

Vocational Assessments and Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities – Recorded July 2020

ROBERT FROEHLICH: --four-part webinar series on career pathways. Vocational Assessment and Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities. This webinar is hosted by the Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities-- or CPID-- Project in Virginia, including the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, the Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired, and the George Washington University Center for Rehabilitation Counseling, Research, and Education.

I'm Dr. Rob Froehlich, Project Director and Associate Professor of Counseling at the Center for Rehabilitation Counseling Research and Education at George Washington University, and I'm a member of the Virginia Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities team. I will be your host and one of your presenters during this webinar.

The other presenters for today's webinar will include Jeff Knight, Vocational Evaluator at Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center; Kate Kaegi, Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services CPID Project Manager; Dr. Victor Gray, Executive Director of the Manufacturing Skills Institute of the Virginia Manufacturers Association; and Shawn Zimmerman, Vocational Evaluator with Virginia DARS.

Because this is a recorded webinar and there will not be an opportunity to ask questions live or through a chat box, we want to encourage viewers to reach out to any of the presenters with questions or comments after viewing the webinar. Contact information is provided here and at the end of the webinar.

We have also included PowerPoint slides and a text-only version of this webinar on our website, gwrcrc.org. We encourage you to please complete the evaluation survey for this webinar which can be accessed by clicking the evaluation link on the website. If you would like to obtain CRC credits, you will need to complete the evaluation after viewing the webinar. Finally, this webinar is closed captioned and a transcript will be available upon request.

Our objectives for our participants today include, learn how and why CPID used hands-on assessments in their approach to assist individuals with disabilities to pursue career pathways; identify ways assessments can be used in career pathways; and understand how participants could incorporate them and their work. So there's a Lean Accessibility Program as a model to approach businesses and open the discussion or hiring individuals with different abilities.

So Kate, could you tell us a bit about the CPID project and the need for assessment?

KATE KAEGI: Thanks, Rob. The goal for CPID here in Virginia is to help individuals with disabilities acquire new skills and industry-recognized credentials that lead to careers with sustainable wages. Our grant emphasized the need for vocational valuation to help candidates explore their skill set, and we found that there were several gaps that needed to be further explored.

What we wanted to address were the middle-skill jobs that require some post-secondary training, but not typically a four-year degree. These jobs make up the largest part of the labor market. According to a national skill coalition study in 2017, here in Virginia, these middle skills jobs account for 49% of Virginia labor market, but only 39% of the state workers are trained to this level, which leads Virginia employers scrambling to find sufficiently-trained workers. This skill gap is a perfect opportunity to train up candidates into high-demand positions.

Many industries have also seen an interest gap such as manufacturing, welding, or mechanics. These career pathways had been stereotyped into public view that wasn't as appealing to potential employees even though technology has changed making these pathways very technical and very promising.

Additionally, technology has evolved so rapidly, that many jobs exist today that were not imagined 20 years ago or even 10 years ago, titles like cloud specialist, drone pilot, wind energy engineer, and podcast producers are just some examples. Knowing where these jobs are located and learning about them is not easy. This is where the vocational evaluator comes in. How do you evaluate individuals within career pathways that are highly technical and evolving?

To address these gaps, we developed new partnerships and reached out to our existing ones. To understand the employer needs, we reached out to businesses and associations. They described the new technology, provided job descriptions, and tours. We found businesses open to helping students learn more about their industry. Newport News Shipyard hosted a hands-on career exploration and manufacturing for high school students. They and Capital One also allowed employees to talk with students about their jobs, including cybersecurity, IT positions, and even women in welding.

Virginia industries for the blind have allowed individuals to participate in situational assessments, allowing individuals to try out a position, letting them experience the actual work that would be done. Businesses and associations also help us to verify what credentials are needed. With the demand-side meetings, we will review a credential and ask employers if they find this credential useful, will they interview individuals that have this credential, and most importantly, will they hire them?

To understand the educational options, we turn to our community partners, like adult education, workforce training, community colleges, and universities. They showed us their teaching methods, information that covered within their training programs, and then also their own screening requirements. We also found out that training grants and scholarships that were available at the schools and that we could help us break funding for individuals.

Our in-house partners help to keep us up to date on assistive technology, OT trends and employers, and new and existing hiring options. Additionally, our candidates inform us on what they know about employment and how their accommodations they use currently can be adapted to all employees within a company.

