



Presentation to the 2023 Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Services

# Vocational Rehabilitation

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Keith Ozols, Director, ODHS Vocational Rehabilitation

February 14, 2023

# Outline

- I. **Who we are**
- II. Who, where and how we serve
- III. Tracking our progress
- IV. The work ahead
- V. Governor's Budget
- VI. Closing remarks

Vocational Rehabilitation



# Why we do our work

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- Communities thrive when everyone who wants to work can find employment.
- Individuals thrive, too. They can pay their bills, be happier and healthier, and contribute to their communities.
- Vocational Rehabilitation helps people with all types of disabilities find jobs in supportive organizations, change careers as their abilities change and advance in their careers — so they can enjoy the dignity and independence that employment brings.



# Who we are

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Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) provides services to Oregonians with disabilities so they can achieve and maintain employment and advance in their careers.



As we emerge from the pandemic, VR plays a vital role in ensuring equitable recovery for people with disabilities, helping to address the unique barriers to employment that people with disabilities face.

# Our mission and vision

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**Our Mission:** Assist Oregonians with disabilities to achieve, maintain and advance in employment and independence.

**Our Vision:** Every Oregonian with a disability who desires to work is given the means and opportunity.



# How we're organized

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## VR Leadership

### Direct Services

- 30 VR offices around the state supported by:
- 14 Branch Managers
  - 146 VR Counselors
  - 70 Human Services Assistants

### Programs

- Workforce and Business Relations
- Youth Transition Services
- Work Incentive Network
- State Independent Living Council

### Central Services

- Business Operations
- Policy and Compliance
- Training
- Communications
- Service Equity

# Advancing economic opportunity for people with disabilities

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Across all age groups, people with disabilities are far less likely to be employed than those with no disability. Of those who are employed, they are less likely to earn a living wage.\*

VR provides access to training, education and employment supports to people with disabilities, helping bridge the gap in employment outcomes.

## Labor Force Participation in Oregon in 2019\*\*



\* From [Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation 2021 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Report](#)

\*\* Data from 2019 U.S. Census Bureau

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# How our programs impact Oregon communities



People with disabilities can **participate more fully** in jobs and community.



High school students with disabilities are excited and **confident about their future career options.**

## Strong and Thriving Communities



People with disabilities have **access to training** for high-demand industries.

