

State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program Minnesota Rehab Services - Minnesota Dept of Employment And Economic Development State Plan for Fiscal Year 2014 (submitted FY 2013)

Preprint - Section 1: State Certifications

1.1 The **Vocational Rehabilitation Services** is authorized to submit this State Plan under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended [1] and its supplement under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act [2].

1.2 As a condition for the receipt of federal funds under Title I, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, the **Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development** [3] agrees to operate and administer the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program in accordance with the provisions of this State Plan [4], the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations [5], policies and procedures established by the secretary. Funds made available under Section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and the administration of the State Plan for the vocational rehabilitation services program.

1.3 As a condition for the receipt of federal funds under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated state agency agrees to operate and administer the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the provisions of the supplement to this State Plan [6], the Rehabilitation Act and all applicable regulations [7], policies and procedures established by the secretary. Funds made available under Title VI, Part B, are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the Title I State Plan. Yes

1.4 The designated state agency and/or the designated state unit has the authority under state law to perform the functions of the state regarding this State Plan and its supplement. Yes

1.5 The state legally may carry out each provision of the State Plan and its supplement. Yes

1.6 All provisions of the State Plan and its supplement are consistent with state law. Yes

1.7 The (enter title of state officer below)Yes

Director of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

... has the authority under state law to receive, hold and disburse federal funds made available under this State Plan and its supplement.

1.8 The (enter title of state officer below)...Yes

Director of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

... has the authority to submit this State Plan for vocational rehabilitation services and the State Plan supplement for supported employment services.

1.9 The agency that submits this State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement.Yes

State Plan Certified By

As the authorized signatory identified above, I hereby certify that I will sign, date and retain in the files of the designated state agency/designated state unit Section 1 of the Preprint, and separate Certification of Lobbying forms (Form ED-80-0013; available at <http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/ed80-013.pdf>) for both the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.

Signed?Yes

Name of SignatoryKimberley T. Peck

Title of SignatoryDirector, Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Date Signed (mm/dd/yyyy)06/26/2013

Assurances Certified By

At the request of RSA, the designated state agency and/or the designated state unit provide the following assurance(s), in addition to those contained within Section 2 through 8 below, in connection with the approval of the State Plan for FY 2014No

Comments:

The Minnesota-General program assures RSA that a triennial comprehensive needs assessment has been carried out and submitted to RSA.

Signed?Yes

Name of Signatory Kimberley T. Peck

Title of Signatory Director, Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Date Signed (mm/dd/yyyy) 06/26/2013

* The signatory of the assurance with the authority to execute and submit the State Plan will maintain a signed copy of the assurance(s) with the signed State Plan.

Section 1 Footnotes

[1] Public Law 93 112, as amended by Public Laws 93 516, 95 602, 98 221, 99 506, 100-630, 102-569, 103-073, and 105-220.

[2] Unless otherwise stated, "Rehabilitation Act" means the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

[3] All references in this plan to "designated state agency" or to "the state agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

[4] No funds under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved State Plan in accordance with Section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR part 361.

[5] Applicable regulations include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR Parts 74, 76, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 85 and 86 and the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program regulations in 34 CFR Part 361.

[6] No funds under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supplement to the Title I State Plan in accordance with Section 625(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[7] Applicable regulations include the EDGAR citations in footnote 5, 34 CFR Part 361, and 34 CFR Part 363.

Preprint - Section 2: Public Comment on State Plan Policies and Procedures

2.1 Public participation requirements. (Section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.10(d), .20(a), (b), (d); and 363.11(g)(9))

(a) Conduct of public meetings.

The designated state agency, prior to the adoption of any substantive policies or procedures governing the provision of vocational rehabilitation services under the State Plan and supported employment services under the supplement to the State Plan, including making any substantive amendments to the policies and procedures, conducts public meetings throughout the state to provide the public, including individuals with disabilities, an opportunity to comment on the policies or procedures.

(b) Notice requirements.

The designated state agency, prior to conducting the public meetings, provides appropriate and sufficient notice throughout the state of the meetings in accordance with state law governing public meetings or, in the absence of state law governing public meetings, procedures developed by the state agency in consultation with the State Rehabilitation Council, if the agency has a council.

(c) Special consultation requirements.

The state agency actively consults with the director of the Client Assistance Program, the State Rehabilitation Council, if the agency has a council and, as appropriate, Indian tribes, tribal organizations and native Hawaiian organizations on its policies and procedures governing the provision of vocational rehabilitation services under the State Plan and supported employment services under the supplement to the State Plan.

Preprint - Section 3: Submission of the State Plan and its Supplement

3.1 Submission and revisions of the State Plan and its supplement. (Sections 101(a)(1), (23) and 625(a)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act; Section 501 of the Workforce Investment Act; 34 CFR 76.140; 361.10(e), (f), and (g); and 363.10)

(a) The state submits to the commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration the State Plan and its supplement on the same date that the state submits either a State Plan under Section 112 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 or a state unified plan under Section 501 of that Rehabilitation Act.

(b) The state submits only those policies, procedures or descriptions required under this State Plan and its supplement that have not been previously submitted to and approved by the commissioner.

(c) The state submits to the commissioner, at such time and in such manner as the commissioner determines to be appropriate, reports containing annual updates of the information relating to the:

1. comprehensive system of personnel development;
2. assessments, estimates, goals and priorities, and reports of progress;
3. innovation and expansion activities; and
4. other updates of information required under Title I, Part B, or Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act that are requested by the commissioner.

(d) The State Plan and its supplement are in effect subject to the submission of modifications the state determines to be necessary or the commissioner requires based on a change in state policy, a change in federal law, including regulations, an interpretation of the Rehabilitation Act by a federal court or the highest court of the state, or a finding by the commissioner of state noncompliance with the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361 or 34 CFR 363.

3.2 Supported Employment State Plan supplement. (Sections 101(a)(22) and 625(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.34 and 363.10)

(a) The state has an acceptable plan for carrying out Part B, of Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act that provides for the use of funds under that part to supplement funds made available under Part B, of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the cost of services leading to supported employment.

(b) The Supported Employment State Plan, including any needed annual revisions, is submitted as a supplement to the State Plan.

Preprint - Section 4: Administration of the State Plan

4.1 Designated state agency and designated state unit. (Section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.13(a) and (b))

(a) Designated state agency.

1. There is a state agency designated as the sole state agency to administer the State Plan or to supervise its administration in a political subdivision of the state by a sole local agency.
2. The designated state agency is a state agency that is not primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities and includes a vocational rehabilitation unit as provided in paragraph (b) of this section. (Option A was not selected/Option B was selected)
3. In American Samoa, the designated state agency is the governor.

(b) Designated state unit.

1. If the designated state agency is not primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities, in accordance with subparagraph 4.1(a)(2)(B) of this section, the state agency includes a vocational rehabilitation bureau, division or unit that:
 - A. is primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities and is responsible for the administration of the designated state agency's vocational rehabilitation program under the State Plan;
 - B. has a full-time director;
 - C. has a staff, at least 90 percent of whom are employed full-time on the rehabilitation work of the organizational unit; and
 - D. is located at an organizational level and has an organizational status within the designated state agency comparable to that of other major organizational units of the designated state agency.
2. The name of the designated state vocational rehabilitation unit is

Vocational Rehabilitation Services

4.2 State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council. (Sections 101(a)(21) and 105 of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.16 and .17)

The State Plan must contain one of the following assurances.

(a) The designated state agency is an independent state commission. (Option A was not selected/Option B was selected)

(b) The state has established a State Rehabilitation Council that meets the criteria set forth in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.17 and the designated state unit.

1. jointly with the State Rehabilitation Council develops, agrees to and reviews annually state goals and priorities and jointly submits to the commissioner annual reports of progress in accordance with the provisions of Section 101(a)(15) of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.29 and subsection 4.11 of this State Plan;
2. regularly consults with the State Rehabilitation Council regarding the development, implementation and revision of state policies and procedures of general applicability pertaining to the provision of vocational rehabilitation services;
3. includes in the State Plan and in any revision to the State Plan a summary of input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council, including recommendations from the annual report of the council described in Section 105(c)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(h)(5), the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction described in Section 105(c)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(h)(4), and other reports prepared by the council and the response of the designated state unit to the input and recommendations, including explanations for rejecting any input or recommendation; and
4. transmits to the council:
 - A. all plans, reports and other information required under 34 CFR 361 to be submitted to the commissioner;
 - B. all policies and information on all practices and procedures of general applicability provided to or used by rehabilitation personnel in carrying out this State Plan and its supplement; and
 - C. copies of due process hearing decisions issued under 34 CFR 361.57, which are transmitted in such a manner as to ensure that the identity of the participants in the hearings is kept confidential.

(c) If the designated state unit has a State Rehabilitation Council, Attachment 4.2(c) provides a summary of the input provided by the council consistent with the provisions identified in subparagraph (b)(3) of this section; the response of the designated state unit to the input and recommendations; and, explanations for the rejection of any input or any recommendation.

4.3 Consultations regarding the administration of the State Plan. (Section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.21)

The designated state agency takes into account, in connection with matters of general policy arising in the administration of the plan and its supplement, the views of:

(a) individuals and groups of individuals who are recipients of vocational rehabilitation services or, as appropriate, the individuals' representatives;

(b) personnel working in programs that provide vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities;

(c) providers of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities;

(d) the director of the Client Assistance Program; and

(e) the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has a council.

4.4 Nonfederal share. (Sections 7(14) and 101(a)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 80.24 and 361.60)

The nonfederal share of the cost of carrying out this State Plan is 21.3 percent and is provided through the financial participation by the state or, if the state elects, by the state and local agencies.

4.5 Local administration. (Sections 7(24) and 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.5(b)(47) and .15)

The State Plan provides for the administration of the plan by a local agency. No

If "Yes", the designated state agency:

(a) ensures that each local agency is under the supervision of the designated state unit with the sole local agency, as that term is defined in Section 7(24) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.5(b)(47), responsible for the administration of the vocational rehabilitation program within the political subdivision that it serves; and

(b) develops methods that each local agency will use to administer the vocational rehabilitation program in accordance with the State Plan.

