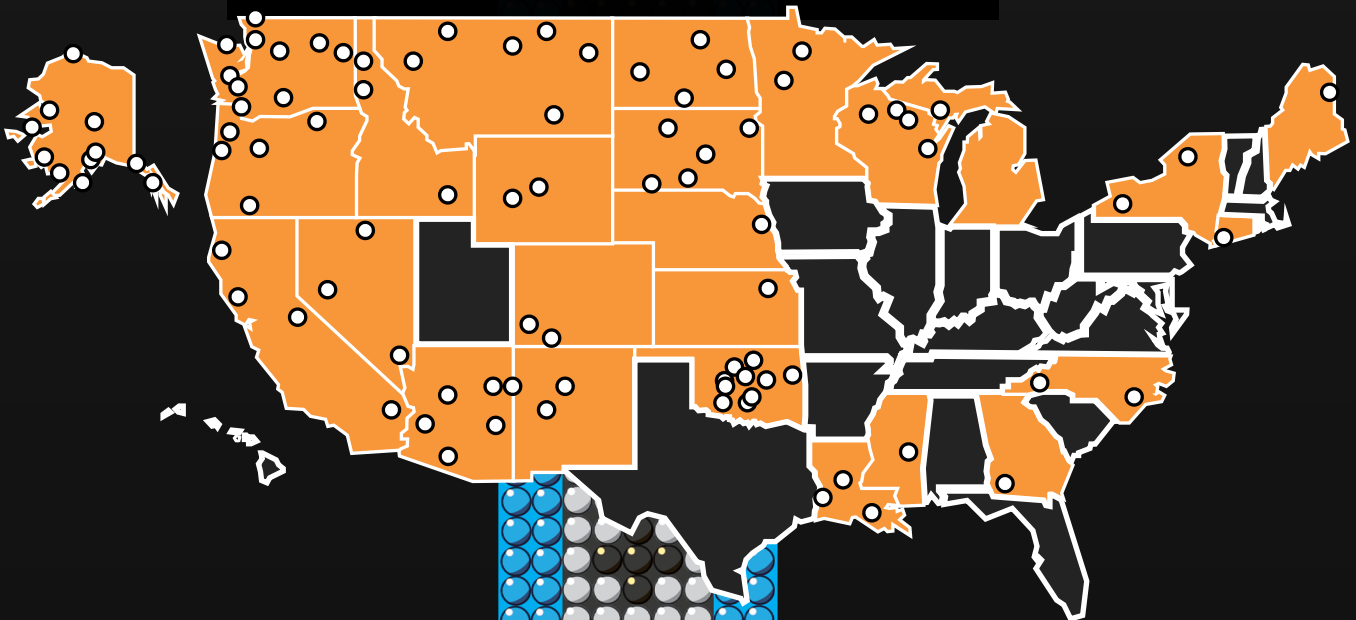
The Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR) is formed with the purpose of uniting AIVRS projects and acting as an agent for change in American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation.

## • 2015 AIVRTTAC is formed

Northern Arizona University's Institute for Human Development is awarded a five-year grant to develop the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Training and Technical Assistance Center (AIVRTTAC). Its purpose is to provide education, guidance, and technical assistance (TA) to AIVRS projects across the country.

## • 2022 As of today...

There are 93 AIVRS projects providing VR services to tribal participants in 26 states.



# AIVRTTAC: Supporting AIVRS Projects

AIVRTTAC is dedicated to supporting AIVRS projects in helping American Indians with disabilities find meaningful employment. It does so by providing AIVRS project personnel the training and resources they need to be successful in delivering VR services.

## Three Types of Training & Technical Assistance

Reached over **5,000** users in the last **6** years

with over **55,000** total web page views

Published over **100** videos

to YouTube with over **5,500** views

Over the last 6 years AIVRTTAC provided: Over **200** TTTA events

including **webinars** and in-person **TTTA events**

The **2022 AIVRS Academy** provided in-person training on several VR topics to **77** participants from **27** projects

AIVRTTAC provided ITTA to **31** projects, with a total of **287** activities.