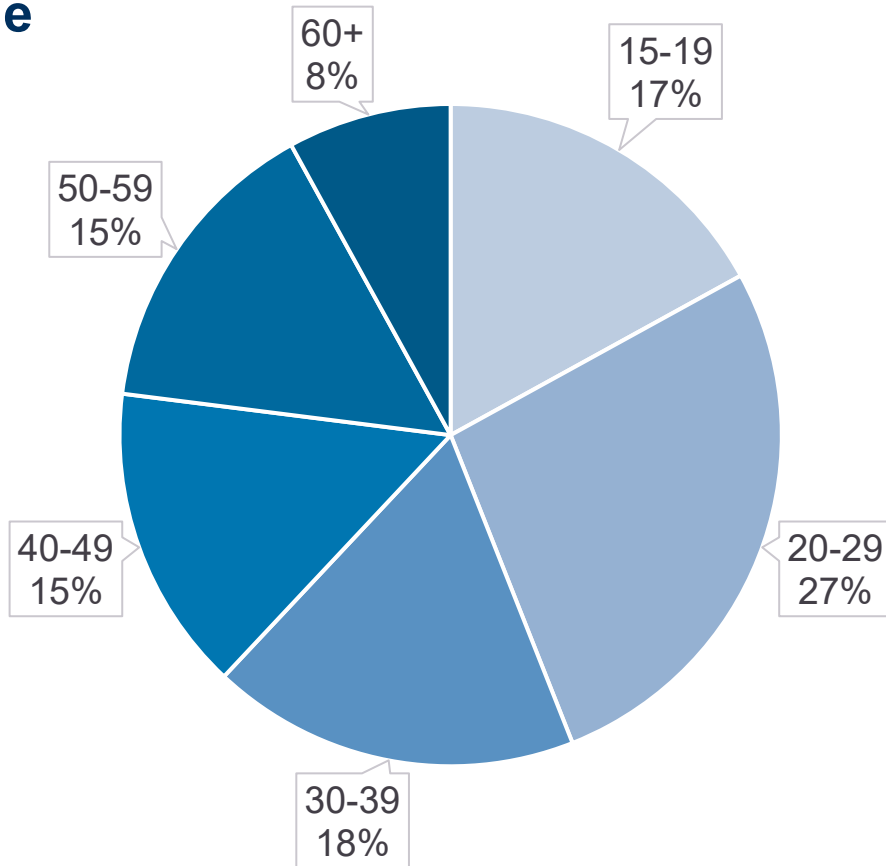


**Businesses have support and information** to hire people with disabilities.

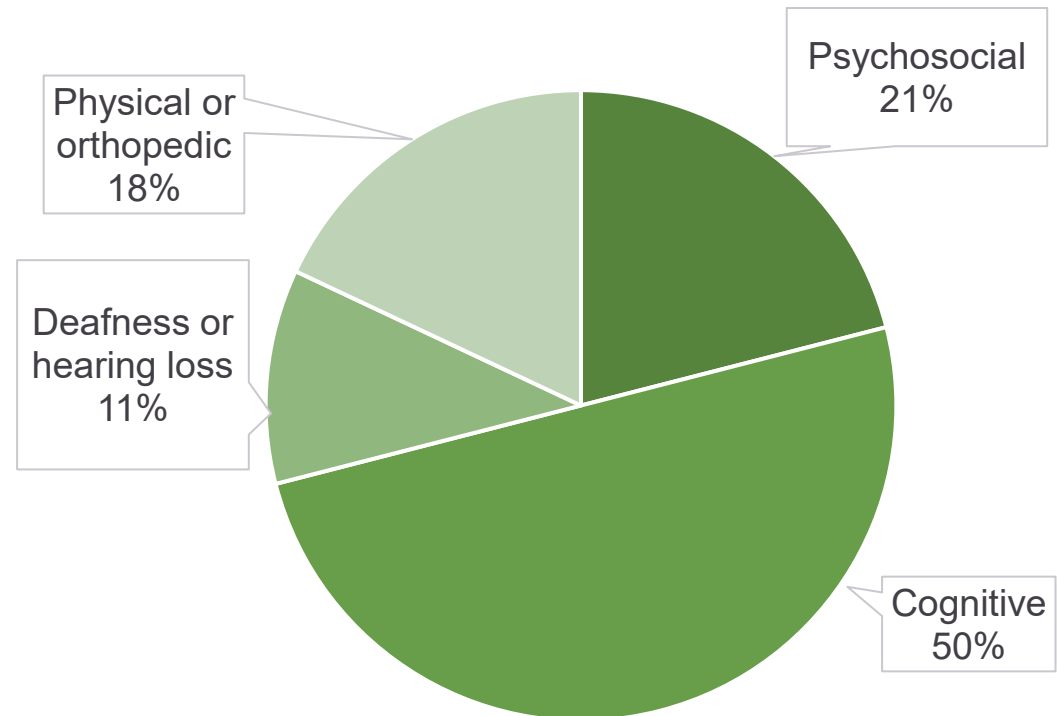
# Who we serve

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## Age



## Disability

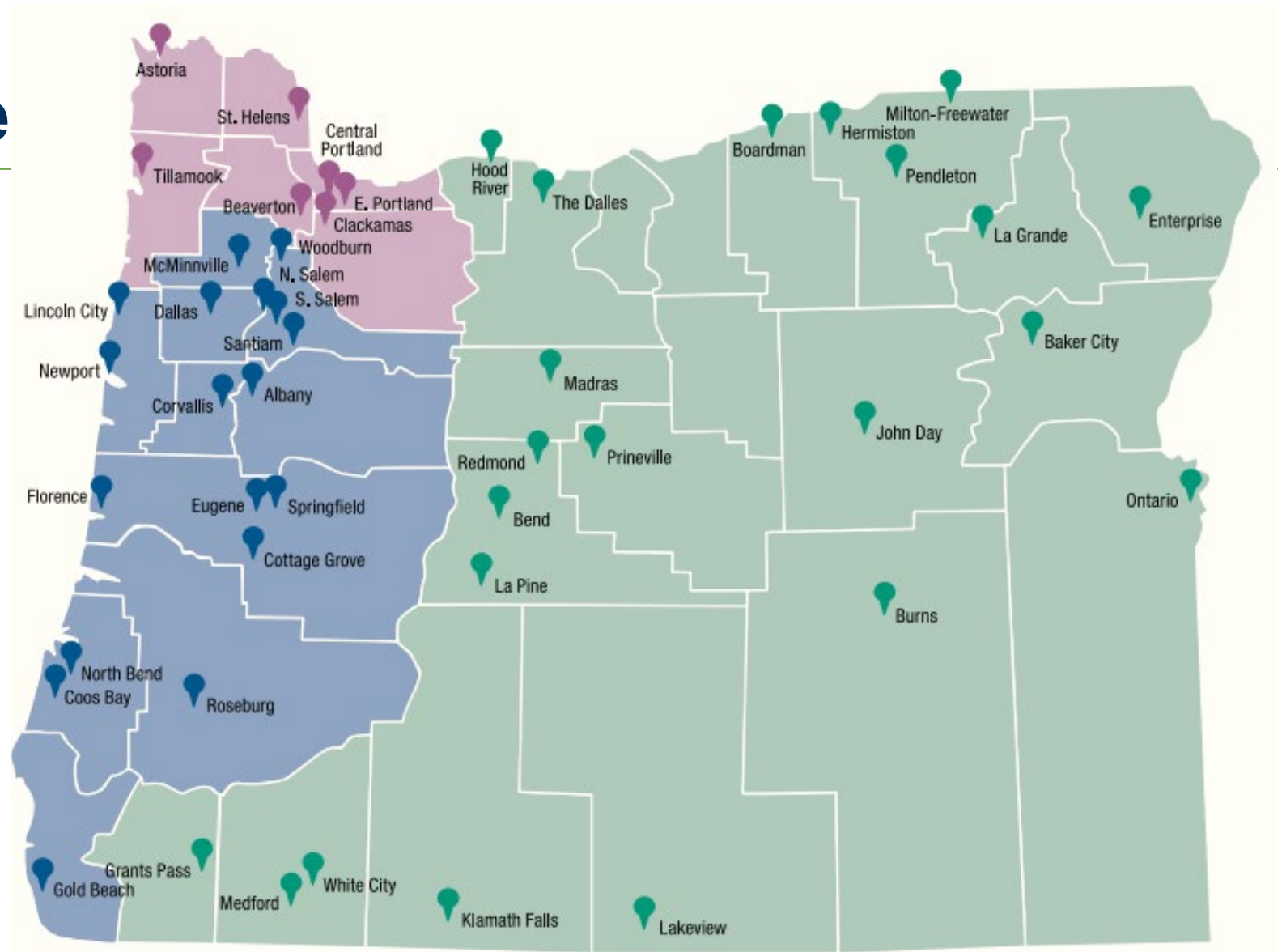


# Where we serve

**Region 1** includes  
ODHS Districts 1, 2,  
15, 16

**Region 2** includes  
ODHS Districts 3,  
4, 5, 6, 7

**Region 3** includes  
ODHS Districts 8, 9,  
10, 11, 12, 13, 14



# Equity North Star

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VR is committed to **intentionally serving** communities we've missed in the past: Indigenous people, people who speak languages other than English and rural communities.

- **Hiring contractors** that deliver linguistically and culturally-responsive services.
- **Hiring direct service staff** who reflect the communities they serve.
- **Partnering with Tribal Nations** and Tribal partners to best serve Tribal citizens and members, and their families.



# How we serve:

## Advancing our agencywide priorities

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### Strengthening our foundations



Leveraging partnerships to improve access to employment services and post-secondary education opportunities for underserved communities.

### Creating the future of human services



Providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services and expanding the network of service providers in the highest-need areas.

# How we serve: Our programs

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## Core Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Support adults with disabilities get or keep a job or advance in their career



## Youth Transition Services

Help young people with disabilities **ages 14 to 24** who are transitioning from school to work, training or college



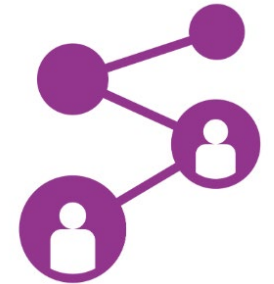
## Inclusive Career Advancement Program (ICAP)

Provide on-campus support for community college training programs in high-demand industries



## Supported Employment

Provides on-the-job assistance and supports in partnership with Office of Development Disabilities Services and Oregon Dept. of Education



## Services to Businesses

Offer training and ready-to-hire applicants

# Core Vocational Rehabilitation Services



# Core VR services: Why it matters

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- Everyone benefits from the independence, resilience and community engagement that employment brings.
- **People with disabilities face specific barriers to finding employment** that matches their abilities — such as stigmas about their disability and lack of understanding about the supports available to businesses.
- Vocational Rehabilitation helps people with all types of disabilities find jobs in supportive organizations so they can enjoy dignity and independence.





# Core Services: Overview

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Orientation

Intake and  
eligibility

Individualized  
Plan for  
Employment

Training, tools  
and skills

Job search

Get hired

# Core services: Key partners

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Coordination with organizations that serve people with disabilities is essential in reaching all Oregonians with disabilities.

- Private businesses
- State Rehabilitation Council
- Community-based organizations
- Local Workforce Development Boards
- Oregon Tribal Nations
- Oregon Commission for the Blind
- State Independent Living Centers (SILC)
- Job Placement Services Contractors
- Non-profit organizations
- WorkSource Oregon



# Core services: Policy direction

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The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed into law on July 22, 2014.

Congress passed the Act with a wide bipartisan majority; it is the first legislative reform of the public workforce system since 1998.

WIOA is designed to help:



- Job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market.
- Match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy.

# Meet David

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“I tell others, don’t give up on the system. The system works.”

David had a good job with a computer company that allowed him to support his family.

After a serious car accident, he couldn’t fully use his left arm and hand. He wasn’t sure how he would keep working.

He met with a VR Counselor and set a goal to complete his degree. VR got him tools he would need while in school.

Through VR’s connection with WorkSource Lane, David accessed unemployment benefits and financial aid.

**David graduated with a Bachelor’s degree and got a job earning double the salary he made before the accident.**

# 2021-23 Accomplishments: Ending sheltered workshops for people with disabilities

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In 2012, a class action lawsuit was filed against the state for over-relying on **sheltered workshops** – places that employ people with disabilities typically at below minimum wage.



In 2016, the **Lane v. Brown settlement** required that at least 1,115 people who were or had been in a sheltered workshop got and kept a community job for at least 90 days by June 30, 2022.



Oregon surpassed the settlement goals. Today **more than 1,800 people with intellectual or developmental disabilities** are working in community jobs.



Oregon also exceeded the goal of **providing supported employment services** to those who had been in sheltered workshops and to youth aged 14-24.

# Celebrating the completion of Lane v. Brown

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“A decade ago, I was in a really dark place. I am thankful for the changes that have been made because it's given me a chance to not just work but thrive.”

– Gabrielle Guedon, plaintiff



# 2021-23 Accomplishments:

## Supporting clients and partners

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### Supporting our clients:

- Reopened offices
- Kept virtual service delivery as an option



### Supporting our partners:

- Increased rates paid to VR service providers
- Began offering free training for VR service providers from national experts

# Youth Transition Services





# Youth Services: Why it matters

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While transitioning from school to work can be daunting for any student, **teens with disabilities** often must navigate **additional processes and disability stigmas** as they pursue careers and independent living.

VR is here to support young people with disabilities, ages 14 to 24, in building the skills and confidence they need to prepare for their future career.



# Youth Services: Overview

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- **Eligibility:** Anyone who is VR eligible or receiving services through their school district under an Individual Education Plan or 504 plan.
- VR funds **transition specialists in schools** who work directly with students with disabilities. VR also has a **dedicated youth team** to serve students directly who do not have a transition specialist in their school or community.