Working within these partnerships help us to better understand and address the interest knowledge and skill gap. Cross-referencing the SOC or the Standard Occupational Classification

system with the credentials and training options at the community college level and in-demand labor market information for the regions, we were able to highlight employer-recognized credentials with in-demand careers, making it easier to align individuals to training options that lead to in-demand areas.

So how does CPID get students interested in a career that may have an interest skill and/or knowledge gap? With CPID, a vocational evaluator starts off with hands-on career exploration. They may also look at career videos to give them a better understanding of the field, possibly involve them in a business tour so they understand the work environment.

Then they look at aptitude. What skills are needed in this career? What are the strengths of the individual? How does this match up? What academic levels are needed to attend a particular training? Are there training options that would fit them given their disability or life circumstances? And through it all, we observe behaviors. Do they ask questions when they need help? How do they address problem-solving? What other issues do we need to address for them to move forward with in this career pathway?

Additionally CPID has a loaner library that allows the candidate to try out a product prior to purchase. We use accommodations that may help them with training, but also accommodations that could be used on the job.

ROBERT FROEHLICH: Thanks for sharing that great information with us, Kate. Next, we're going to hear from my colleague Shawn Zimmerman. Shawn, would you please tell us a bit about why evaluation is essential, and share with us the type of information one gets from a vocational evaluation.

SHAWN ZIMMERMAN: Well thank you, Rob and Kate. As they said, my name is Shawn Zimmerman, and I'm a certified vocational evaluator. So what really do you get from a vocational evaluation? It is important to remember that a book eval does not supply all the answers. But here are a few things that you should expect-- information on the client's current vocationally-relevant levels of social, educational, psychological, and physiological functioning. So basically the entire picture, the holistic view of the consumer or the client.

Estimation of their individual potential for behavior change and skill acquisition, results from the client's most effective learning styles if requested, a snapshot of the client and his or her skills, and open communication from the vocational evaluator to the consumer, to the rehab counselor, and anybody else interested in information to move forward.

You should also get a potential list of feasible jobs, educational or special training programs that might increase the vocational potential, and jobs the client can do without additional vocational services if appropriate, and of course, always community support services that might augment job retention following successful client placement.

So we'll then move to types of vocational evaluation. In DARS, we do a comprehensive evaluation. So you're going to have interest assessments, aptitudes, academic or achievement levels, and career exploration. You might do learning styles and work values if the counselor

requests that. We could do a transferable skills analysis, in-depth career exploration through videos, or the CPID classes. We could sit-in on those or even conduct them ourselves.

And we can also do community-based assessment to really get the consumers involved in the job itself within the community. It's important to remember that asking the right referral questions will help drive the vocational evaluation forward, especially when you are looking at career pathways for individuals with disabilities.

Later on you'll hear from Wilson Workforce Center and how they do more hands-on career exploration from the traditional paper-pencil testing that you often see within field evaluation.

KATE KAEGI: Hi, this is Kate again, and I wanted to give you a quick overview of what Virginia's setup looks like for vocational evaluators here in the area. We have field evaluators, private vendors, and the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center all provide vocational evaluations. As you see from the chart, over the course of the past three years, our evaluations have increased. We have gone from the field from 822 evaluators-- evaluators-- evaluations up to 1,651.

Our Wilson has held steady pretty much at 1,119. They have dipped a bit below in 2020 mainly because of the COVID-19 and the closure of the rehab center. Our vendors in the field, we don't have as many, but they have also include-- actually, they've almost doubled. They've gone from 58 to 100 in 2020. So as you can see, Virginia really does see the value of vocational evaluation here within the state.

ROBERT FROEHLICH: Thanks to you both Kate and Shawn. So on another note, I've heard that Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center is an essential partner in the Virginia CPID project. Hey Jeff, would you be able to tell us a bit about evaluation at WWRC?

JEFF KNIGHT: Sure thing, Rob. And again, I'm Jeff Knight, I'm the Lead Vocational Evaluator at the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center. And today we're mainly going to be talking about career exploration and assessment for adults. Real quickly, though, the pre-ETS or Pre-employment Transition Services track, it's entirely focused on those five mandated services in WIOA. Things like job exploration, counseling, work-based learning experiences, and so forth.