4.6 Shared funding and administration of joint programs. (Section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.27)

The State Plan provides for the state agency to share funding and administrative responsibility with another state agency or local public agency to carry out a joint program to provide services to individuals with disabilities. No

If "Yes", the designated state agency submits to the commissioner for approval a plan that describes its shared funding and administrative arrangement. The plan must include:

(a) a description of the nature and scope of the joint program;

(b) the services to be provided under the joint program;

(c) the respective roles of each participating agency in the administration and provision of services; and

(d) the share of the costs to be assumed by each agency.

4.7 Statewideness and waivers of statewideness. (Section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.25, .26, and .60(b)(3)(i) and (ii))

X This agency is requesting a waiver of statewideness.

(a) Services provided under the State Plan are available in all political subdivisions of the state.

(b) The state unit may provide services in one or more political subdivisions of the state that increase services or expand the scope of services that are available statewide under this State Plan if the:

1. nonfederal share of the cost of these services is met from funds provided by a local public agency, including funds contributed to a local public agency by a private agency, organization or individual;
2. services are likely to promote the vocational rehabilitation of substantially larger numbers of individuals with disabilities or of individuals with disabilities with particular types of impairments; and
3. state, for purposes other than the establishment of a community rehabilitation program or the construction of a particular facility for community rehabilitation program purposes, requests in Attachment 4.7(b)(3) a waiver of the statewideness requirement in accordance with the following requirements:
 - A. identification of the types of services to be provided;
 - B. written assurance from the local public agency that it will make available to the state unit the nonfederal share of funds;
 - C. written assurance that state unit approval will be obtained for each proposed service before it is put into effect; and
 - D. written assurance that all other State Plan requirements, including a state's order of selection, will apply to all services approved under the waiver.

(c) Contributions, consistent with the requirements of 34 CFR 361.60(b)(3)(ii), by private entities of earmarked funds for particular geographic areas within the state may be used as part of the nonfederal share without the state requesting a waiver of the statewideness requirement provided that the state notifies the commissioner that it cannot provide the full nonfederal share without using the earmarked funds.

4.8 Cooperation, collaboration and coordination. (Sections 101(a)(11), (24)(B), and 625(b)(4) and (5) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.22, .23, .24, and .31, and 363.11(e))

(a) Cooperative agreements with other components of statewide work force investment system.

The designated state agency or the designated state unit has cooperative agreements with other entities that are components of the statewide work force investment system and replicates those agreements at the local level between individual offices of the designated state unit and local entities carrying out the One-Stop service delivery system or other activities through the statewide work force investment system.

(b) Cooperation and coordination with other agencies and entities.

Attachment 4.8(b) (1)-(4) describes the designated state agency's:

1. cooperation with and use of the services and facilities of the federal, state, and local agencies and programs, including programs carried out by the undersecretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture and state use contracting programs, to the extent that those agencies and programs are not carrying out activities through the statewide work force investment system;
2. coordination, in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 4.8(c) of this section, with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services;
3. establishment of cooperative agreements with private nonprofit vocational rehabilitation service providers, in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 5.10(b) of the State Plan; and,
4. efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other state agencies and entities with respect to the provision of supported employment and extended services for individuals with the most significant disabilities, in accordance with the requirements of subsection 6.5 of the supplement to this State Plan.

(c) Coordination with education officials.

1. Attachment 4.8(b)(2) describes the plans, policies and procedures for coordination between the designated state agency and education officials responsible for the public education of students with disabilities that are designed to facilitate the transition of the students who are individuals with disabilities from the receipt of educational services in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services under the responsibility of the designated state agency.
2. The State Plan description must:
 - A. provide for the development and approval of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with 34 CFR 361.45 as early as possible during the transition planning process but, at the latest, before each student determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services leaves the school setting or if the designated state unit is operating on an order of selection before each eligible student able to be served under the order leaves the school setting; and
 - B. include information on a formal interagency agreement with the state educational agency that, at a minimum, provides for:
 - i. consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to postschool activities, including vocational rehabilitation services;

- ii. transition planning by personnel of the designated state agency and the educational agency for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and completion of their individualized education programs under Section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;
- iii. roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services; and
- iv. procedures for outreach to students with disabilities as early as possible during the transition planning process and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

(d) Coordination with statewide independent living council and independent living centers.

The designated state unit, the Statewide Independent Living Council established under Section 705 of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 364, and the independent living centers described in Part C of Title VII of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 366 have developed working relationships and coordinate their activities.

(e) Cooperative agreement with recipients of grants for services to American Indians.

1. There is in the state a recipient(s) of a grant under Part C of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services for American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing on or near federal and state reservations. **Yes**
2. If "Yes", the designated state agency has entered into a formal cooperative agreement that meets the following requirements with each grant recipient in the state that receives funds under Part C of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act:
 - A. strategies for interagency referral and information sharing that will assist in eligibility determinations and the development of individualized plans for employment;
 - B. procedures for ensuring that American Indians who are individuals with disabilities and are living near a reservation or tribal service area are provided vocational rehabilitation services; and
 - C. provisions for sharing resources in cooperative studies and assessments, joint training activities, and other collaborative activities designed to improve the provision of services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities.

4.9 Methods of administration. (Section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.12, .19 and .51(a) and (b))

(a) In general.

The state agency employs methods of administration, including procedures to ensure accurate data collection and financial accountability, found by the commissioner to be necessary for the proper and efficient administration of the plan and for carrying out all the functions for which the state is responsible under the plan and 34 CFR 361.

(b) Employment of individuals with disabilities.

The designated state agency and entities carrying out community rehabilitation programs in the state, who are in receipt of assistance under Part B, of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and this State Plan, take affirmative action to employ and advance in employment qualified individuals with disabilities covered under and on the same terms and conditions as set forth in Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act.

(c) Facilities.

Any facility used in connection with the delivery of services assisted under this State Plan meets program accessibility requirements consistent with the provisions, as applicable, of the Architectural Barriers Rehabilitation Act of 1968, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the regulations implementing these laws.

4.10 Comprehensive system of personnel development. (Section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.18)

Attachment 4.10 describes the designated state agency's procedures and activities to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified state rehabilitation professional and paraprofessional personnel for the designated state unit. The description includes the following:

(a) Data system on personnel and personnel development.

Development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs and personnel development with respect to:

1. Qualified personnel needs.
 - A. The number of personnel who are employed by the state agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;
 - B. The number of personnel currently needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services, broken down by personnel category; and
 - C. Projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services in the state in five years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

2. Personnel development.

- A. A list of the institutions of higher education in the state that are preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals, by type of program;
- B. The number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and
- C. The number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

(b) Plan for recruitment, preparation and retention of qualified personnel.

Development, updating on an annual basis, and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel based on the data collection and analysis system described in paragraph (a) of this subsection and that provides for the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated state unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare and retain personnel who are qualified in accordance with paragraph (c) of this subsection, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

(c) Personnel standards.

Policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards to ensure that designated state unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are appropriately and adequately prepared and trained, including:

- 1. standards that are consistent with any national- or state-approved or recognized certification, licensing, registration, or, in the absence of these requirements, other comparable requirements (including state personnel requirements) that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing vocational rehabilitation services.
- 2. To the extent that existing standards are not based on the highest requirements in the state applicable to a particular profession or discipline, the steps the state is currently taking and the steps the state plans to take in accordance with the written plan to retrain or hire personnel within the designated state unit to meet standards that are based on the highest requirements in the state, including measures to notify designated state unit personnel, the institutions of higher education identified in subparagraph (a)(2), and other public agencies of these steps and the time lines for taking each step.
- 3. The written plan required by subparagraph (c)(2) describes the following:
 - A. specific strategies for retraining, recruiting and hiring personnel;

- B. the specific time period by which all state unit personnel will meet the standards required by subparagraph (c)(1);
- C. procedures for evaluating the designated state unit's progress in hiring or retraining personnel to meet applicable personnel standards within the established time period; and
- D. the identification of initial minimum qualifications that the designated state unit will require of newly hired personnel when the state unit is unable to hire new personnel who meet the established personnel standards and the identification of a plan for training such individuals to meet the applicable standards within the time period established for all state unit personnel to meet the established personnel standards.

(d) Staff development.

Policies, procedures and activities to ensure that all personnel employed by the designated state unit receive appropriate and adequate training. The narrative describes the following:

1. A system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated state unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement and rehabilitation technology.
2. Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination to designated state unit professionals and paraprofessionals significant knowledge from research and other sources.

(e) Personnel to address individual communication needs.

Availability of personnel within the designated state unit or obtaining the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability or in appropriate modes of communication with applicants or eligible individuals.

(f) Coordination of personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Procedures and activities to coordinate the designated state unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

4.11. Statewide assessment; annual estimates; annual state goals and priorities; strategies; and progress reports.

(Sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2) and 625(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.17(h)(2), .29, and 363.11(b))

(a) Comprehensive statewide assessment.

1. Attachment 4.11(a) documents the results of a comprehensive, statewide assessment, jointly conducted every three years by the designated state unit and the State Rehabilitation Council (if the state has such a council). The assessment describes:
 - A. the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the state, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of:
 - i. individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;
 - ii. individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program carried out under this State Plan; and
 - iii. individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide work force investment system.
 - B. The need to establish, develop or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state.
2. For any year in which the state updates the assessments, the designated state unit submits to the commissioner a report containing information regarding updates to the assessments.

(b) Annual estimates.

Attachment 4.11(b) identifies on an annual basis state estimates of the:

1. number of individuals in the state who are eligible for services under the plan;
2. number of eligible individuals who will receive services provided with funds provided under Part B of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and under Part B of Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act, including, if the designated state agency uses an order of selection in accordance with subparagraph 5.3(b)(2) of this State Plan, estimates of the number of individuals to be served under each priority category within the order; and
3. costs of the services described in subparagraph (b)(1), including, if the designated state agency uses an order of selection, the service costs for each priority category within the order.

(c) Goals and priorities.

1. Attachment 4.11(c)(1) identifies the goals and priorities of the state that are jointly developed or revised, as applicable, with and agreed to by the State Rehabilitation Council, if the agency has a council, in carrying out the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.