## Services include:

Career exploration

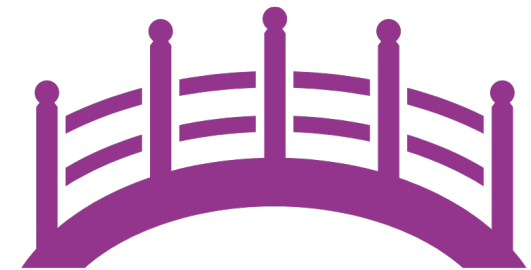
Interview practice

Workplace readiness

Self-advocacy

College guidance counseling

Paid work experiences



# Youth Services: Key partners

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Collaboration among all agencies and organizations that serve youth with disabilities is essential for preparing young people for success and independence as adults.

- School districts
- Transition Technical Assistance Network
- Businesses that provide summer work experiences
- Oregon Department of Education
- Oregon Developmental Disability Services
- Oregon Commission for the Blind
- Families and Community Together (FACT)



# Meet Kevin

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“My job is super good. They give me a lot of help.”

Kevin completed a paid summer internship at Sandy River Marketing.

Gresham High School’s youth transition coordinator helped Kevin prepare by:

- Learning to use the bus to get to work
- Preparing for his interview
- Completing hiring paperwork
- Hiring a job coach to accompany Kevin at work to help him stay on task.

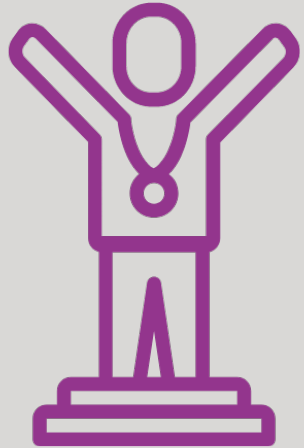
The Youth Transition Program will support Kevin through age 24. If he wants to pursue post-secondary education, training or a certification program, we will be there to support him.

# Youth Services: Policy direction

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The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act requires VR to spend 15% of its budget on youth transition services.

Research shows helping people with disabilities early in their lives better helps them achieve employment, independence and well-being as adults.\*



“One of the greatest things we can do is see people succeed that are like us.”

– J Lea, 21, after graduating high school and finding a job with support from VR’s youth transition team

\*Hammill Institute on Disabilities. [“Secondary Transition Predictors of Postschool Success: An Update to the Research Base.”](#)

# Youth Services: 2021-23 accomplishments

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## Found creative ways to serve students virtually and in-person

- Virtual job clubs
- Virtual Pitch Fest where students and employers meet for introductions and mock interviewing

## Resumed in-person youth events in 2022

- Community college tours
- Women and Trades event
- Workshops in rural areas

**Expanded paid summer work experience programs** so more students can get real-world work experience

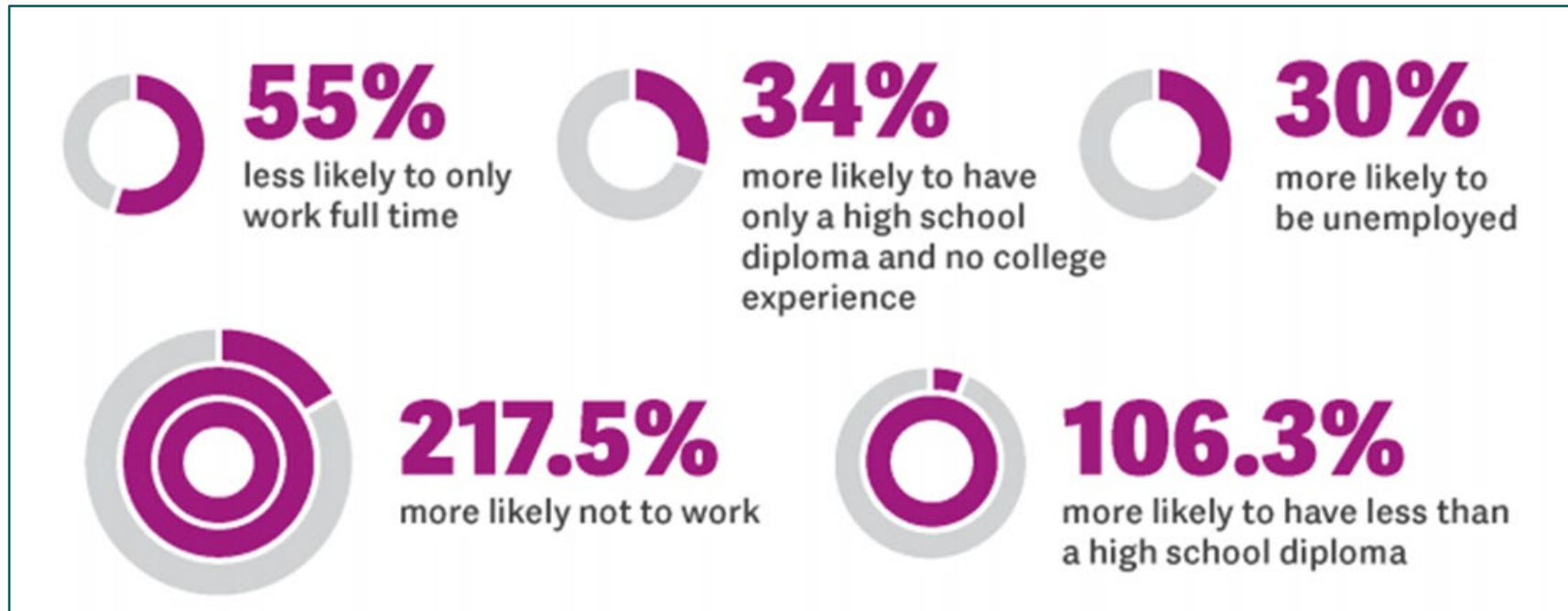




# Inclusive Career Advancement Program: Why it matters

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People with disabilities are disproportionately unemployed and underemployed. Compared to the general population, Oregonians with disabilities are:



Oregon has amazing career pathways — pipelines to jobs in high-demand industries — within its community colleges. ICAP helps more people with disabilities access these opportunities.

Source: [2021 VR Comprehensive Needs Assessment](#)

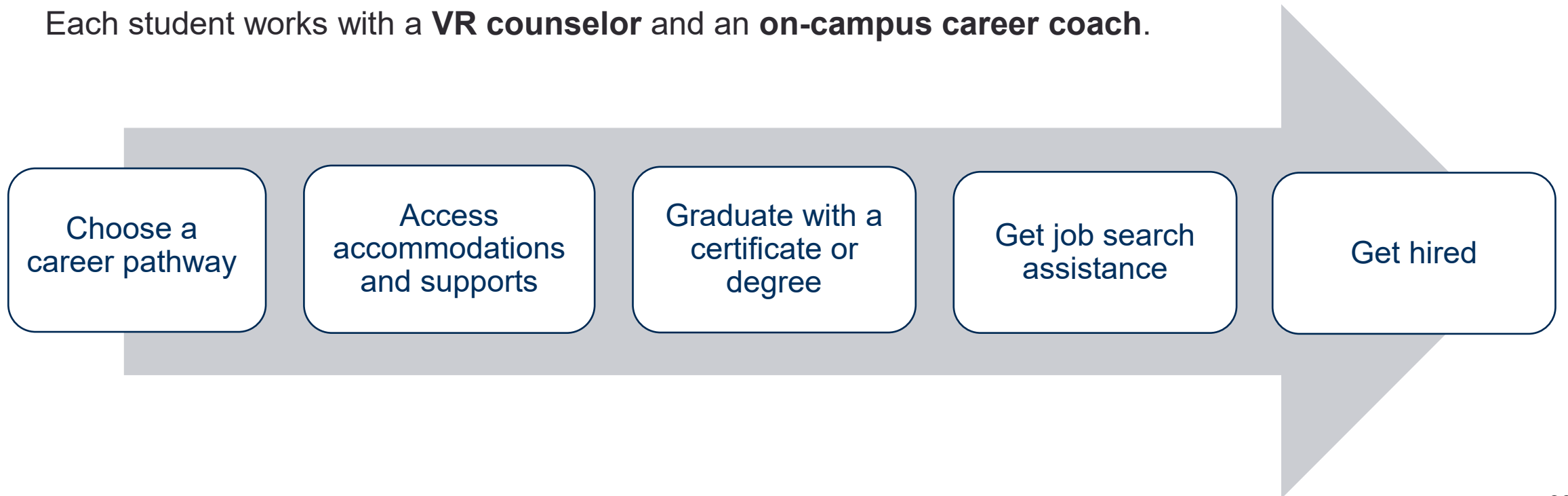


# ICAP: Overview

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**ICAP is available for eligible VR clients** who set a career goal to complete a short-term, credentialed training program at one of Oregon's participating community colleges.