There are no comparative assessments in that model, it's all truly exploration. It's supposed to be inclusive and not restricting anybody from any tracks. But a little bit about the structure and the nuts and bolts of our program. So we have 10 full-time vocational evaluators. Each week we're going to have that team work with a cohort of probably 25 to 30 individuals, and we alternate a schedule where one week we're working with students with disabilities from across Virginia on that pre-ETS track, and the next week would be working-- doing exploration assessment with adults from across the state.

So the majority of those individuals are going to be in the 18 to 25-year-old range. We certainly work with folks in all stages of career development, including people in their 40s, 50s, and older, but the primary demographic really is going to be you can transition.

So the philosophy of the center's model. So we're working with individuals with all types of disabilities, whether it be intellectual, learning, emotional, psychiatric, sensory, physical, or neurological, really any combination of those things. So first and foremost, our model is individualized and it's participant-focused.

But having said that, we're looking at career separation through internal and external perspectives. So internally, we want to help the participant understand more about themselves as a process of self-discovery. We want them to know about their strengths, we want them to be able to understand more about their interests and understanding of vocational barriers that they might have and especially how to accommodate in those areas and compensate and remediate.

And we also-- I think it's real important-- is to provide the opportunities to gain insight on soft skills and work readiness behaviors, that sort of thing. The external perception is more looking outward, looking at the world of work, learning more about job families, elements in various work settings, career pathways, local and statewide labor market stuff. And we want to be able to equip individuals that we're working with, when they leave, to be able to speak intelligently and have a better understanding of themselves related to the world of work, and to give them more information when making informed decisions about vocational planning. Really to be able to better handle both internal external factors in career development.

So how do we do it? So we have about 26 job families for exploration and assessment, things like business support services, information technology, food service, manufacturing to name a few, materials handling, cosmetology, automotive, health occupations, various trades areas, carpentry, plumbing, that sort of thing.

And a participant coming in, they're going to pick two to three job families to explore. They're going to spend a day to a day-and-a-half in each one of those areas, and they're going to be doing a combination of one, norm-to-work samples and proprietary vocational assessments, and those things are often going to be normed to a specific career fields; and two is going to be-- they're going to be doing hands-on exploration opportunities with job activities that are pulled from specific fields.

For example-- and this is kind of what sets us really apart and we're real proud of with our program. For example, automotive, we're going to do some assessments looking at spatial perception, manual dexterity, reading comprehension, that kind of thing, normality assessments for formal and paper and pencil, possibly.

But we're also going to work through functional mechanical activities. For example, as a series of gearboxes. And it's going to get progressively more challenging, and they're going to take them apart and reassemble them, and they're going to gain experience with a variety of tools. They're going to find out what it's like to get their hands dirty, so there's a sensory piece, and they're going to find out what it's like to bang their knuckles on the inside of a gearbox case.

And one thing that's I think really telling is how they deal with frustration when they have to put something back together or take it back apart after having extra parts, and that you learn a lot about somebody's temperament and fit with a field, and they learn more about how they're going

to best fit with those areas. Food service, cosmetology-- they follow all the evaluations that we do, follow that same model with a combination of the normed work samples and the hands-on exploration.

For food, for example, they're going to-- they're going to-- food service-- they're going to start with food safety ideas based off a ServSafe, and then they're going to deal with some liquid and dry measurement things. They're going to work through a recipe. They're going to have to gather ingredients. And the evaluator working with them along the way is going to be paying attention to their problem-solving, problem sensitivity, and critical thinking, how they break down tasks.

And it's very functional, and it's a critical piece to be able to see how they deal with different variables, different interaction demands, communication on the job, teamwork, those kinds of things. And our process really results in a four-to-five-day conversation, and it's a model that allows for two-way feedback, deeper exploration, understanding of elements in different jobs.

This is important, too, I think, the flexibility to change directions when the participant is, to a great extent, being in the driver's seat. Sometimes they go two days in and the rest of their week looks a lot different than we thought it was going to be in the first part. So they can take control of their program and have ownership, and it all results in a report that includes accommodative strategies and work readiness kinds of things and recommendations about career pathways, next steps, those kind of--

And it's always focused on vocational strengths. We do have to recognize when there are barriers or issues that they need to work around, but always, always going to be focusing on the strengths. And we have to evaluate and analyze critically, but we always need to remember to present compassionately and think about ways to move them forward in a positive way, help them make those decisions.