2. The designated state agency submits to the commissioner a report containing information regarding any revisions in the goals and priorities for any year the state revises the goals and priorities.
3. Order of selection.
If the state agency implements an order of selection, consistent with subparagraph 5.3(b)(2) of the State Plan, Attachment 4.11(c)(3):
 - A. shows the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services;
 - B. provides a justification for the order; and
 - C. identifies the service and outcome goals, and the time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
4. Goals and plans for distribution of Title VI, Part B, funds.
Attachment 4.11(c)(4) specifies, consistent with subsection 6.4 of the State Plan supplement, the state's goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of funds received under Section 622 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services.

(d) Strategies.

1. Attachment 4.11(d) describes the strategies, including:
 - A. the methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities, including how a broad range of assistive technology services and assistive technology devices will be provided to those individuals at each stage of the rehabilitation process and how those services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities on a statewide basis;
 - B. outreach procedures to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities in accordance with subsection 6.6 of the State Plan supplement, and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program;
 - C. as applicable, the plan of the state for establishing, developing or improving community rehabilitation programs;
 - D. strategies to improve the performance of the state with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators established pursuant to Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act; and
 - E. strategies for assisting other components of the statewide work force investment system in assisting individuals with disabilities.

2. Attachment 4.11 (d) describes how the designated state agency uses these strategies to:
 - A. address the needs identified in the assessment conducted under paragraph 4.11(a) and achieve the goals and priorities identified in the State Plan attachments under paragraph 4.11(c);
 - B. support the innovation and expansion activities identified in subparagraph 4.12(a)(1) and (2) of the plan; and
 - C. overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and State Supported Employment Services Program.

(e) Evaluation and reports of progress.

1. The designated state unit and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state unit has a council, jointly submits to the commissioner an annual report on the results of an evaluation of the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program and the progress made in improving the effectiveness of the program from the previous year.
2. Attachment 4.11(e)(2):
 - A. provides an evaluation of the extent to which the goals identified in Attachment 4.11(c)(1) and, if applicable, Attachment 4.11(c)(3) were achieved;
 - B. identifies the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals and priorities;
 - C. describes the factors that impeded their achievement, to the extent they were not achieved;
 - D. assesses the performance of the state on the standards and indicators established pursuant to Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act; and
 - E. provides a report consistent with paragraph 4.12(c) of the plan on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion activities were utilized in the preceding year.

4.12 Innovation and expansion. (Section 101(a)(18) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.35)

(a) The designated state agency reserves and uses a portion of the funds allotted to the state under Section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the:

1. development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities under this State Plan, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities, consistent with the findings of the statewide assessment identified in Attachment 4.11(a) and goals and

priorities of the state identified in Attachments 4.11(c)(1) and, if applicable, Attachment 4.11(c)(3); and

2. support of the funding for the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has such a council, consistent with the resource plan prepared under Section 105(d)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(i), and the funding of the Statewide Independent Living Council, consistent with the resource plan prepared under Section 705(e)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 364.21(i).

(b) Attachment 4.11 (d) describes how the reserved funds identified in subparagraph 4.12(a)(1) and (2) will be utilized.

(c) Attachment 4.11(e)(2) describes how the reserved funds were utilized in the preceding year.

4.13 Reports. (Section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.40)

(a) The designated state unit submits reports in the form and level of detail and at the time required by the commissioner regarding applicants for and eligible individuals receiving services under the State Plan.

(b) Information submitted in the reports provides a complete count, unless sampling techniques are used, of the applicants and eligible individuals in a manner that permits the greatest possible cross-classification of data and protects the confidentiality of the identity of each individual.

Preprint - Section 5: Administration of the Provision of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

5.1 Information and referral services. (Sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.37)

The designated state agency has implemented an information and referral system that is adequate to ensure that individuals with disabilities, including individuals who do not meet the agency's order of selection criteria for receiving vocational rehabilitation services if the agency is operating on an order of selection, are provided accurate vocational rehabilitation information and guidance, including counseling and referral for job placement, using appropriate modes of communication, to assist such individuals in preparing for, securing, retaining or regaining employment, and are referred to other appropriate federal and state programs, including other components of the statewide work force investment system in the state.

5.2 Residency. (Section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.42(c)(1))

The designated state unit imposes no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the state.

5.3 Ability to serve all eligible individuals; order of selection for services. (Sections 12(d) and 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.36)

(a) The designated state unit is able to provide the full range of services listed in Section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.48, as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the state who apply for services. No

(b) If No:

1. Individuals with the most significant disabilities, in accordance with criteria established by the state, are selected first for vocational rehabilitation services before other individuals with disabilities.
2. Attachment 4.11(c)(3):
 - A. shows the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services;
 - B. provides a justification for the order of selection; and
 - C. identifies the state's service and outcome goals and the time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
3. Eligible individuals who do not meet the order of selection criteria have access to the services provided through the designated state unit's information and referral system

established under Section 101(a)(20) of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.37, and subsection 5.1 of this State Plan.

5.4 Availability of comparable services and benefits. (Sections 101(a)(8) and 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.53)

(a) Prior to providing any vocational rehabilitation services, except those services identified in paragraph (b), to an eligible individual or to members of the individual's family, the state unit determines whether comparable services and benefits exist under any other program and whether those services and benefits are available to the individual.

(b) The following services are exempt from a determination of the availability of comparable services and benefits:

1. assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs by qualified personnel, including, if appropriate, an assessment by personnel skilled in rehabilitation technology;
2. counseling and guidance, including information and support services to assist an individual in exercising informed choice consistent with the provisions of Section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act;
3. referral and other services to secure needed services from other agencies, including other components of the statewide work force investment system, through agreements developed under Section 101(a)(11) of the Rehabilitation Act, if such services are not available under this State Plan;
4. job-related services, including job search and placement assistance, job retention services, follow-up services, and follow-along services;
5. rehabilitation technology, including telecommunications, sensory and other technological aids and devices; and
6. post-employment services consisting of the services listed under subparagraphs (1) through (5) of this paragraph.

(c) The requirements of paragraph (a) of this section do not apply if the determination of the availability of comparable services and benefits under any other program would interrupt or delay:

1. progress of the individual toward achieving the employment outcome identified in the individualized plan for employment;
2. an immediate job placement; or
3. provision of vocational rehabilitation services to any individual who is determined to be at extreme medical risk, based on medical evidence provided by an appropriate qualified medical professional.

(d) The governor in consultation with the designated state vocational rehabilitation agency and other appropriate agencies ensures that an interagency agreement or other mechanism for interagency coordination that meets the requirements of Section 101(a)(8)(B)(i)-(iv) of the Rehabilitation Act takes effect between the designated state unit and any appropriate public entity, including the state Medicaid program, a public institution of higher education, and a component of the statewide work force investment system to ensure the provision of the vocational rehabilitation services identified in Section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.48, other than the services identified in paragraph (b) of this section, that are included in the individualized plan for employment of an eligible individual, including the provision of those vocational rehabilitation services during the pendency of any dispute that may arise in the implementation of the interagency agreement or other mechanism for interagency coordination.

5.5 Individualized plan for employment. (Section 101(a)(9) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.45 and .46)

(a) An individualized plan for employment meeting the requirements of Section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.45 and .46 is developed and implemented in a timely manner for each individual determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, except if the state has implemented an order of selection, and is developed and implemented for each individual to whom the designated state unit is able to provide vocational rehabilitation services.

(b) Services to an eligible individual are provided in accordance with the provisions of the individualized plan for employment.

5.6 Opportunity to make informed choices regarding the selection of services and providers. (Sections 101(a)(19) and 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.52)

Applicants and eligible individuals or, as appropriate, their representatives are provided information and support services to assist in exercising informed choice throughout the rehabilitation process, consistent with the provisions of Section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.52.

5.7 Services to American Indians. (Section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.30)

The designated state unit provides vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the state to the same extent as the designated state agency provides such services to other significant populations of individuals with disabilities residing in the state.

5.8 Annual review of individuals in extended employment or other employment under special certificate provisions of the fair labor standards act of 1938. (Section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.55)

(a) The designated state unit conducts an annual review and reevaluation of the status of each individual with a disability served under this State Plan:

1. who has achieved an employment outcome in which the individual is compensated in accordance with Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (29 U.S.C. 214(c)); or

2. whose record of services is closed while the individual is in extended employment on the basis that the individual is unable to achieve an employment outcome in an integrated setting or that the individual made an informed choice to remain in extended employment.

(b) The designated state unit carries out the annual review and reevaluation for two years after the individual's record of services is closed (and thereafter if requested by the individual or, if appropriate, the individual's representative) to determine the interests, priorities and needs of the individual with respect to competitive employment or training for competitive employment.

(c) The designated state unit makes maximum efforts, including the identification and provision of vocational rehabilitation services, reasonable accommodations and other necessary support services, to assist the individuals described in paragraph (a) in engaging in competitive employment.

(d) The individual with a disability or, if appropriate, the individual's representative has input into the review and reevaluation and, through signed acknowledgement, attests that the review and reevaluation have been conducted.

5.9 Use of Title I funds for construction of facilities. (Sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.49(a)(1), .61 and .62(b))

If the state elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs, the following requirements are met:

(a) The federal share of the cost of construction for facilities for a fiscal year does not exceed an amount equal to 10 percent of the state's allotment under Section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for that fiscal year.

(b) The provisions of Section 306 of the Rehabilitation Act that were in effect prior to the enactment of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 apply to such construction.

(c) There is compliance with the requirements in 34 CFR 361.62(b) that ensure the use of the construction authority will not reduce the efforts of the designated state agency in providing other vocational rehabilitation services other than the establishment of facilities for community rehabilitation programs.

5.10 Contracts and cooperative agreements. (Section 101(a)(24) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.31 and .32)

(a) Contracts with for-profit organizations.

The designated state agency has the authority to enter into contracts with for-profit organizations for the purpose of providing, as vocational rehabilitation services, on-the-job training and related programs for individuals with disabilities under Part A of Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act, upon the determination by the designated state agency that for-profit organizations are better qualified to provide vocational rehabilitation services than nonprofit agencies and organizations.

(b) Cooperative agreements with private nonprofit organizations.