Each student works with a **VR counselor** and an **on-campus career coach**.



# ICAP: Key partners

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Strong partnerships make ICAP a success. ICAP's four core partners are:

- **Vocational Rehabilitation**
- **Oregon Commission for the Blind**
- **Portland Community College** and all of Oregon's 17 community colleges
- **Cornell University** provides training, evaluation and technical support

We also partner with schools, businesses, organizations and government agencies who have relationships with people with disabilities who are interested in training and gaining employment.



# Meet Jayda

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“If you think you can't do it,  
you can!”

Jayda is a 19-year-old ICAP student from John Day, and the first in her family to go to college.

She is working on a credential in Early Childhood Education at Treasure Valley Community College. “I just really like working with kids.”

Dyslexia, she says, “makes me a slow reader.” Text-to-speech assistive technology helps her write her college papers.

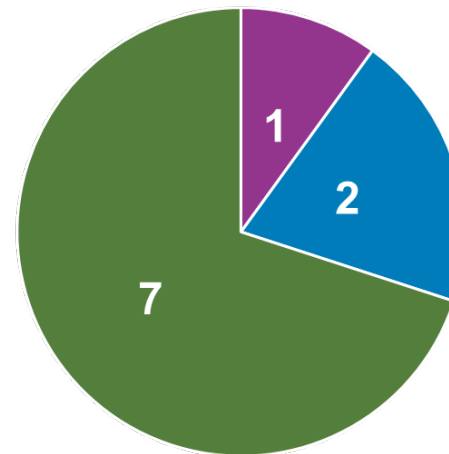
She is proud of her first quarter grades and excited about the future.

# ICAP: Policy direction

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 envisions **Career Pathways**: regional talent pipelines that connect trained workers to high-demand industries.

- State and federal guidance has urged changes to the VR system of service **to help people with disabilities connect with these Career Pathways** to find meaningful careers and access higher-paying positions and economic mobility.
- ICAP aligns with other initiatives to help Oregonians train and gain employment in high-demand industries, such as Pathways to Opportunity and Future Ready Oregon, an investment package approved in the 2022 Legislative Session.

## For Every Ten Job Opportunities



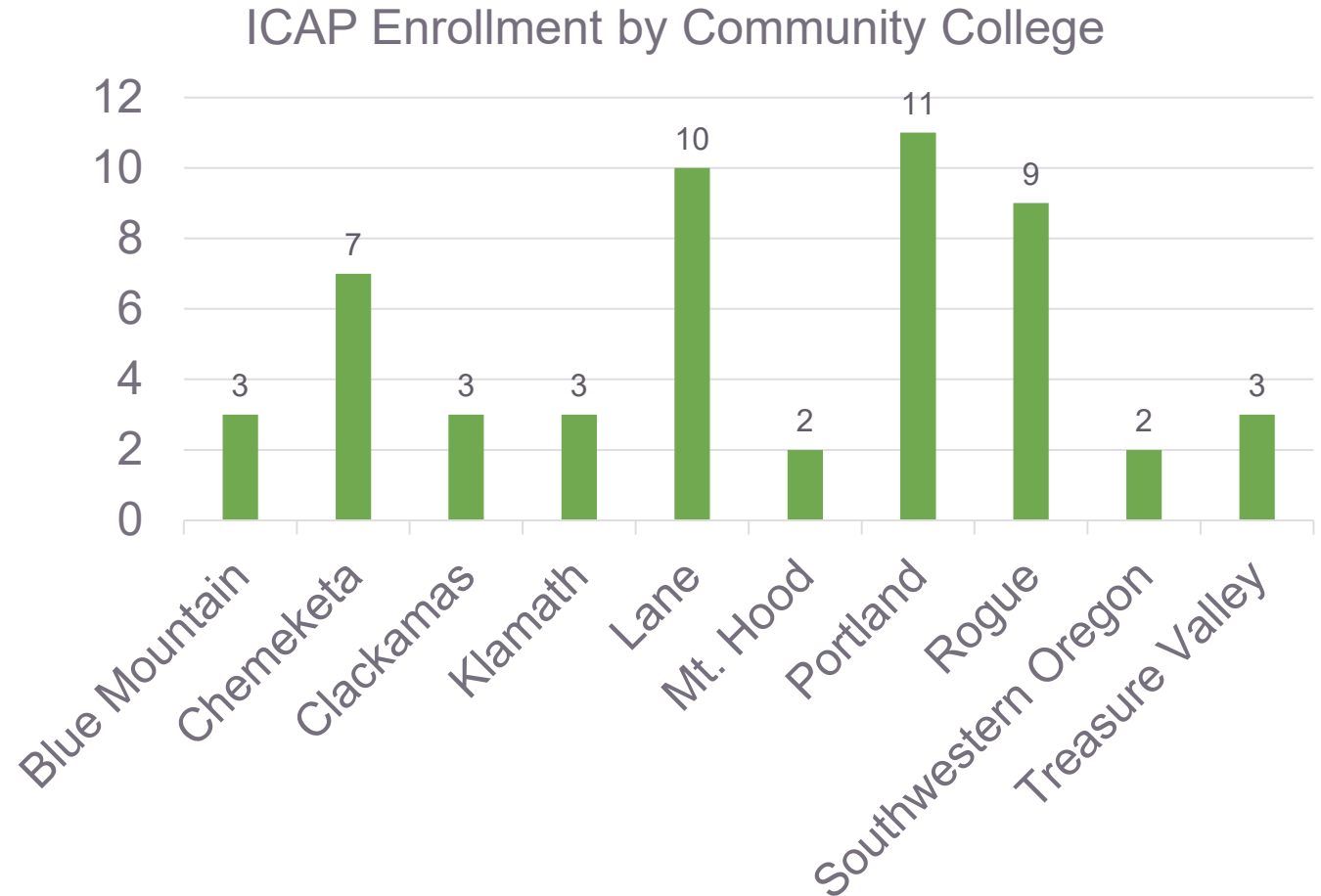
- 1 requires a Master's degree
- 2 requires a Four-Year degree
- 7 require certifications or a Two-Year degree

Source: Oregon's Middle 40 Goal: Stackable Certificates and Credentials  
<https://slideplayer.com/slide/5309050/>

# ICAP: 2021-23 accomplishments

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- 53 students enrolled since the program went live in September 2022.
- 18 students identify as Black, Indigenous or people of color.
- 2 people graduated with credentials and are working with VR to find a job in their field



# Services to Businesses



# Services to businesses: Why it matters

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Oregon businesses need reliable employees, and Oregonians with disabilities want opportunities to work and earn a living. VR is a resource.

- Connecting businesses with skilled workers.
- Partnering with businesses to spread the word about all-abilities hiring events.
- Providing training on cultivating an inclusive culture that attracts and retains diverse talent.
- Offering tips, tools, information and resources to promote disability inclusion in the workforce.