So also want to talk about a recent collaborative project with the center evaluators and the field evaluators. So the idea was to bring some of what we do at the center to the field, and also to better understand field processes and needs. So this involved all the state evaluators-- I think we're about 20 of us. And we broke up into teams, had two or three center evaluators and two field evaluators on each team.

Each team worked through a portion of job family assessments we do at the center, and focuses on reviewing our-- we call them job family assessment outlines, or internally we call them skill sheets. But one of the few evaluators to be able to get a better sense of how we break down elements in different job families, and the outcome was a set of skill sheets or outlines that the field evaluators could use-- of course with tools or-- that might be available that they could obtain in the field-- and be able to equip them to put together assessments targeting specific career clusters to kind of parallel what we're doing at the center.

And we're also working together to spin up virtual evaluations at the center, and this is something that the field folks have been working on longer. And we're going to have a mentor model, a mentor relationship going. And overall, the biggest gains from this is we just opened up communication so we can better serve the people we're working with, minimizing wait times and

streamlining services, avoiding redundancies and aligning programs. So it's an ongoing thing, and it's been extremely positive.

And that leads us to talking a little bit about skill sheets. Here are some examples of job elements that we would need to address relative to a given job family. It's kind of a roadmap. Every one of our evaluations, we have a common outline that helps us structure and break down the elements we're looking for. These particular ones were pulled from the manufacturing assessment. Certainly not exhaustive, but just some examples.

And as we go down through the elements, we want to talk more-- just kind of refer back to the idea that we're combining norm stuff and functional activities. For example, academics. With a lot of achievement tests out there-- and we definitely will take those into consideration when we're working with somebody for manufacturing, but we also want to see how they do with applied exercises, dealing with a tutorial, for example, and electricity concepts.

So maybe dealing with the math elements in Ohm's law, powers of 10, those kinds of things that might take us into dimensioning and measurement. They might use scales to deal with mass and digital vernier calipers, measuring to the hundredth or a thousandth of an inch. Even just using a ruler, metric system, English fractional measurement, that kind of thing. But dealing that combination is real important.

Going down the list. So mechanical reasoning, we talked a little bit about that with automotive, but there are a lot of written activities out there for that, and they definitely have an important place. We also want people to have hands-on experiential work with pulled-part and part-to-whole relationships, and taking apart a mechanical unit, for example.

A lot of times we'll see people do really well on the paper and pencil stuff and have much more difficulty with the in vivo interaction, kind of kinesthetic interaction with materials or equipment. Sometimes we'll see the opposite. They'll really have a struggle with the paper and pencil stuff, but then with the hands-on and the applied activities, they show really great problem sensitivity and better create critical thinking skills actually in the moment, so I think it's important to have that combination.

But that's been a real quick overview of our VE model, and I really appreciate you letting me share it.

ROBERT FROEHLICH: Thanks, Jeff, for giving us some insight into your approach. So I've been told that an essential portion of evaluation within the CPID Project is the academy. Kate, would you mind telling us a bit about the CPID Academy and how they fit into the project?

KATE KAEGI: Absolutely, Ron. With CPID, one of the first things we noted was that many of our high school students did not have the opportunity to explore career options through elective classes, like engineering class or programming or technical drawing. Many of them were instead pulled out for academic enrichment, vision training, or even occupational therapy or speech sessions.

So because of this, CPID explored the career-specific academy model the industry and the Virginia Manufacturers Association had developed. So these academies allow students to create an item from raw materials to a finished product. Using industry equipment, they get a chance to experience what this pathway is all about. They get an opportunity see, do they like this? Are they good at it? Would they like to further explore this career area?

So academies are also an opportunity to take technical curriculum and adjust them to students with disabilities. It provides an opportunity for students to see how their current accommodations work within a working environment, and to even try out new accommodations as needed. And so overall, academy is an opportunity for students to demonstrate to themselves, their families, and to VR counselors and other partners what their true abilities are.

So here we have listed some of the academies that were developed. In 2017, we had two residential camps. Water filtration at WWRC and robotics at the Virginia Rehab Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired. We also had several non-resident academies across the state. In 2018, we expanded to include academies for adults, and in 2019, we started academies that were shorter in duration, looking at more of a one to two, possibly three days, making it easier to work around busy schedules, especially within the summer.