Attachment 4.8(b)(3) describes the manner in which the designated state agency establishes cooperative agreements with private nonprofit vocational rehabilitation service providers.

Preprint - Section 6: Program Administration

Section 6: Program Administration

6.1 Designated state agency. (Section 625(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(a))

The designated state agency for vocational rehabilitation services identified in paragraph 1.2 of the Title I State Plan is the state agency designated to administer the State Supported Employment Services Program authorized under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act.

6.2 Statewide assessment of supported employment services needs. (Section 625(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(b))

Attachment 4.11(a) describes the results of the comprehensive, statewide needs assessment conducted under Section 101(a)(15)(a)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and subparagraph 4.11(a)(1) of the Title I State Plan with respect to the rehabilitation needs of individuals with most significant disabilities and their need for supported employment services, including needs related to coordination.

6.3 Quality, scope and extent of supported employment services. (Section 625(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(c) and .50(b)(2))

Attachment 6.3 describes the quality, scope and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities who are eligible to receive supported employment services. The description also addresses the timing of the transition to extended services to be provided by relevant state agencies, private nonprofit organizations or other sources following the cessation of supported employment service provided by the designated state agency.

6.4 Goals and plans for distribution of Title VI, Part B, funds. (Section 625(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(d) and .20)

Attachment 4.11(c)(4) identifies the state's goals and plans with respect to the distribution of funds received under Section 622 of the Rehabilitation Act.

6.5 Evidence of collaboration with respect to supported employment services and extended services. (Sections 625(b)(4) and (5) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(e))

Attachment 4.8(b)(4) describes the efforts of the designated state agency to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other state agencies and other appropriate entities to assist in the provision of supported employment services and other public or nonprofit agencies or organizations within the state, employers, natural supports, and other entities with respect to the provision of extended services.

6.6 Minority outreach. (34 CFR 363.11(f))

Attachment 4.11(d) includes a description of the designated state agency's outreach procedures for identifying and serving individuals with the most significant disabilities who are minorities.

6.7 Reports. (Sections 625(b)(8) and 626 of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(h) and .52)

The designated state agency submits reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the commissioner may require and collects the information required by Section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under Part B, of Title VI and individuals receiving supported employment services under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act.

Preprint - Section 7: Financial Administration

7.1 Five percent limitation on administrative costs. (Section 625(b)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.11(g)(8))

The designated state agency expends no more than five percent of the state's allotment under Section 622 of the Rehabilitation Act for administrative costs in carrying out the State Supported Employment Services Program.

7.2 Use of funds in providing services. (Sections 623 and 625(b)(6)(A) and (D) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.6(c)(2)(iv), .11(g)(1) and (4))

(a) Funds made available under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act are used by the designated state agency only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities who are eligible to receive such services.

(b) Funds provided under Title VI, Part B, are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act, in providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment.

(c) Funds provided under Part B of Title VI or Title I of the Rehabilitation Act are not used to provide extended services to individuals who are eligible under Part B of Title VI or Title I of the Rehabilitation Act.

Preprint - Section 8: Provision of Supported Employment Services

8.1 Scope of supported employment services. (Sections 7(36) and 625(b)(6)(F) and (G) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.5(b)(54), 363.11(g)(6) and (7))

(a) Supported employment services are those services as defined in Section 7(36) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.5(b)(54).

(b) To the extent job skills training is provided, the training is provided on-site.

(c) Supported employment services include placement in an integrated setting for the maximum number of hours possible based on the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice of individuals with the most significant disabilities.

8.2 Comprehensive assessments of individuals with significant disabilities. (Sections 7(2)(B) and 625(b)(6)(B); 34 CFR 361.5(b)(6)(ii) and 363.11(g)(2))

The comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under Section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome.

8.3 Individualized plan for employment. (Sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 625(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.46(b) and 363.11(g)(3) and (5))

(a) An individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of Section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.45 and .46 is developed and updated using funds under Title I.

(b) The individualized plan for employment:

1. specifies the supported employment services to be provided;
2. describes the expected extended services needed; and
3. identifies the source of extended services, including natural supports, or, to the extent that it is not possible to identify the source of extended services at the time the individualized plan for employment plan is developed, a statement describing the basis for concluding that there is a reasonable expectation that sources will become available.

(c) Services provided under an individualized plan for employment are coordinated with services provided under other individualized plans established under other federal or state programs.

Attachment 4.2(c) Input of State Rehabilitation Council

Required annually by all agencies except those agencies that are independent consumer-controlled commissions.

Identify the Input provided by the state rehabilitation council, including recommendations from the council's annual report, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction, and other council reports. Be sure to also include:

- the Designated state unit's response to the input and recommendations; and
- explanations for the designated state unit's rejection of any input or recommendation of the council.

SUMMARY OF INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS PROVIDED BY THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL (SRC); RESPONSE OF THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT

The State Rehabilitation Council provides ongoing input and recommendations to VRS. The council's annual reports, meeting minutes, and summary reports of public forums can be found online at:

http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/JobSeekers/People_with_Disabilities/Disability_Councils_Committees/State_Rehabilitation_Council_3.aspx

Following are standing recommendations that the council carried over from previous years:

1. Timely Appointments to the SRC: The council recommends that the VRS director and governor's office seek ways to recruit members from under-represented groups and to ensure timely and efficient appointments.

VRS Response: The director concurs that it is critical that the council be fully staffed. VRS will continue to recruit members from under-represented groups. Efforts have been made to post the notice of openings and recruit potential members early to allow time for the governor's office to make the appointments prior to the legislative session. A letter was sent to the governor's office written by the three DEED disability councils explaining the unique needs of the councils. In early November, the council chair met with the governor's office to discuss and advocate for early appointments.

2. Recommendations for Transition-Aged Youth: For the purposes of these recommendations, transition-aged consumers are those consumers aged 16 to 21 who receive special education services as required by an individual education program and have not graduated from school or received a diploma.

A. Foster transition-age consumer satisfaction: VRS should continue to provide services to transition-age consumers that demonstrate personal concern by VRS staff. VRS should also assist staff in developing an orientation toward transition-age consumers.

B. Communication with transition-age consumers and parents: VRS should foster communication (including enhanced web presence) of transition services so that all transition-age consumers and parents:

1. Know its name
2. Know its purpose
3. Know about and understand all assessments that are conducted
4. Know about career exploration opportunities
5. Know about and understand the Employment Plan
6. Know and understand their rights and the VR appeal process.

C. Communication among parents: VRS should work to ensure that parents have the opportunity to communicate with each other and share ideas and information.

D. Communication and coordination with educators: VRS should foster communication and coordination with educators to ensure:

1. Appropriate VRS involvement in Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
2. Seamless provision of services between VRS and educators
3. Employment Plans are coordinated with IEPs

E. VRS should resolve differences in services between VRS staff in the Twin Cities metropolitan area and VRS staff in Greater Minnesota.

VRS Response: VRS agrees that there should be continued emphasis on improving transition services for students with an IEP or 504 Plan. VRS has entered into a two-year contract with PACER Center to address many of these issues. PACER Center, established in 1977, is staffed primarily by parents of children with disabilities dedicated to educating other parents and improving the lives of children with disabilities throughout Minnesota. PACER offers more than 30 programs for parents, students, professionals and other parent organizations. The contract addresses four key areas:

* Improving outreach, training and individual assistance to Minnesota families of youth with disabilities.

* Improving VRS staff capacity to effectively partner with families whose youth are consumers of VRS services.

* Improving VRS staff understanding of special education law, and increasing VRS staff capacity to advocate for youth who are in special education.

* Improving VRS staff understanding of assistive technology and its impact on transitioning to employment.

3. VRS participation in the Minnesota WorkForce Center (WFC) System: In 1994 established six recommendations related to VRS' participation in the WFC system. The recommendations were formally retired in FY 2009, but the SRC requested that VRS continue to report on the status of the following topics:

A. Training WFC staff in applicable human rights law, including department and VRS policies on inclusiveness and non-discrimination, and in the human and customer relationship skills that support successful program use by individuals with disabilities;

B. Allocating VRS funds for the WFC system, so that a verifiable cost basis substantiates the appropriateness of direct and indirect costs assessed to VRS for the operation of WFCs;

C. Ensuring program and physical accessibility at all WorkForce Centers;

D. Measuring WFC system activities other than VRS for the quality of their performance and outcomes relating to individuals with disabilities.

VRS updates: The Governor's Workforce Development Council, the council primarily concerned with WorkForce Center activities, met with the State Rehabilitation Council on March 27, 2013 to provide an update on two recommendations they are currently implementing:

* Make the State of Minnesota a model employer of people with disabilities: A business plan for internships and paid work experiences is being developed, and training curriculum is being implemented for state hiring managers on the benefits and opportunities associated with hiring people with disabilities.

* Ensure that Minnesota's WorkForce Centers are accessible and usable: People with disabilities will be included in the ADA/accessibility re-certifications for a given WorkForce Center. The recertification is done every three years. Methods to provide customer feedback are being reviewed to ensure customers can provide feedback, and any concerns are addressed promptly.

The VRS director discussed cost allocation extensively in 2010 and 2011. The council did not request an update for the current fiscal year.

Public Forums

The State Rehabilitation Council convened four public forums. The forums provide an opportunity to gather grassroots commentary and input regarding Minnesota's Vocational Rehabilitation program, and they encourage participation in public conversation about matters of interest and importance in the arena of disability employment.

Center Based Employment: The Continuum of Employment Supports for People with Disabilities

The SRC and VRS convened a daylong public forum on the nationwide system that provides long-term employment supports for people with significant disabilities. The system has evolved and continues to adapt to changes in public policy, shifts in social priorities, and on-going debates over center-based and community employment. The fundamental question providing impetus for the discussion was "To what extent should center-based employment continue, if at all?" As Congress debates reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act and changes to the Rehabilitation Act it is important to bring the national discussion to the local level so that people have an opportunity to influence policy.

Legislative Outcomes and Transportation

A public forum that was to have focused on state legislative outcomes and their impact on employment and independent living for people with disabilities took an unexpected turn during public testimony. A compelling theme of the public's testimony was the great need for accessible public transportation, particularly in rural areas. The councils heard about nonexistent coordination between transportation companies, few transit options and the impossibility of traveling across county lines. An outcome of the day was a letter signed and endorsed by the three councils and sent to the Minnesota Department of Transportation. The letter outlined how the lack of accessible public transportation for a person with a disability can have a profound negative impact on community involvement, employment and economic well-being.