# Services to businesses: Overview

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Make referrals and introductions to workforce partners



Recruit and refer qualified applicants to your business



Provide help with accommodation requests



Provide long-term partnerships and supports



Provide candidates for on-the-job training and internship opportunities



Give information about assistive technology in the workplace



Deliver customized in-person and virtual disability awareness training for Oregon businesses of any size



# Services to businesses: Key partners

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- Bureau of Labor and Industries
- Oregon Employment Department
- Oregon Commission for the Blind
- WorkSource
- Veterans Administration
- VR programs in other states
- Community colleges
- VR's Youth Team
- Office of Federal Contract Compliance Program (OFCCP)



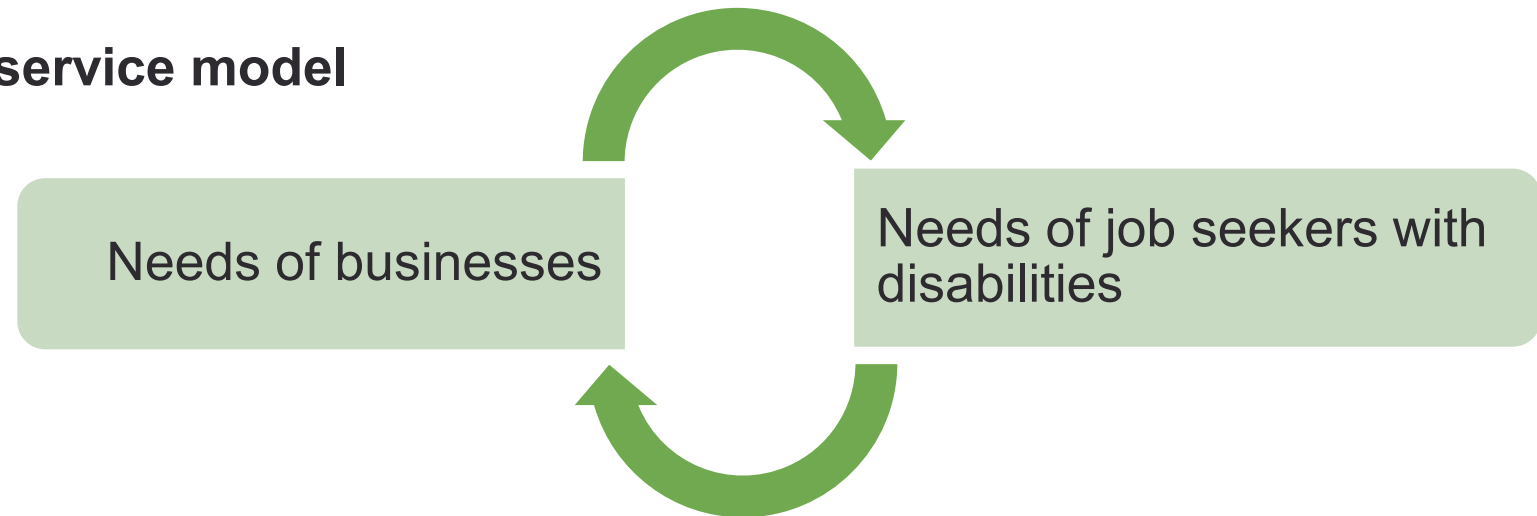
# Services to businesses: Policy direction

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The **Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA)** guides our work.

- Aims to strengthen and improve the nation's public workforce system
- Aims to help employers hire and retain skilled workers

**VR's dual customer service model**



# Meet Don

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“I knew I would affect the life of a student who needed employment, but I never expected Kevin to change my life and the lives of our employees by his presence this summer.”

- Don DeVore, owner, Sandy River Marketing

# Services to businesses: 2021-23 accomplishments

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**Expanded VR's workforce team** from 1 to 5 professionals who serve businesses across Oregon.

- More business connections
- More collaboration with partner workforce programs
- Better training and support for VR staff



**Hosted 47 networking events** around the state

- 23 Business Spotlight events to introduce a business partner to VR staff and workforce partners
- 6 Lunch & Learn events for businesses about disability-in-the-workplace topics
- 18 trainings for businesses

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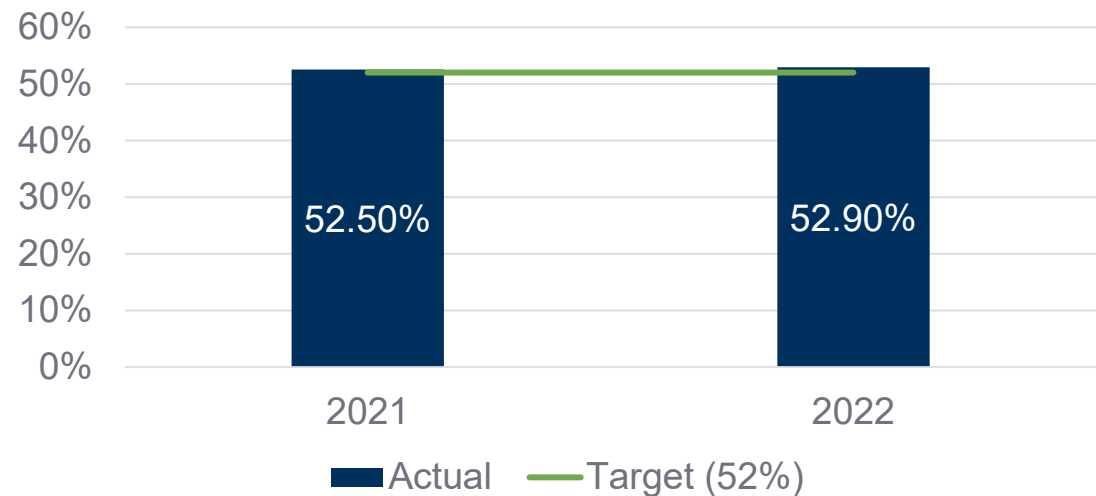


# KPM 18: Continued employment — 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter

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Tracking employment outcomes for the people we serve is important to ensure VR is meeting their needs. We check in during the second quarter after they exit the program, and again in the fourth quarter.

Continued employment in the second quarter following program exit

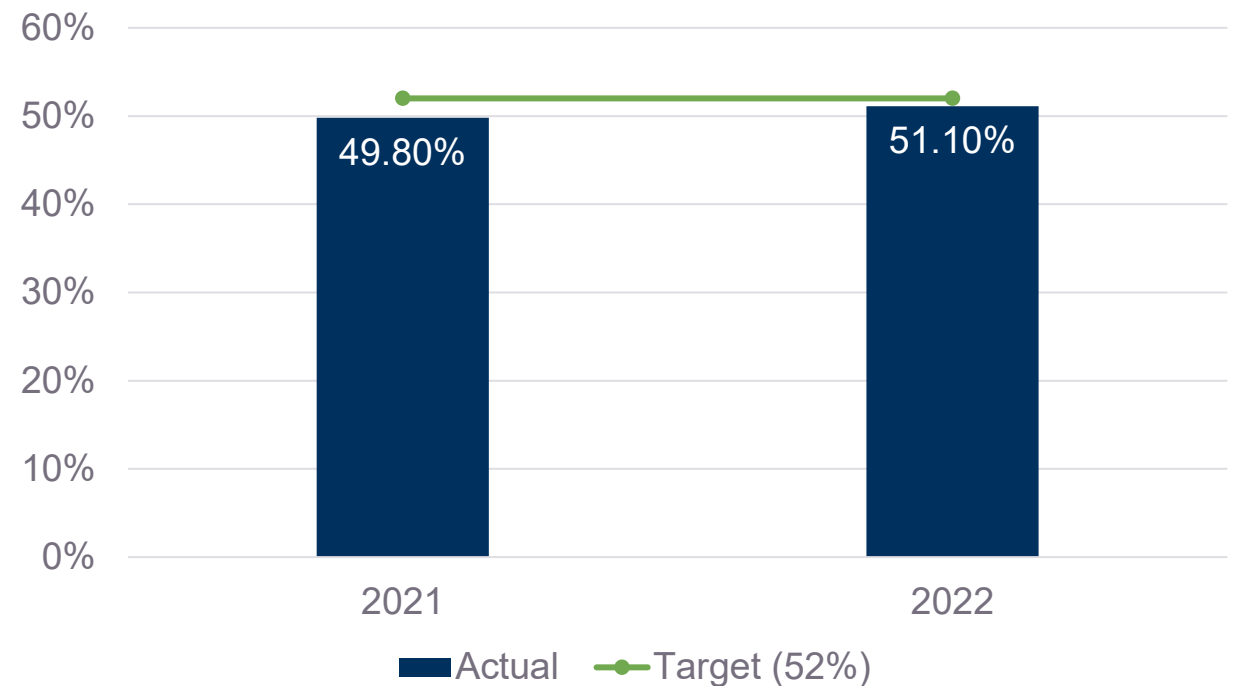


# KPM 19: Continued employment — 4th quarter

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People can return to VR if their disability changes and their job is no longer a good fit.