Overall, we have academies on 3D printing, CNC or Computer Numerical Control, welding, health careers, manufacturing, gaming, and drones; and now moving forward, we will continue with five-day academies, like Leap Into Linux and water filtration; and we'll also continue with one-day academies, like cyber and robotic academy with the Science Museum of Richmond.

ROBERT FROEHLICH: Those sound like some great experiences, Kate. Most recently, regardless of your work setting, it's safe to say the world of work has changed a great deal. There's been a great deal of need to transition from in-person interactions to interactions at a distance. My colleague Shawn will now talk a bit about virtual assessment and how that concept fits into the CPID Project.

SHAWN ZIMMERMAN: Thank you, Rob. So again, this is Shawn, and obviously COVID-19 has pushed us more forward into looking at virtual vocational evaluations. So evaluate-- or the-- excuse me-- the assessments that I will be talking about are just examples, and some of the assessments that we use in the field and possibly at Wilson Workforce Center, but don't take these as the end-all, be-all, there are plenty of great options out there.

So for online interest inventories, we're using the O*NET Online or My Next Move, which is their interest assessment, using the Holland Code. And also Virtual Job Shadow where we can set up a couple of interests inventory, a work preference profile, and have videos to show the consumer all the different areas that they might be interested in. And they can watch short little clips of the actual job being done so that they can choose whether or not that is still something they're interested in. And of course, that will also help if we can narrow down their interest and help them choose a CPID path to have the hands-on experience in those classes.

Some of the academic assessments that we can use is let's say parts of the Woodcock-Johnson, we're also able-- with web cameras and scanning, we're able to scan certain pieces of different

assessments to be able to share our screen with the consumer. For example, if we want to do a word reading, we could scan the page for the wide-range achievement test just to show the words on the screen and then the consumer could read them out loud to us. Those are just a couple of examples of academic assessments.

For aptitudes, there's the career skills, which has been around for a long time, but they also offer an online platform that has an interest in mandatory, seven assessments, and then of course, it's all paired together. Again, that is just an example of one of the aptitude assessments that could be used.

We also could do vocational information interviews through either just the phone or by using video. We can do additional career exploration. For example, we could maybe show different YouTube videos, I could share my screen with the consumer and we could go on Indeed.com and other formats such as that to look at different jobs and areas of their interest and look at where the jobs are, how much they're making, the education needed, so on and so forth.

And then, of course, just general vocational counseling based on what they've expressed, possibly if they've done assessments in the past, or just additional counseling once we've completed the vocational evaluation. And of course, other options would include work samples such as the Conover Company, for example, they have learning assessment profile which allows the consumer to go through certain learning tasks where they would read about a certain job and then try out different job tasks that are computer-based more than application-based, such as Wilson Workforce Center.

And then we, of course, could, for example, if somebody was interested in cleaning or robotics or anything like that, that maybe they would have the assessment or the pieces in front of them and be able to put it together while we observe and assist as need be. But again, these are just some options.

There are things that we do need to consider for moving forward with virtual assessments. Of course, we always have to think about the ethical implications. Of course, we do not want to do any harm.

We know that our observations won't be as fluid as they are face-to-face, but we also have to consider making sure that the consumers are set up appropriately with the right web camera, with the right bandwidth on their internet, making sure that they have child care if they have children, and just have an area where they can be assessed privately, and even in our own homes as evaluators, we need to make sure that we are not breaching any confidentiality by maybe having children or spouses at home, so on and so forth, and just making sure that it's a safe environment for both the consumer and the evaluator.

Making sure that all issues with technology are evened out prior to their assessment. We can offer trainings on how to get on Zoom and how to navigate through that or Google Hangouts or whatever the platform that may be used by the evaluator. Just ensuring that the consumer feels comfortable and relaxed to move forward with the assessment.

Of course, there are some social or economic impacts. Maybe people don't have a computer or they don't have access to internet, and thinking-- being creative and finding ways to still be able to meet with them and conduct some of the evaluations that we had mentioned earlier without all the technology.