■ Case management (75)  
■ Policies & procedures (65)  
■ Data, reporting, & evaluation (39)

■ Collaborative partnerships (30)  
■ Project management (25)  
■ VR process (19)

■ Professional development (15)  
■ Culturally responsive services (12)  
■ Other (7)

### UTTA

#### (Universal Training and Technical Assistance)

is widely available and provided through resources such as newsletters, published webinars and videos, products and tools, toolkits, and more, all of which can be downloaded from the AIVRTTAC website ([aivrttac.org](http://aivrttac.org)).

### TTTA

#### (Targeted Training and Technical Assistance)

often takes the form of coaching or instruction in group settings, all with the goal of helping AIVRS project staff clarify and address common challenges. Examples include academic courses (such as those offered by the Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Institute), regional trainings, conferences, live webinars, phone calls, and Zoom meetings.

### ITTA

#### (Intensive Training and Technical Assistance)

is one-on-one, on-site TTA intended for AIVRS projects with critical needs that greatly impact their ability to deliver culturally appropriate VR services. ITTA generally results in changes to policies, programs, practices, and/or operations that lead to improved employment outcomes for AIVRS participants.



*"Without NAU's AIVRTTAC team we would still be struggling to create Policies and Procedures that are understandable and thorough."*

- Kawerak, Inc. VR Project

# TVRI and Capacity Building

As an equal partner in AIVRTTAC, the Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Institute (TVRI) at Northwest Indian College (NWIC) provides academic courses in TVR foundations to AIVRS project staff. The Institute also maintains the Financial Management Toolkit and published the TVR Handbook in 2020.

The TVRI offers

**13 courses**



Seven of these focus on the **TVR process** that, when completed for credit, lead to an



**Award of Completion**  
in TVR Studies from NWIC

Over the last 6 years...

**1,443**



enrollments

**85**

**students**

earned an award  
of completion

**125**



courses offered



with **1,238**

course  
completions

Staff from

**71**

**AIVRS projects**  
took courses

*In the beginning of the five-year cycle, I would say that it was kind of unrealistic to get at least 60 percent of our clients closed successfully; but everything that we learned through the TVR Institute, we applied to our program. And in two years, maybe three years, our program numbers of successes increased.*

– TVR Institute Graduate

## A Student's Success

I am currently a VR Counselor (VRC) and have been a counselor for several years. My own learning disability has made it so I could not attain a college degree. I began as a counselor trainee. I have been in school and gradually making progress towards a degree while working. I am happy to be a part of the TVR Institute. It gave me an opportunity to become awarded the TVR Award of Completion. I was able to get a raise in wages and became knowledgeable and confident in my counseling as a VRC.

– TVR Institute Graduate





# AIVRTTAC's Model of Support

AIVRTTAC is organized around four hubs and two support components that structure its work of supporting AIVRS projects across the nation. As AIVRS projects all differ in needs, identity, and the people they serve, this model ensures that AIVRTTAC's culturally appropriate and responsive services fit each project's unique needs.

## Capacity Building Hub

Includes all academic delivery of training, including credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing courses offered by TVRI.