Disability Disclosure

The decision about whether and when to disclose a disability is a dilemma that many people with disabilities must confront when seeking employment. Forum participants reviewed the Americans with Disabilities Act and other state and federal regulations. They described resources for people who grapple with the difficult personal challenges surrounding the disclosure dilemma. Panels consisting of employers, employees, job developers and individuals with disabilities shared their experiences and personal stories. The forum participants suggested that disability disclosure can help in receiving accommodations and in gaining protection from on-the-job harassment or discrimination. Disclosure can give a more accurate picture of the true number of people with disabilities in the workplace. But they also noted that not everyone should disclose disability. For some, no accommodation is necessary and in many cases there are concerns about workplace discrimination. There are often reservations of violation of confidentiality and fears that disclosure could lead to a loss in work hours, loss of wages or demotion. The forum was co-sponsored by the State Rehabilitation Council-General; Vocational Rehabilitation Services; State Rehabilitation Council-Blind; and the Statewide Independent Living Council.

White Earth Nation

Members of the State Rehabilitation Council traveled to the White Earth Nation Indian reservation in northwestern Minnesota for the fall public forum. The forum was hosted by Gloria LaFriniere, a member of the State Rehabilitation Council-General and the director of the White

Earth Nation Vocational Rehabilitation program. She presented an overview of White Earth tribal history and culture, and also offered information about the White Earth VR program. Of particular interest was a presentation by Oscar Opegard, a VR counselor, on traditional healing techniques and how they are employed successfully in counseling tribal members with disabilities.

The forum occurred at the Shooting Star Conference Center in Mahnomen, which is by far the largest employer on the reservation, and active and collaborative partner with the White Earth Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Melinda Iverson, human resources director at the casino, described the evolution of that partnership and included many examples of the flexible-and somewhat unorthodox-ways that the casino adapts its employment policies for VR clients. The forum concluded with a discussion about unmet needs in northwestern Minnesota and the collaborative relationships between the state VR program, Centers for Independent Living, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services and the White Earth Nation program.

This screen was last updated on Jun 18 2013 12:34PM by John Fisher

Attachment 4.7(b)(3) Request for Waiver of Statewideness

Identify the types of services to be provided by the program for which the waiver of statewideness is requested.

The waiver request should also include:

- a written assurance from the local public agency that it will make available to the designated state unit the non-federal share of funds;
- a written assurance that designated state unit approval will be obtained for each proposed service before it is put into effect;
- a written assurance that all state plan requirements will apply to all services approved under the waiver.

This agency **has** requested a waiver of statewideness.

VRS requests continuation of the waiver with respect to delivery of vocational rehabilitation services in Minnesota Independent School District No. 2170, which includes the cities of Staples and Motley in north central Minnesota.

VRS serves students with disabilities in all public school districts and most private schools through Minnesota WorkForce Centers and satellite offices. Uniform statewide provision of services is required by the Rehabilitation Act, except when waived.

Independent School District 2170 and VRS use a service model, pursuant to waiver, under which a full-time counselor provides services exclusively to the district's eligible students. The school district employs the counselor, sharing costs with VRS. Hiring authority and case supervision is a responsibility of the VRS area manager. The contract under which this collaboration is carried out is negotiated and administered by the local rehabilitation area manager to meet specific local needs. This written contract provides that all non-federal funds allocated by the agreement are made available to VRS, that all services provided under the agreement are subject to VRS approval, and that all state plan requirements apply to all services approved under the contract.

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Attachment 4.8(b)(1) Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Investment System

Describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce investment system with respect to

- Federal, state, and local agencies and programs;
- if applicable, Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture; and
- if applicable, state use contracting programs.

COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Following is a discussion of Vocational Rehabilitation Services' collaborative arrangements with federal, state and local agencies and with private entities that are not formal components of the statewide workforce investment system.

Olmstead Subcabinet: The Department of Employment and Economic Development is active on the Lt. Governor's subcabinet to implement the Olmstead court decision. The subcabinet "embraces the Olmstead decision as a key component of achieving a better Minnesota for all Minnesotans, and strives to ensure Minnesotans with disabilities will have the opportunity, both now and in the future, to live close to their families and friends, to live more independently, to engage in productive employment and to participate in community life" (2013 vision statement). The State Rehabilitation Council, State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind, Minnesota State Council on Disability and the State Independent Living Council plans to conduct joint public forums to identify opportunities to enhance the current service delivery system.

Minnesota Legislative Autism Taskforce: Representatives from Minnesota's Departments of Education, Human Services, Health, and Employment and Economic Development meet monthly to discuss the needs of citizens with autism. VRS is active on this taskforce, and on a sub-committee that wrote Minnesota's Autism State Plan. The rehabilitation specialist for autism is also active on the Department of Human Services' Advisory Council on residential services for people with autism.

Collaboration Grants to Provide Independent Living Services: VRS utilizes SSA program income to provide grants to the Centers for Independent Living to fund co-located staff that provide IL services as part of the Employment Plan. In FY 2012, 1,349 consumers received coordinated VR and IL services. The rehabilitation rate for this group was 62.6 percent, as compared to 56.7 percent for the program as a whole.

Minnesota Employment Center for Individuals Who Are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing: Provides VRS funded short-term services and state-funded long-term support services for individuals who are deaf and hard-of-hearing.

VECTOR Youth Project for Deaf/Deaf Blind: \$1.9m in school district funding supplemented with \$350,000 in VRS managed state funding support enhanced transition services for youth who are deaf or deaf blind in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Enhanced services include work readiness classes, college preparation classes, driver's education, community based work experiences, and paid internships in competitive employment. For students who transition to college, high school instructors work with the college for the first semester to make sure all needed accommodations are in place and the person is making adequate progress. Ninety percent of VECTOR students are either working or enrolled in college at time of high school graduation.

Cooperative Agreements with the White Earth Nation - Tribal VR program and the Red Lake Nation - Tribal VR program: VRS and State Services for the Blind provide information, technical assistance, training opportunities, and support to the tribal VR programs. A formal process is in place for referral and transfer of cases in accordance with best practices ensuring choice. Although not a part of the written agreement, the Social Security Administration's Area Work Incentive Coordinator has also played a crucial role in providing technical assistance on benefits planning.

Interagency Cooperative Agreement between DEED and DHS-Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Services Division: A new agreement is being discussed to continue the coordination of training and common advocacy to improve employment outcomes for customers who are deaf and hard-of-hearing.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services: Memorandum of Understanding to enhance work opportunities for veterans with disabilities by sharing information, coordinating activities and offering complementary services.

U.S. Department of Agriculture: Memorandum of Understanding establishing formal working relationships between the USDA's AgrAbility Project and Vocational Rehabilitation Services field offices under which consumers may access programs funded by USDA Rural Development in support of their employment plans. The Minnesota USDA Rural Development Office also uses technical economic information and forecasting provided by DEED to develop and market its services.

VRS Community Outreach Team: The CRP Advisory Committee identified the need for a more focused effort on communication, marketing and branding. As a result of this discussion, a Community Outreach Team consisting of communication and marketing staff from VRS and CRPs was established in 2012. Initial efforts have been focused on documenting and communicating the value and return on investment of vocational rehabilitation programs for individuals and communities.

Work Incentives Connection (Minnesota's Work Incentives and Planning Assistance program): An agreement to provide benefit analysis counseling and related services for consumers on a fee

for service basis with the goal of increasing the employment of persons who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). The agreement also provides funding for staff training on work incentives. Additional funding is provided by Goodwill Industries to sustain the program while WIPA federal funding is suspended.

Ticket to Work Employment Networks: VRS, State Services for the Blind and SSA co-host quarterly meetings of the Employment Networks to provide staff training, updates on Ticket to Work procedural changes, and to promote Partnership Plus job retention services after VRS/SSB case closure.

Professional vocational rehabilitation counseling organizations: Active participation relating to ongoing professional development for staff and to counselor recruitment takes place through well-established working relationships with and memberships on the boards of the Minnesota Rehabilitation Association, including the Minnesota Rehabilitation Counseling Association chapter.

Performance-based funding for placement services provided by community rehabilitation programs and limited- use vendors: Placement providers receive milestone and outcome payments for facilitating successful outcomes for VR customers. The first milestone is payable when the Placement Plan is developed, the second milestone is paid at time of successful placement, and a final outcome payment is paid when the person has been successfully employed for 90 days.

State Use Program: Since the mid-1990s, Minnesota state agencies have been legislatively encouraged to purchase goods and services from small businesses operated by individuals with disabilities. In 2007, the Legislature enacted a set-aside program, providing that 19 percent of the total value of all state janitorial contracts be awarded to community rehabilitation organizations approved by VRS as service providers under the VRS Extended Employment Program. During the 2010 legislative session, the set-aside program was expanded to include document imaging, document shredding, mailing, collating, and sorting services. Further, the amount of each contract awarded under this section may exceed the estimated fair market price for the same goods and services by up to 6 percent.

This screen was last updated on Jun 25 2013 10:30AM by John Fisher

Attachment 4.8(b)(2) Coordination with Education Officials

- Describe the designated state unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services, including provisions for the development and approval of an individualized plan for employment before each student determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services leaves the school setting or, if the designated state unit is operating on an order of selection, before each eligible student able to be served under the order leaves the school setting.
- Provide information on the formal interagency agreement with the state educational agency with respect to
 - consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services;
 - transition planning by personnel of the designated state agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and completion of their individualized education programs;
 - roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;
 - procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), State Services for the Blind (SSB), and the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) have entered into an agreement to achieve better coordination between schools and VR services and creating a bridge from the school to VRS or SSB prior to school exit. It also aims to:

- Provide guidance to students with disabilities transitioning from school to employment.
- Offer consultation and technical assistance to educators in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to VR services.
- Define roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, and determine state lead agencies and qualified staff responsible for transition services.
- Design methods of identification and outreach to students with disabilities who are in need of transition services.
- Guide the development of policies and procedures that help students with disabilities make the transition from school to employment.
- Promote flexible, coordinated, and collaborative planning and service delivery among MDE, VRS, and

SSB for eligible youth transitioning from school to employment.