And of course, there are things that we're going to lose in context. We're unable to necessarily observe their hygiene as well, especially if there are any smells, maybe they haven't showered in a few days or their clothes are dirty, we would miss that. We also can't necessarily always see who's in the room. Even if they show the room to us, somebody could kind of sneak in and-- like a parent and maybe give answers or health coach them throughout the process.

So there are a lot of things that we have to be mindful of and just kind of put a little disclaimer on our reports to say that during these virtual times, things are a little bit more difficult, but that we're going to do the best we can and move forward as safely as possible with our consumer, ensuring that they're comfortable and able to perform at their best.

ROBERT FROEHLICH: So no doubt these approaches are a crucial part of DARS's service delivery current day. In addition today, we're lucky to have Dr. Victor Gray with us. Dr. Gray, my CPID colleagues tell me Lean accessibility is an approach that has been important to the Virginia Career Pathways Project. Would you mind sharing some information about Lean accessibility with us?

VICTOR GRAY: Thank you, Rob. Yes, when MSI first created the partnership with DARS to develop the Career Pathways for People with Disabilities Program, we already had experience assisting businesses by improving their processes utilizing Lean principles and concepts. Lean primarily focuses on pull from the customer, developing flow, organizing the workplace, and reducing waste.

And typically the eight waste commonly identified in a production environment are overproduction, weighting, unnecessary transportation, extra processing time, excess inventory, excess motion, which is where assistive technology helps us, and creating defects, and underutilizing people's skills.

Businesses are interested in the Lean technique because it incorporates simple, easily-understood techniques to reduce waste in the business environment. The purpose of eliminating these wastes in the process is to save the resources of the company. These savings can be categorized into the following three big categories.

So businesses are interested in cost savings-- this is actually taking the cost-- some cost out of producing the product or service that they're doing. Cost avoidance, this is where they're not meeting their goals, and so we use a waste elimination by removing activities that don't add value to the process. And then maybe more importantly, these techniques help the businesses to increase their capacity. So now they can produce more service, more product without having to add equipment or people.

So how did we get from Lean to working with CPID? We realized in some of our first meetings that there was a synergy between the techniques we use in developing Lean culture and utilizing assistive technology. The Lean technology is improving processes that were just talked about. Assistive technology thinks about improving people. Lean organizes the work area. Assistive technology thinks about universal design. Lean's reducing waste. Assistive technology is thinking about minimal physical effort. Lean is-- so you get the connections. So Lean is thinking about business applications and assistive technology focuses on people or personal applications.

So they're so similar that we combine the two concepts into an instrument that we can use to measure how well businesses have adapted Lean and assistive technology in the workplace. By doing that, it makes them more aware of the capabilities that people with disabilities might have, and provide the opportunity for businesses to seek people who have those capabilities from underutilized sources. Thus, we developed and piloted the Lean Accessibility Program.

So the CPID grant is working with the VMA, the Virginia Manufacturers Association, and MSI, and our goal was to have a clear understanding of what businesses need for their future employees-- help develop the quality and consistent training, change the disability stereotypes, and shrink the skill and interest gaps in advanced manufacturing.

So with this in mind, we developed the Lean Accessibility Program that looked at both Lean and assistive technology. And we hope that this tool will help manufacturers to explore the assistive technology options that will help all the employees, as well as fit neatly within the Lean principles.

So we do a free assessment for business. We utilize continual improvement principles. We analyze their current state. We always do a walk-around-- always walk through the process and see how things are moving, how are people operating, how are they communicating with each other? And we interview key people both hourly and salary.

We always do this with HR, human resources, and the production or the site manager together. They have different viewpoints on what is important. We then discuss opportunities, we identify the resources needed to accomplish those opportunities, and we write up a formal confidential report and give it to them that day. In addition, we make assignments for how we're going to move forward, including dates when we're going to complete those.

So we begin the LAP-- the Lean Accessibility Program-- with a discussion of how the business operates. Always show interest in what they're doing, how they do it, how their customers are serviced. Tour the facility, talk to people while you're walking around. You should use the LAP instrument to guide this discussion. The Lean Accessibility Program contains 10 category worksheets describing the best practices that constitute the following attributes of a successful Lean or CPID transformation.

So we look at communication and culture, information technology-- how do they share information, 5S and assistive technology. 5S is a Lean term which basically means how they have organized their workspace. Standard work. So have they created standard work for everybody so that everybody understands what their work is and it's the same every day?