Continued employment in the fourth quarter following program exit



# KPM 20: Median wage

Helping the people we serve find a job earning competitive wages is a hallmark of VR success.

VR counselors incorporate extensive labor market research to help clients find a job with a living wage.

Median quarterly wage at second quarter following program exit



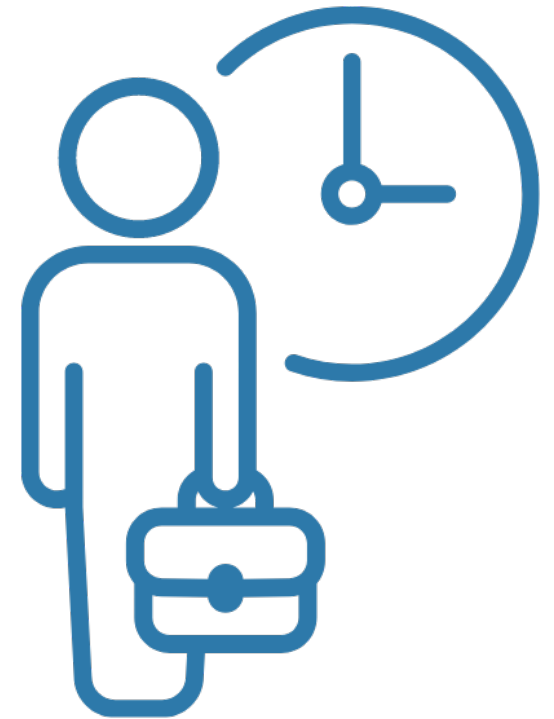


# Other measures that matter: Timeliness of eligibility

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We believe bringing efficiency to the eligibility processes will lead to high-quality competitive integrated employment outcomes for the people we serve.

Adding this additional measure that matters will help us monitor the program's effectiveness.



# Outline

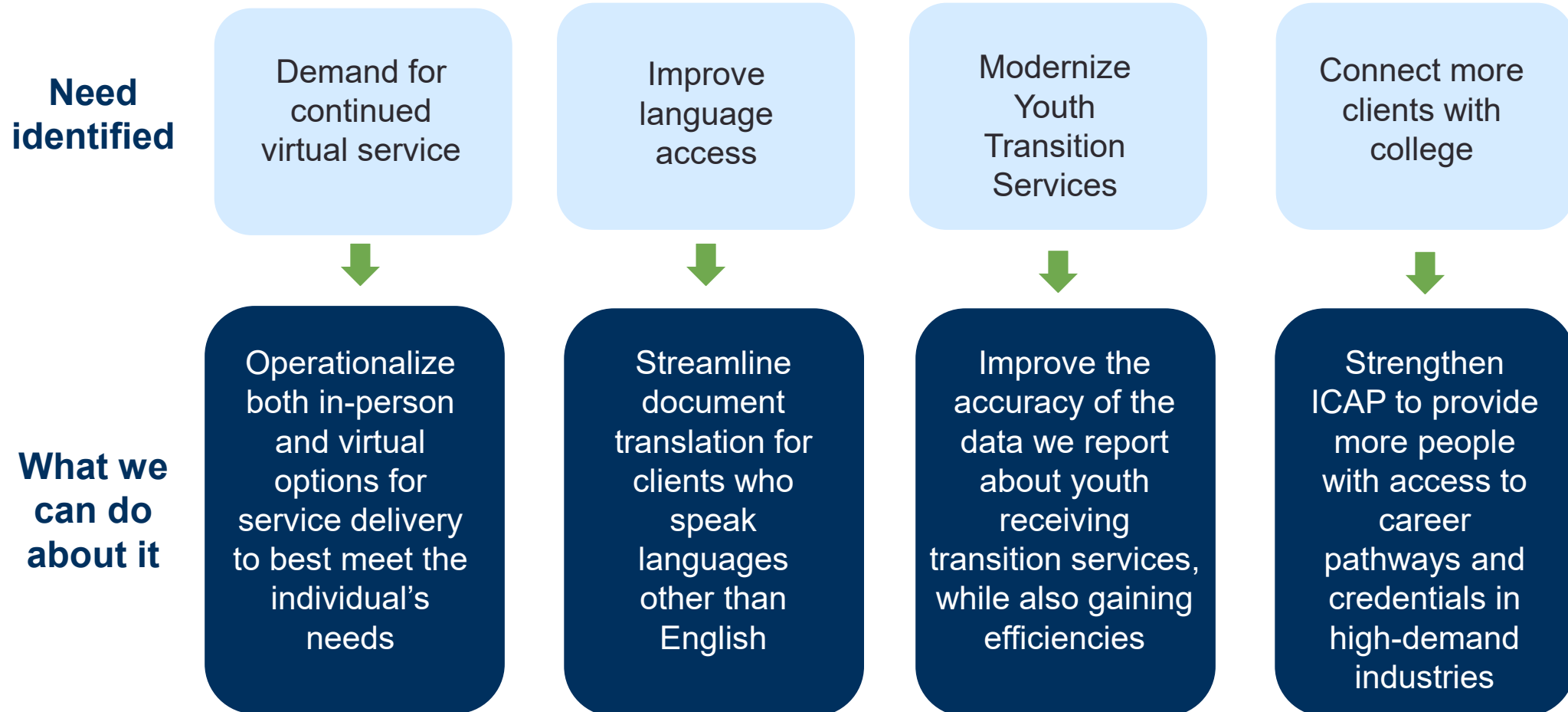
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# Lessons Learned: 2021-2023

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# Partnering with communities

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- Gathering feedback from the **State Rehabilitation Council**, our advisory body and the voice of the people we serve
- Hearing directly from the people we serve about how we can improve in the council's **Consumer Satisfaction Survey**
- Collaborating with our **partners who directly serve Oregonians with disabilities**
- Listening to **Oregon businesses** about their needs and knowledge gaps regarding hiring people with disabilities

There is still much to learn from our partners and the people we serve about how we can provide more equitable services across the state. Community engagement will be paramount in the next biennium.