The agreement clarifies how Minnesota VR programs will assist education agencies to plan the transition of students with disabilities from secondary school to the receipt of VR services.

Agreed-upon practices for statewide transition planning include:

- Allocate staff time for ongoing consultation with MDE's Special Education Office to continuously improve transition policies and services.
- Allocate staff time for service on state-level coordination bodies.
- Allocate staff time for participation in the community transition interagency committees (CTICs) that facilitate improved local transition practices.
- MDE's Special Education Office, SSB, and VRS will share data that improves transition services planning and the evaluation of transition services.

The agreement delineates critical practices that VR programs and the MDE Special Education Office will implement to facilitate a smooth transition for individuals with disabilities as they complete their individual education programs (IEPs). Agreed-upon practices to facilitate a student's smooth transition include:

- MDE's Special Education Office will encourage local school districts to implement pre-adolescent career exploration and vocational skill development.
- MDE's Special Education Office will encourage school districts to provide complete and timely referral information to VRS/SSB two years prior to graduation to promote a timely, efficient engagement with VR services.
- VRS/SSB will use information provided by the school district to determine if a student is eligible for VR services.

The agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities of education and VR. Schools provide free and appropriate public education, as defined by the IEP, for students in the special education program. Schools must access available third-party dollar resources to help meet these responsibilities. VRS and SSB provide services that help prepare an individual to implement post-secondary VR services. In this agreement, VRS/SSB commits to assigning VR counselors to work with students referred from each secondary education program in Minnesota. The agreement identifies joint outreach activities such as:

- Identification of prospective VRS/SSB participants, including students who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out and students with disabilities on Section 504 plans.
- Coordination and collaboration of IEP/IIIP/IPE meeting with VRS, SSB, and schools, when the IEP/IIIP team has begun to identify transition of other post-secondary employment services (IIIP - individual interagency intervention plan).

- Development of an outreach tool for students with disabilities, school personnel, and other community agencies. Materials may include a description of the purpose of the VR program, referral process, eligibility requirements, priority for services, application procedures, and scope of services that may be working with partners at the local WorkForce Centers who work with youth with disabilities to solicit appropriate referrals.
- MDE will encourage school districts to identify students who are prospective VR participants and make them and their families aware of VR services during IEP/IIP meetings: prospective VRS customers no later than two years before leaving secondary school, prospective SSB customers upon identification of visual impairment.
- MDE will encourage school districts to coordinate IEP/IIP meeting with VRS and SSB staff. These meetings with prospective VR applicants will occur when the IEP/IIP team has begun to identify transition or other post-secondary employment services.
- MDE will provide a 504 contact for school districts to identify and refer students with 504 plans to VRS and SSB for services.

Coordinated Services for Youth in Special Education

Minnesota law mandates a coordinated system of services for youth, birth to 21, who are involved in special education. The Minnesota System for Interagency Collaboration (MnSIC) was formed to develop and implement this system. VRS is represented on MnSIC and VRS staff participate on subcommittees that develop service strategies for students and recommendations for governance and coordination of state and local collaborative efforts.

Community Transition Interagency Committee (CTIC)

Approximately 70 local CTICs promote statewide interagency coordination to remove system barriers and expand community services. CTICs include parents, students, advocacy groups, local businesses, county government, post-secondary education, vocational education, community education, corrections, SSA health care, and other local service providers. VRS staff serve on all CTICs, thereby helping to improve and expand vocational services that result in employment outcomes.

Rehabilitation Counselors Assigned to High Schools

VR counselors are assigned to all public, and most private, high schools in every Minnesota school district. They are active participants on transition planning teams so that each VR eligible student with a disability can access VR services and establish a written VR plan before leaving school. Outreach efforts include working with school nurses, guidance counselors, case managers, principals, social workers, 504 personnel, community agencies and work experience coordinators to identify students with disabilities who are not in special education programs. About 11 percent of students referred to VRS are not enrolled in special education programs. A referral of all potentially eligible students prior to the student's final year of school is sought so that an employment plan can be completed before the student leaves school.

This screen was last updated on Jun 18 2013 12:40PM by John Fisher

Attachment 4.8(b)(3) Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations

Describe the manner in which the designated state agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit vocational rehabilitation service providers.

COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE NON-PROFIT VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICE PROVIDERS

VRS purchases services such as vocational evaluation, work adjustment training, skill training, internships, job development and job placement, on-the-job training, and time-limited job coaching. Services must be consistent with an employment plan developed between counselor and customer, based on the consumer's informed choices and offered in integrated settings.

Written Assurances

Providers must provide written assurances about their organizational missions, operations (including audits and lines of authority), staff development and qualifications, services, fees, populations served, standards of professional practice, and adherence to customers' employment plans. They must also provide written assurance regarding vendor compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Minnesota Human Rights Act and other employment law on individual rights, accessibility, occupational health and safety, and data privacy.

Two Categories of Providers

Minnesota distinguishes between two categories of vendor: the limited-use provider and the unlimited use community rehabilitation program (CRP). This arrangement permits wide selection of services and system flexibility and emphasizes the use of providers accredited by the national Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).

Limited Use Providers

Limited-use providers (those without CARF accreditation) introduce competition to the rehabilitation marketplace and provide an entry point for new providers in response to an unmet or emerging service need. They are typically small organizations with small caseloads, limited to a narrow range of specialized services such as intensive job placement or job coaching for individuals with a particular disability. Some are private-for-profit entities. VRS uses the services of 36 limited-use providers. Contracts are limited to \$20,000 annually.

CARF-accredited CRPs

A nonlimited-use CRP must be accredited by CARF for the services they provide. Professional/Technical Contracts, detailing services and specific fee schedules, are negotiated, with the engagement of VRS area managers and counseling staff. VRS management reviews the

agreement for approval or modification. VRS currently has 57 Professional/Technical Contracts with CRPs statewide.

VRS employs a program specialist to help maintain a mutually supportive professional relationship and to negotiate modifications to agreements with CRPs. VRS and CRPs work together to promote mutually held goals, including:

- Develop and maintain choices for consumers.
- Meet workforce needs identified by the state's employers.
- Ensure that services are provided in integrated settings.
- Facilitate state-level planning and coordination of training needs of CRP staff.
- Facilitate communication between VRS and CRP staff at the administrative level.
- Increase CRP awareness of vocational rehabilitation issues at state and national levels.
- Identify and provide training for CRP and VRS staff.

VRS has an active CRP Advisory Committee to assist in achievement of these common goals. The committee met seven times in FY 2012. Priority topics discussed included "telling our story" (development of a strategic marketing and communications plan), enhanced placement services through collaboration, completion of a community survey to develop strategic priorities, preliminary work on a return on investment study, CRP input into the VRS administrative structure, collaborating with CRPs to provide paid internships for consumers, enhancements to supported employment services, shared coordination and delivery of staff training, and planning for sequestration.

The Advisory Committee is also engaged in defining CRP quality measures and defining opportunities for joint training of VRS and CRP staff. The committee is currently actively involved in developing training for VRS and CRP job developers.

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Attachment 4.8(b)(4) Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services

Describe the efforts of the designated state agency to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other state agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide the following services to individuals with the most significant disabilities:

- supported employment services; and
- extended services.

EVIDENCE OF COLLABORATION REGARDING SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND EXTENDED SERVICES

Statewide Collaboration

VRS collaborates with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), Department of Human Services (DHS), and county and local service providers to offer statewide supported employment services. VRS is a partner in several state-level agreements that provide long-term supports.

During development of an employment plan, VRS counselors and other service team members help consumers to select supported employment services that meet their needs. They identify which services will be provided by VRS, as well as the source of long-term supports in the community.

VRS provides time-limited supports for up to 18 months, but an employment plan may be amended if additional time is needed to achieve job stability. The primary funding resources for long-term supports in the community following VRS case closure are county case managers, the VRS Extended Employment Program, DHS programs such as traumatic brain injury waiver funding, and the Social Security Administration's Impairment-Related Work Expense exclusions and Ticket to Work funding for persons on SSI and/or SSDI.

State-funded VRS Extended Employment Program

Minnesota's Extended Employment Program, administered by VRS, develops performance based contracts with CARF-accredited CRPs. The contracts set expectations for extended support, establish funding levels and specify how many employment hours will be funded. These collaborations contribute significantly to the quality, scope, and effectiveness of the state's supported employment efforts. The VRS Extended Employment Program augments Minnesota's supported employment resources, including those for persons who are deaf or hard-of-hearing and for persons with serious mental illness. It provides over \$12 million a year to CRPs to provide ongoing supports. More than 80 percent of these dollars support people working in integrated community settings. VRS coordinates both vocational rehabilitation and extended employment services to maximize the impact of both time-limited and extended services.

Individuals with Serious Mental Illness and Individuals Who Are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing

Extended Employment dedicates \$1.6 million to supports for persons with serious and persistent mental illness. Another dedicated appropriation provides \$300,000 annually to provide ongoing supports for persons who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

In state fiscal year 2012, the VRS Extended Employment program provided ongoing work supports to about 5,100 individuals, most of whom had previously received time-limited VR services. VRS and the DHS Mental Health Division also collaborate on projects that lead to community-based employment for adults with serious and persistent mental illness. Services include functional assessment, individualized career planning, job skill acquisition, job placement, job development, and non-time-limited supports to maintain and advance in employment. All recipients of these grants must demonstrate collaboration with counties, local community support programs, VRS, and providers of employability services such as community rehabilitation programs, regional treatment centers, and community mental health centers.