Continuous improvement. How do they improve their processes, and are they even thinking about improving their processes?

Operator flexibility. Is there cross-training? Mistake-proofing. So how do we make sure that if we set a process up, that we can do it right the first time? Some of that goes back to standard work and 5S. And then changeovers. When we change from one product or process to another, how is that handled and is it organized, and is the company thinking about that or is it all the apples knock out of the basket we've got to get them back in every time something different comes up?

And then nine, pull and balanced production-- so we want to have businesses that are doing a balanced production-- in other words, are you work-- are you using all of the capable resources both from a people and a production standpoint that you have available to you? And then in Virginia, we have tax credits available for some of these companies who will use these activities.

So let's look a little bit at what the report would look like. When we finish, each tab has a series of statements, and we score them from 0 to 4 with a relative percent implemented for each level. So even though we're, for instance, on communication and cultural awareness, the first thing might be plant management, communicate with all levels of the organization on topics regarding employee satisfaction, diversity, and organizational objectives at least twice a year. So if they're not doing that at all, they would get a 0 for that.

If they're doing it sometimes but not a lot and maybe only a quarter of the time, they would get a 1, and then that would be 25%. A 2 would be 50%, a 3 would be 75%, and of course, a 4 would be-- they're doing it 100% of the time. So those scores are rolled up, we end up with a score, and if you look down at the bottom, the total possible score, if they got a 4 on everything, would be 1,000.

So these are adjusted scores, and this particular example here, the company only got a 391. So they have some opportunities to improve. So you can see, information technology is kind of low. They only got 30% out of that. Operational flexibility, it's only 41%. Mistake-proofing, see number 7 down there, that's 20%. So they definitely have opportunities there. The question is, do they see those themselves and do they have a will to modify or change their culture to move that up?

We also know that businesses are very visual. So we transfer this into a bar chart, it goes automatically, it's part of their report. And as you can see, the low-- the blue bars are where the company is, the red bar is where they should be, and we use this technique to make sure that we have their attention, and they can relate this to part of their metrics and how they're moving their processes forward.

So just a little recap. When talking to businesses, you must realize that management's probably interested in three things-- how to make money, how to save money, and how not to lose money. So if you're talking to them, you need to be talking in terms that relate to them-- either money or business terms, like cycle time or how quickly they can get product out.

If you can exhibit that you can feel their pain and understand their pain, and part of it might be not being able to find the right workforce, or not being able to get products or services out fast enough, or maybe their costs are too high. So having all of these thoughts in your head and asking the right questions will create a relationship with your business.

So make sure you have the right people involved, at least the plant manager or the site manager and an HR person, walk the process, you have a better feel for what's going on. And contact DARS or your local rehabilitation center and have some names available of people who might be qualified to fit into some of these jobs, because that is one of the things that we try to do with the LAP.

At the end, we try to point out to them that they have the opportunity to hire workforce from a source that they may have never considered before, and that they can do these jobs and that they can fit into this environment. And then be ready to provide solutions for the opportunities that will present themselves during the discussion.

So we do this in three-or-four-hour sit-down, very interactive with the site. We haven't tried to do any of these LAPs virtually. We've typically done them face-to-face and at the site where their business is. So Rob, that's a quick update on how the LAP works, and thank you for the opportunity.

ROBERT FROEHLICH: Yeah, thanks, Victor, for sharing that great evaluation approach with us today. As we near the end of our webinar, Kate, I'm wondering if there's some resources we want to share relative to evaluation in the CPID approach.

KATE KAEGI: Sure would. Here we have listed several references, including CPID and the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center where you can find additional information on the assessment as well as other resources that are offered. The Virginia Manufacturers Association is listed here as well. You can find out more about the Manufacturing Skills Institute and the Lean Accessibility Program at that site.

And we have also included the Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professional Association and the Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment Association, because these are both available to provide additional information or assistance with vocational evaluation and assessment. So thank you, Rob.

ROBERT FROEHLICH: Slide 30 contains contact information for all of today's presenters. So in collaboration with all of my co-presenters today, I want to thank you for carving out some time to hear about the topic of vocational assessments and the Virginia Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities Project. We hope we provided some information that will be useful to you as you carry out your work targeted toward meeting the employment-related needs of individuals with disabilities. As we noted, please feel free to contact any of the presenters if you have any questions.