## Knowledge Translation Hub

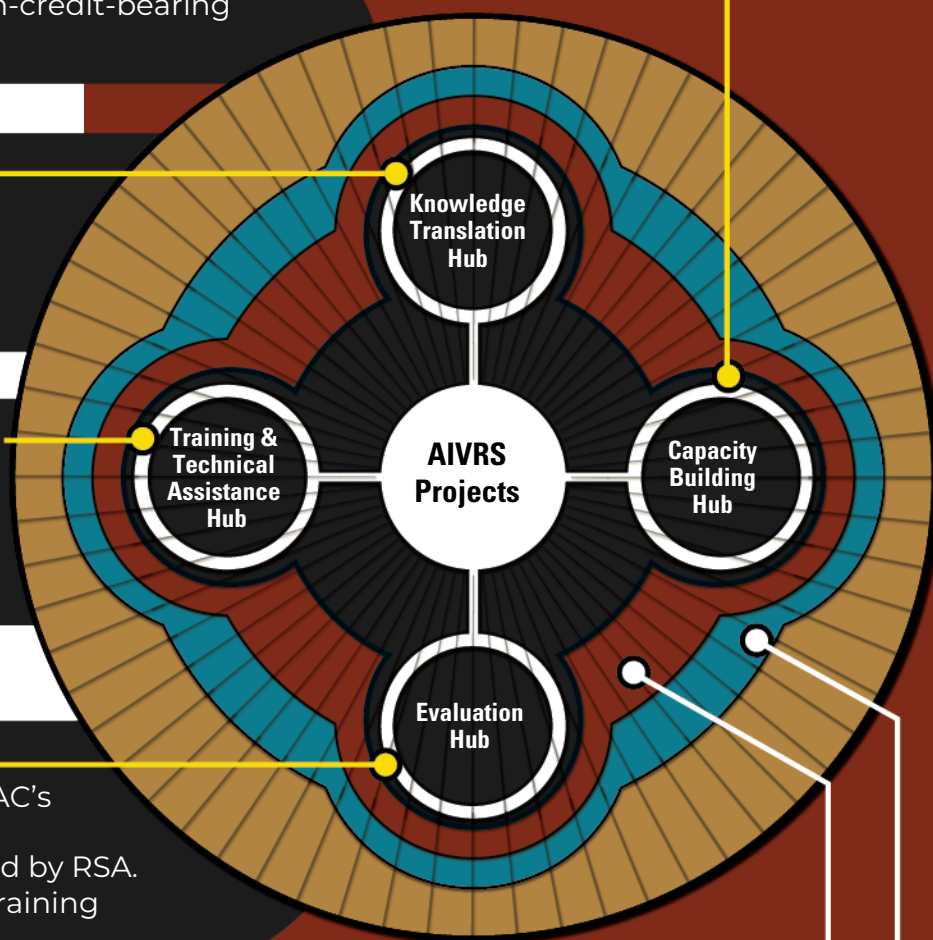
Bridges research to practice to promote the use of evidence-based, emerging, and promising practices by AIVRS projects.

## Training and Technical Assistance Hub

Focuses on the provision of intensive and targeted training and technical assistance (ITTA and TTTA) to AIVRS projects across several topic areas.

## Evaluation Hub

Assesses and monitors AIVRTTAC's progress toward achieving performance outcomes outlined by RSA. Measures the effectiveness of training and technical assistance.



## Traditional Cultural Guidance and Support

Ensures that all AIVRTTAC materials and activities are culturally responsive.

## State-of-the-Art IT Platform

Guides and leads all dissemination and universal training and technical assistance activities (including verifying accessibility).



*We also place significant importance on the cultural appropriateness of our services for our consumers, and we are pleased that your grant supports this important facet.*

*– Apache Tribe of Oklahoma*

# Success Stories

These stories speak to AIVRTTAC's provision of Intensive Training and Technical Assistance to AIVRS projects, and the successful outcomes of these project-specific activities.

## Expanding Employment Opportunities

The new director of one project contacted AIVRTTAC for training on transition services. During ITTA, AIVRTTAC found that the project did not have many partnerships with local employers. AIVRTTAC focused on helping bolster the project's reputation in the community, which led to the project forming partnerships with new businesses in rural areas. This increased employment opportunities for participants. AIVRTTAC also helped improve case management by encouraging a more trauma-informed approach, which ensures that participants feel physically and emotionally safe, have choices in their services, and trust their VR counselors. Thanks to ITTA, the project staff were able to develop more successful service plans and help obtain more employment opportunities for participants.



## Overcoming Staff Turnover

After experiencing a staff turnover rate of nearly 200% in the first two years of their grant, project staff discovered inconsistencies in their staff training and case management practices. Additionally, very few forms, policies, and data management systems had been implemented due to resignation of key personnel. This project was struggling to manage their newly doubled caseload and reached out to AIVRTTAC for support. ITTA resulted in a new policy manual, which helped VR counselors be consistent in their work with participants. Additional case file review helped the project staff provide culturally appropriate services, resulting in a more individualized approach to case management. Following ITTA, the project showed an increase in staff retention, as well as a higher number of employment outcomes.

# Contact us

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aivrttac.org

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[bit.ly/Request\\_TA](https://bit.ly/Request_TA)

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