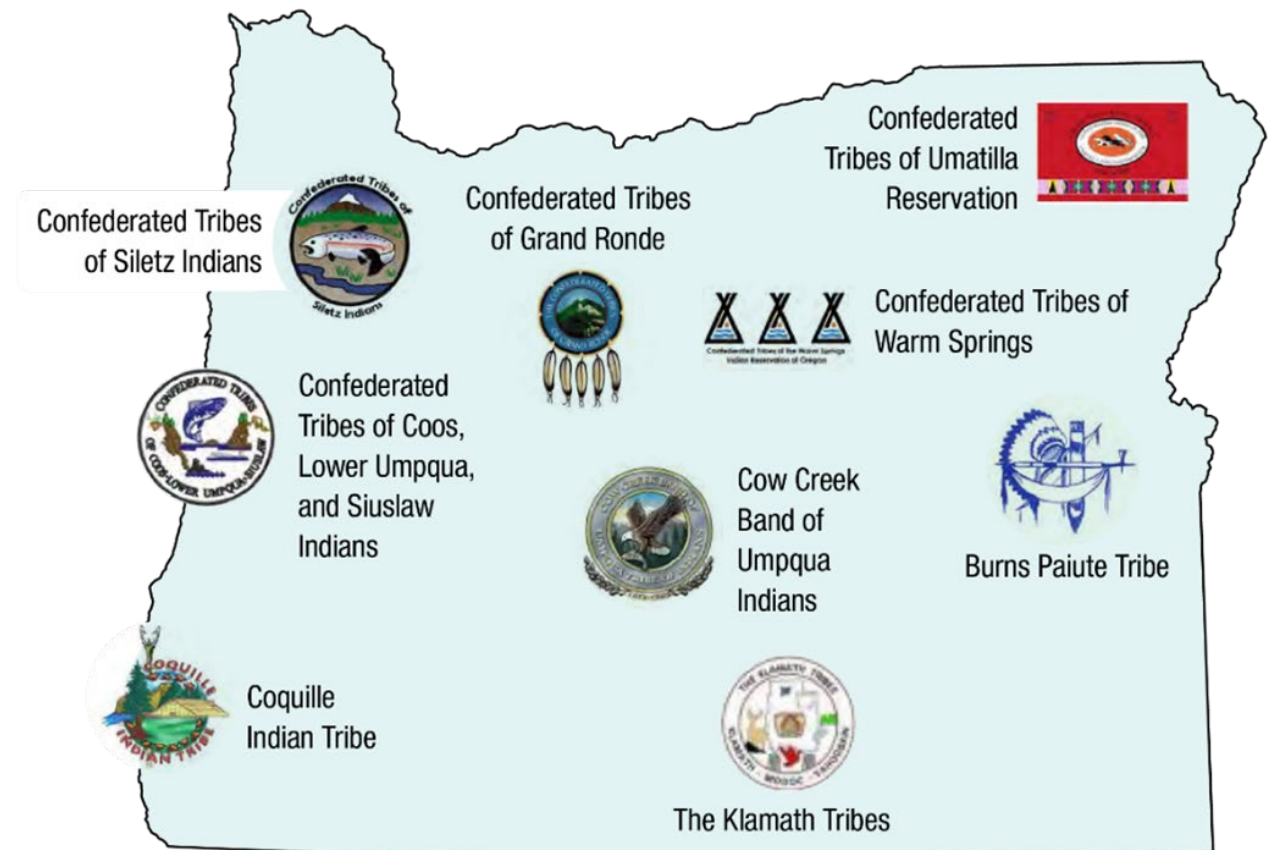


# Tribal engagement

VR holds cooperative agreements with five Tribal Nations that provide a Tribal VR program:

- Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon
- Confederated Tribes of the Klamath Falls
- Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians of Oregon
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs

## Oregon's Nine Federally Recognized Tribes



# 2023-25 Policy Option Package

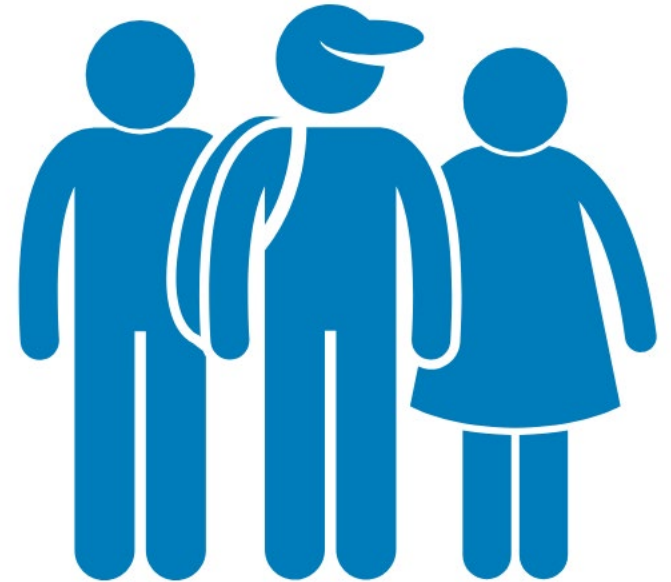


# What's at stake: Supporting the success of young people with disabilities

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All Oregon teens deserve support for realizing their **goals and dreams after high school.**

While transitioning from school to work can be daunting for any student, teens with disabilities often must navigate **additional processes and disability stigmas** as they pursue careers and independent living.



# Risk: Loss of critical transition supports

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Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)'s Youth Transition Program places counselors in high schools and community organizations statewide to help people ages 14–21 with disabilities prepare for future employment.

- VR delegates authority to oversee some contracts for delivering services to youth. VR learned this arrangement is **not in compliance with federal law**.
- To comply, VR needs to provide these critical services in-house, but it **does not have the staff** to do so. Without additional position authority, young people with disabilities stand to **lose a critical support** that helps them transition from school to work.





# Solution: Modernize transition services

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## Policy Option Package 148

- VR needs to oversee contracted services and rewrite some existing contracts to ensure they comply with federal guidelines.
- VR is requesting position authority to hire staff to provide these services — a **cost-neutral** request.
- By restructuring how youth services contracts are administered, VR will be able to **continue providing these critical transition supports** to young people with disabilities who are entering the workforce for the first time.



# 2023-25 Key Issues



# Workforce

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We are investing in future VR leaders by empowering and developing current and future VR staff.

- Oregon Vocational Aspiring Leaders program
- Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists
- Communities of practice
- Internship program in partnership with Portland State University and Western Oregon University



# Outstanding issues

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Waiting to receive the Rehabilitation Services Administration 2022 Monitoring Report that will provide some program recommendations

- Expected delivery this spring
- VR will work with RSA to address any findings



# Other 2023-25 considerations

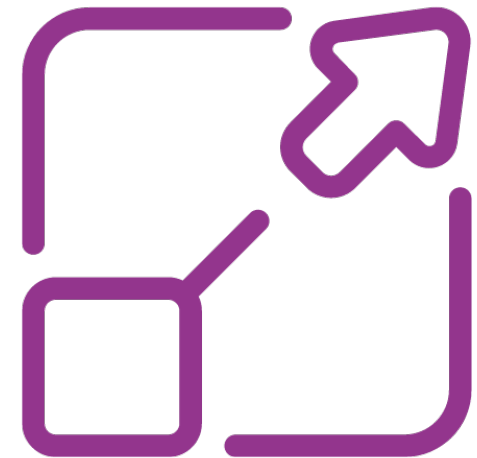
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We are investing in **modernizing our case management system** in order to:

- Add efficiencies so staff can spend more time helping clients and less time finding and entering information.
- Improve quality and quantity in reporting services to Rehabilitation Services Administration.

We are investing in **modernizing our scheduling system** in order to:

- Improve customer service so clients schedule appointments from a smartphone and get automated email updates.
- Bring consistency around the state.



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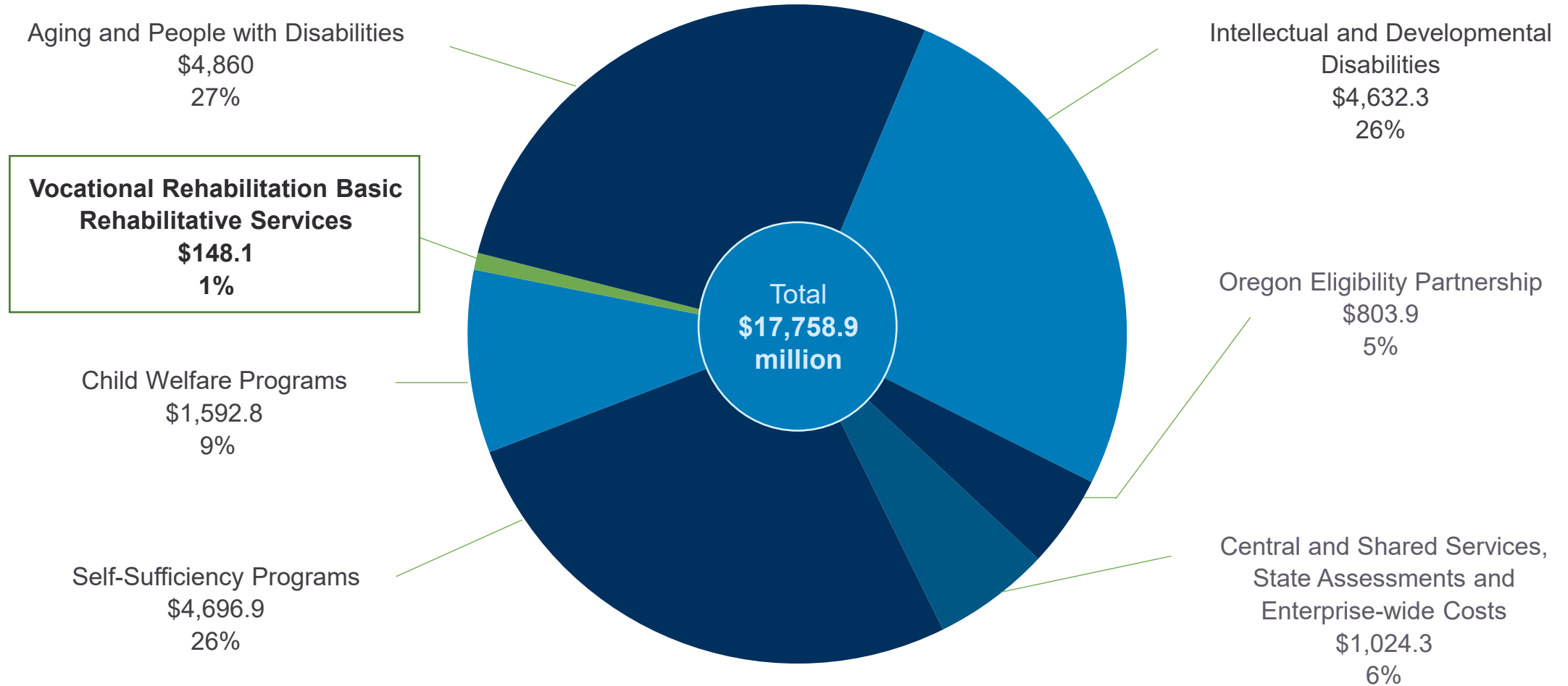
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# 2023-25 Governor's Budget: ODHS total fund by program area