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Attachment 4.10 Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

1. Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs with respect to:

- the number of personnel who are employed by the state agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;
- the number of personnel currently needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services, broken down by personnel category; and
- projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services in the state in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

The Comprehensive System of Personnel Development is the planning framework for recruiting, developing and retaining qualified staff to carry out the state's vocational rehabilitation mission. Pursuant to Section 101 of the Rehabilitation Act, the plan addresses the following topics:

- * The Need for Qualified Personnel
- * Regional Higher Education for the Preparation of Vocational Rehabilitation Professionals
- * Recruitment and Retention of Qualified Personnel
- * Staff Training and Development
- * Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs
- * Coordination with Personnel Development of the State's Secondary Education System under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The Need for Qualified Personnel

In FFY 2012, VRS served 19,314 consumers and ended the year with an active caseload of 13,193 individuals, including 522 in applicant status. In FFY 2013, we anticipate serving approximately 19,600 consumers, and ending the year with an active caseload of 13,500, including 560 in applicant status. In FFY 2014, counselors will have an average caseload of about 84. Statewide allocation of staff is based on population data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

The geographic allocation of staff is consistent with the distribution of Minnesota’s population of Minnesotans with disabilities. Seventeen VRS field service teams cover the state, ranging from 14 to 24 positions.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services management consists of a director, eight managers, and three supervisors in the administrative office, 17 rehabilitation area managers, and five rehabilitation supervisors serving 17 field offices. Twenty rehabilitation specialists and three other administrative specialists provide technical assistance and consultation to management and field staff. Direct case service by 156 rehabilitation counselors is augmented by six rehabilitation representatives, two community liaison representatives, 20 placement coordinators, five placement specialists, and a business services specialist. Seventy-two vocational rehabilitation technicians and 16 clerical staff provide support to both field and administrative offices. VRS employs two full-time sign language interpreters, supplemented by purchased interpreter services and the sign language skills of counselors who serve deaf and hard-of-hearing consumers.

VRS had five retirements in calendar year 2012. There were seven voluntary resignations. The number of voluntary resignations has remained constant (around 2 percent) over the past five years. Between 2013 and 2018, 28 percent of VRS staff, including 20 percent of counselors and 54 percent of managers and supervisors will be eligible to retire.

Row	Job Title	Total positions	Current vacancies	Projected vacancies over the next 5 years
1	VRS program director/managers/supervisors (Admin)	11	1	7
2	Rehabilitation Area Managers/supervisors (field)	22	3	11
3	Rehabilitation Specialists	20	0	7
4	Rehabilitation Counselors	156	6	31
5	Rehabilitation Representatives	6	0	1
6	Job Placement/Business Services	26	5	8
7	Vocational Rehabilitation Technicians	72	7	21
8	Clerical Support	17	4	6
9	Other Admin/Field	7	0	2

10	TOTAL	336	26	94
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2. Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on personnel development with respect to:

- a list of the institutions of higher education in the state that are preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals, by type of program;
- the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and
- the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

Three area graduate programs award master’s degrees that prepare individuals to work as vocational rehabilitation counselors: Minnesota State University at Mankato; St. Cloud State University; and University of Wisconsin - Stout. VRS maintains a collegial relationship with these programs, recruiting for paid internships and filling counselor positions from among graduates. The table below displays current enrollment and the number of rehabilitation counseling graduates available through these programs.

Row	Institutions	Students enrolled	Employees sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates from the previous year
1	Minnesota State University - Mankato	24	2	0	4
2	St. Cloud State University	24	0	0	9
3	University of Wisconsin - Stout	70	2	24	27
4		0	0	0	0
5		0	0	0	0

Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel

Describe the development (updated on an annual basis) and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the Coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated state unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

Recruitment and Retention of Qualified Personnel

Internships commonly lead to permanent counseling positions. Eight students completed internships in 2012. Four completed internships thus far in 2013, and three are currently in progress. We anticipate hosting additional interns beginning with the fall 2013 semester. A staff development specialist works closely with managers, professors, interns, supervising counselors, and Human Resources to coordinate intern placement and supervision. This position devotes approximately 10 percent time as the VRS point of contact for inquiries about vacancies and internships. Other activities include presentations to students, coordinating VRS participation in career fairs, and informing university personnel of counselor vacancies.

The VRS staff development manager is an active member of graduate counseling advisory committees at the University of Wisconsin - Stout and Minnesota State University, and communicates regularly with counseling program directors.

VRS provides tuition support for staff pursuing graduate degrees in rehabilitation counseling. Employees in the UW - Stout online program have also had access to RSA stipends to assist with some tuition costs. Four VRS employees graduated with Rehabilitation Counseling graduate degrees in 2012-2013 and were promoted to counselor positions; three employees are in the process of completing degrees.

Media advertisement: VRS posts its vacancies at the State of Minnesota personnel openings website and the MinnesotaWorks job bank, as well as in newspapers.

Minnesota post retirement option: The post retirement option, which permits a state retiree to work up to half time without losing insurance or retirement benefits, is a component of VRS retention and succession planning strategies.

As a key strategy for staff retention, VRS pays close attention to organizational vitality and staff morale. Through statewide staff communication about the vision, mission, values, strategic goals and agency achievements, and a robust training and development program, VRS works to maintain a high level of employee engagement. VRS completed an Organizational Vitality survey in April 2013. With an 85 percent response rate, findings indicated strong engagement on the key indicators measured. For example, 92 percent agreed that the VRS mission makes them feel their job is important, 90 percent agreed that they have the necessary training to do their job well, and 90 percent agreed that they had had a performance discussion with their supervisor in the previous six months. Staff also provided suggestions for specific changes that would increase job satisfaction; response themes included continuing the commitment to training, increasing recognition and feedback, enhancing organization communications, reviewing system

or policy issues, and addressing work environment issues. VRS plans to use the survey results as baseline data for continuous improvement and to repeat the survey annually.

Counselors and other staff are recruited and hired under Minnesota's competitive civil service system, including affirmative action to recruit and hire individuals with disabilities and members of the state's diverse cultural and ethnic populations. Voluntary disclosure of ethnic and cultural status provides the following FFY 2013 data: 7 percent of VRS employees identify themselves as American Indian, Asian, Black or Hispanic/Latino, 91 percent identify themselves as White, and 2 percent are non-specified or undisclosed. At present, 10 percent of VRS employees voluntarily disclose a disability.

The New Americans team, based in the Twin Cities, offer vocational rehabilitation services to refugees who recently immigrated to Minnesota from countries such as Somalia, Ethiopia, Jamaica, Turkey, Congo, Guyana, Iraq, Nigeria, Egypt, Pakistan, Sudan and Eritrea. The New Americans team consists of a lead rehabilitation counselor and two community liaison representatives. They are themselves refugees from East African countries. Each member of the New Americans team is multi-lingual and provide intensive supports from application through employment closure to the VRS consumers they serve.

Coordination with professional associations: VRS staff serve on the board of the Minnesota Rehabilitation Association (MRA) and serve on MRA conference planning committees. A significant number of staff attend MRA conferences each year. VRS encourages staff membership in professional associations, and many serve as officers and work on association committees. The staff development manager is also a member of the National Council on Rehabilitation Education.

Personnel Standards

Describe the state agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards to ensure that designated state unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:

1. standards that are consistent with any national or state-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or, in the absence of these requirements, other comparable requirements (including state personnel requirements) that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing vocational rehabilitation services; and
2. to the extent that existing standards are not based on the highest requirements in the state applicable to a particular profession or discipline, the steps the state is currently taking and the steps the State Plans to take in accordance with the written plan to retrain or hire personnel within the designated state unit to meet standards that are based on the highest requirements in the state, including measures to notify designated state unit personnel, institutions of higher education, and other public agencies of these steps and the timelines for taking each step.

Be sure to include the following:

- specific strategies for retraining, recruiting, and hiring personnel;
- the specific time period by which all state unit personnel will meet the standards;
- procedures for evaluating the designated state unit's progress in hiring or retraining personnel to meet applicable personnel standards within the established time period;
- the identification of initial minimum qualifications that the designated state unit will require of newly hired personnel when the state unit is unable to hire new personnel who meet the established personnel standards;
- the identification of a plan for training newly hired personnel who do not meet the established standards to meet the applicable standards within the time period established for all state unit personnel to meet the established personnel standards.

Personnel Standards

Vocational rehabilitation counselors and other professional staff are hired through competitive examination under the Minnesota civil service system. The current rehabilitation counselor candidate examination was developed by a workgroup that comprises staff from VRS, State Services for the Blind, and the department's Office of Human Resources.

Qualifications for counselors are based on both educational preparation and professional work experience. The academic degree standard for Rehabilitation Counselors is the Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or a Master's Degree in a closely related field and evidence of completion of a graduate level course in counseling theories/techniques.

Qualifications

Rehabilitation Counselors

- * Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling; or
- * A degree in a closely related field with evidence of completion of graduate level coursework in counseling theory/techniques. All of the agency's vocational rehabilitation counselors meet the state's standard.

Rehabilitation Representative

- * Bachelor's degree in rehabilitation counseling or in a related social services field; or
- * Bachelor's degree in any field, plus two years of experience providing employment related services for persons with disabilities.

Placement Coordinator

- * One year professional experience in which the primary focus was the provision of vocational services to persons with disabilities; or

* Master's degree in behavioral science, counseling, vocational evaluation, job placement, vocational rehabilitation, or a closely related degree; or

* Three years of paraprofessional experience in which the primary focus was the provision of vocational services to persons with disabilities.

Vocational Rehabilitation Technician

* A minimum of one year of experience in an organization whose mission includes the provision of services to persons who are injured or disabled so that an understanding and sensitivity toward people with disabilities has been obtained

* Customer service skills sufficient to perform intake, assist with forms, and to develop positive relationships with the consumers

* Keyboarding skills sufficient to create documents and complete data entry, and

* English sufficient to interview consumers and employers, present job-seeking skills training, and to draft correspondence or complete forms.

Staff Development

Describe the state agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that all personnel employed by the designated state unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:

1. a system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated state unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology; and
2. procedures for the acquisition and dissemination to designated state unit professionals and paraprofessionals significant knowledge from research and other sources.

Staff Training and Development

The staff development director is a member of the VRS management team and is responsible for the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development. A staff development specialist coordinates training, develops training programs to meet identified needs, performs case review, and coordinates internships and other recruitment activities.

Staff development and training needs are assessed through interviews with field staff, reports from area managers and recommendations from staff groups and committees. Case review yields training needs information. A Staff Development Committee meets regularly to develop and guide staff development activity.