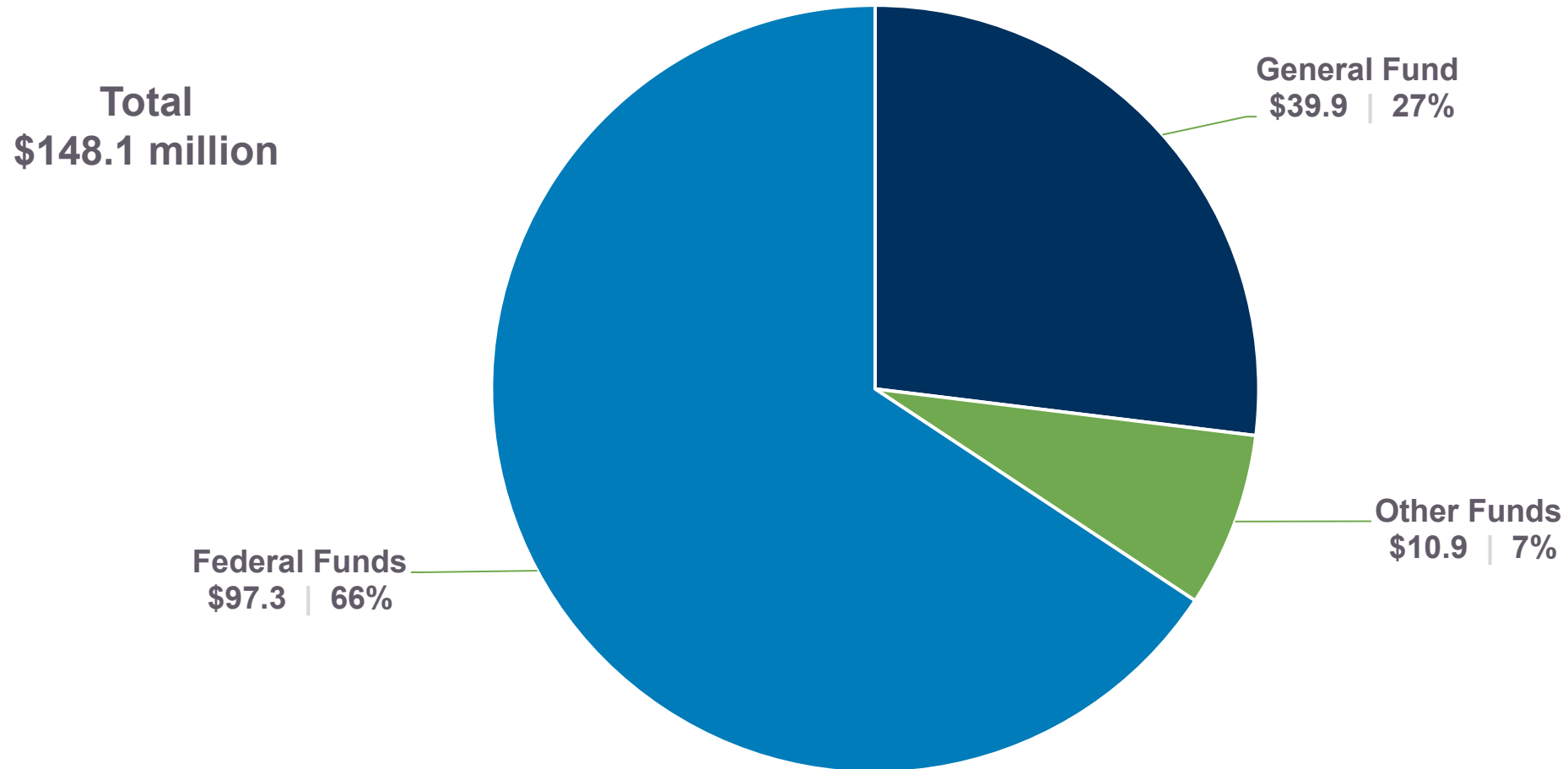
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All dollars in millions

# Governor's Budget: VR total by fund type

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All dollars in millions



# Summary of 15 percent reduction exercise

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**A one-time 15% reduction would result in \$7.6 million in cuts.**

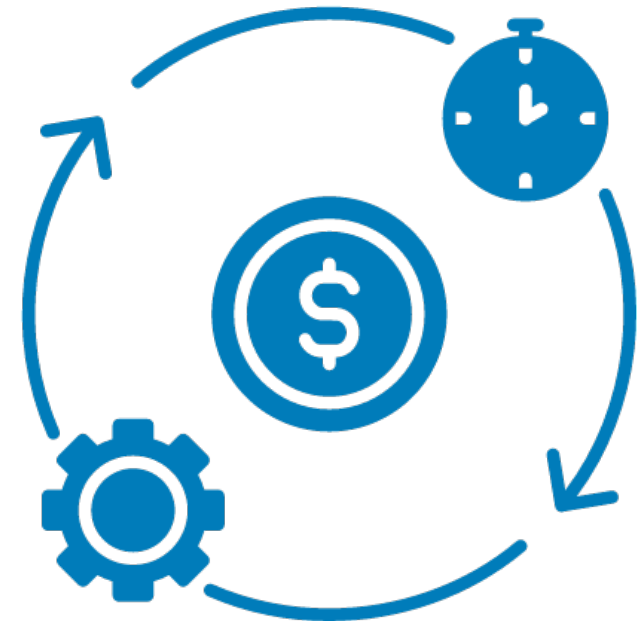
## **Potential impacts:**

- 5% decrease in direct services
- Potential waitlist for services
- 835 people would not receive services, including youth served under intergovernmental agreements with local school districts
- This would jeopardize the match dollars that these agreements provide, thus further reducing the program budget
- Small, specialized vendors that rely on VR for revenue would lose income.

# Creating efficiencies

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- Modernizing case management and scheduling systems.
- Permanently adopted option for clients to apply for and receive services remotely.
- Modernizing reporting for Pre-Employment Transition Services.
- Revisiting program policies and procedures to make them more efficient and reduce administrative burden.
- Provide robust training for staff in each of these areas so they are confident in their roles and feel supported in serving VR clients.



# Long-term vacancies

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**Five positions** are currently listed as vacant for 12 months or longer.

- VR does not anticipate having any long-term vacancies after spring 2023.
- Three positions are in recruitment or the process of being filled; two are in reclassification or review process.



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# Thank you



“Never in my life has anything like this happened to me. I am so thankful.”

– Marty Norton, after receiving a modified truck he can control with his hands



Questions?

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