The comprehensive staff training and development plan describes core training curriculum for staff, identifies competencies required of each VRS position along with training strategies and resource information for each competency, and identifies specialized competencies for serving transition age youth and deaf/hard-of-hearing consumers. Annual performance reviews between supervisor and employee include the development of an Individual Development Plan which identifies specific competencies and/or training needed by the employee.

Required training for new employees includes: New Employee Orientation, New Counselor Training, Data Practices, Ethics, Information Management, Purchasing Procedures, Work Incentives, Transition 101, Labor Market Resources and Updates, Vocational Assessment Interpretation, ADA, Introduction to Supported Employment and Motivational Interviewing. Online learning options available through the TACE and other entities are also available for new employees. A field trainer manual is available for use in on-the-job training of counselors.

Guidelines for funding continuing education contribute to agency succession planning, professional expertise and leadership capacity. Completion of an ethics course once every five years is a minimum expectation for all staff. Besides agency-required training, staff must complete at least one self-initiated "elective" training activity annually. The agency makes a concerted effort to publicize conferences and external training opportunities available to staff; these are a vital component of the overall staff development strategy as they enable counselors to obtain advanced training to meet individual learning and development goals for serving VR consumers.

The agency continues to focus and invest in training on motivational interviewing. Continuing learning opportunities are available for staff to build and expand upon their counseling skills using MI strategies; in addition we are building the capacity of internal staff to train, coach and mentor others on MI. VRS expects that continued skill development in these core counseling skills will lead to more positive consumer engagement, fewer individuals dropping out of the VR process, and ultimately improved employment outcomes. The University of Wisconsin - Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute and the University of Wisconsin - Madison have obtained Institution Review Board approval to begin a research project with VRS to examine the "effect of MI training for VR counselors on improving the working alliance, treatment adherence, consumer satisfaction, and employment outcomes". We expect the initial phase of the research, a counselor survey, will be completed by the end of FFY 2013.

All field staff received training on supported employment this fiscal year. We also contracted for training on the Discovery model. Discovery provides an alternative process for individuals for whom typical assessment processes are ineffective. We are particularly interested in assessing how Discovery can assist with employment planning with individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Training has also been provided on the American with Disabilities Act, Working with Consumers on Small Business Plans, Working Effectively with Ex-Offenders, Work Incentives, and Career Planning with Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders. VRS supported staff serving Deaf and Hard of Hearing caseloads in attending the national ADARA conference held in Minnesota in May 2013.

An 18-month statewide case review cycle was completed on September 30, 2012 with results compiled in October 2012. Baseline results for the Assessment of VR Needs quality indicators: 66 percent met standard, 26 percent were "working toward" standard, and 8 percent did not meet the standard. For Employment Plan quality indicators: 86 percent met the standard, 8 percent were "working toward" standard, and 6 percent did not meet the standard. Follow up training has been provided to several teams and we continue to work with supervisors on assisting staff with assessment and employment planning. Teams have reported that the re-designed process is much more positive and conducive to learning and process improvement than they have experienced in previous review case review cycles.

VRS and CRPs in Minnesota continue to make a concerted effort to work in partnership to serve VR consumers. "Placement 101", a three-day training program implemented in January 2012 continues to be offered on a bi-monthly basis with an average of 18 newly hired placement professionals participating in each session. VRS and CRP trainers collaborate in delivering this program and the program continues to receive high praise from both participants and their managers. The VRS Staff Development Director, a Placement Specialist and a Community Rehabilitation Program Manager presented a session describing the collaborative development and delivery of this program at the fall 2012 NCRE Conference. Based on the success of this collaborative training project, a new project was initiated to develop a training program for placement professionals focusing on effective strategies for engaging with businesses; implementation is anticipated in early FFY 2014.

From August 2012 through February 2013 ten managers and supervisors participated in Clinical Supervision Training offered by Pennsylvania State University as part of a NIDRR Field Initiated project designed to enhance clinical supervision among state VR supervisors. Supervisors attended a three-day program on Clinical Supervision, along with six months of bi-weekly phone coaching. Both supervisors and counselors completed surveys about supervision effectiveness before, during and upon completion of the training program; results will be aggregated with data from other states participating in the study. Pennsylvania State University will repeat this training program for the remaining VRS managers and supervisors beginning in August 2013. In addition, the VRS Leadership Team has begun work to define leadership competencies for the agency and will be exploring the Insights Transformational Leadership model as a foundation for a leadership development program for current and emerging leaders.

The Department of Employment and Economic Development librarians routinely track and disseminate relevant research and journals. They also provide in-service training to VRS teams on how to use the department's advanced online library search capabilities and on effective use of social media.

In the next year, priorities are to continue skill building in motivational interviewing, to develop the skills of field managers to provide counseling supervision, to design and implement a leadership development program for current and emerging leaders, and to continue to focus on building the skills of placement professionals.

Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs

Describe how the designated state unit has personnel or obtains the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability or in appropriate modes of communication with applicants or eligible individuals.

Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs

VRS ensures that personnel and methods are available so that staff may communicate with consumers in a preferred language or other means of communication. Substantial numbers of VRS consumers use languages other than English, including: Cambodian, Lao, Vietnamese, Somali, Spanish, and American Sign Language. Translation of forms, information brochures and the ready availability of purchased interpreter services or a multilingual staff member ensures effective communication statewide.

Five VRS managers/supervisors, a state coordinator on deafness, nine counselors, two VR technicians and two placement coordinators serving deaf and hard-of-hearing consumers are conversationally competent in American Sign Language. Two certified sign language interpreters are on staff. The addition of a highly qualified state coordinator on deafness has greatly enhanced the agency's capacity to serve deaf and hard-of-hearing consumers. A wireless face-to-face communication technology, UbiDuo, has been deployed in 35 VRS field offices and WorkForce Centers to aid communication with persons who are deaf or hard-of-hearing; another five have been placed in community rehabilitation programs. Deaf and hard-of-hearing specialists in six locations use videophone (Sorenson VP-200 and D-Link) to improve communication and achieve efficiencies of time and travel. Currently, specialists are field testing new Video Remote Interpreting platforms to supplement the use of onsite interpreting services and provide more options for accessibility. Texting and use of video via iPhones are providing even more access to communication for consumers.

Coordination of Personnel Development Under the individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act

Describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated state unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act.

Coordination of Personnel Development

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act

VRS and Minnesota's secondary education system have a collaborative agreement with the Minnesota Department of Education, facilitated by Department of Education representation on the State Rehabilitation Council and augmented by VRS participation on the Minnesota State

Interagency Coordinating Team, with staff support by the VRS program specialist for transition services.

This screen was last updated on Jun 18 2013 12:57PM by John Fisher

Attachment 4.11(a) Statewide Assessment

Provide an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the state, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of:

- individuals with most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;
- individuals with disabilities who are minorities;
- individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program; and
- individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system.

Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state.

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Executive Summary

This needs assessment is a report jointly developed under the direction of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), a division of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, and the Minnesota State Rehabilitation Council. The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), United States Department of Education, regards VRS as the "designated state unit" and Minnesota State Rehabilitation Council as the "council" under the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

A project team consisting of representatives from VRS and the SRC was appointed and completed the needs assessment between September 2012 and February 2013.

Needs framework

The project team identified needs using federal publications, research articles, surveys, focus groups, interviews and program data.

VRS organized the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) into five categories (Transition Services, Employment Preparation, Employer Relationships, Long-Term Supports and Communication) representing areas of need consistently identified in previous needs assessments. In light of resource constraints and the results of CSNAs, it seemed wise to focus the needs assessment on the most pressing unresolved needs. The CSNA identified needs as either "Consistent and Documented" or "Potential and Emerging".

Vocational Rehabilitation Services Needs

Transition Services

Consistent and Documented

Interviews with VRS counselors and evaluation results from career exploration projects for transition-age consumers indicate that transition plans should contain a career development section to improve the likelihood of future employment. The section should contain plans for work experiences or internships under which consumers would explore potential careers and add work experience to their life history. There is a need for American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters for career development classes and work experiences and internships for deaf and hard of hearing transition consumers. Since many youth begin seriously thinking about careers when they are 14 or 15 years old, many practitioners see a need to begin career development discussions as early as the 9th grade rather than waiting until the later years of high school.

Active parent participation in the development and follow-through of a transition plan is a critical factor in achieving successful outcomes for transition consumers. Parents identified two needs which they believe could improve parent participation in their children's transition planning:

- 1) alternative meeting locations for meetings between VRS counselor, consumers and parents
- 2) parent forums or support groups for parents of transition-age consumers to air their concerns and issues

A survey of VRS counselors who carry at least one transition case found the following needs:

- 1) 56 percent had seen a large increase over the past two years in the amount of time spent with transition-age consumers with challenging disability-related barriers
- 2) 53 percent were very interested in receiving training in using career development services with transition consumers
- 3) 51 percent were very interested in receiving training in developing and maintaining relationships with transition-age consumers
- 4) 42 percent were very interested in receiving training in developing and maintaining relationships with parents and family of transition-age consumers
- 5) 36 percent were very interested in gaining a better understanding of special education IEPs and assessment reports

VRS counselors ranked their identified needs in order of priority. The top three were:

- 1) legal requirements and interpretations of special education Individual Education Plans and Assessment Reports
- 2) developing and maintaining relationships with parents/family, and
- 3) identifying career development services for transition consumers

Potential and Emerging

VRS and other agencies that serve youth with disabilities have seen an increasing incidence of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). In FFY 2006 VRS served 175 ASD consumers; in FFY 2012 that number had increased to 488. The diagnosis usually occurs while the individual is a child.

Emerging issues and needs in the provision of services to persons with ASD include:

- 1) individuals without cognitive disability may be ineligible for developmental disability services but require long-term supports
- 2) staff and programs may have little experience with ASD clients, and best-practices research is limited
- 3) traditional services are often not suitable for persons with ASD who may require highly individualized services
- 4) there are not good assessment and vocational evaluation tools for persons with ASD
- 5) guidance may be necessary to develop individualized post-secondary education, employment and independent living goals for life after high school
- 6) a work-based learning plan between the student, employer and job specialist that requires discussion about agreed upon work goals and ongoing evaluation, job hunting skills (i.e., resume writing, cover letter writing, interviewing skills) in collaboration with local one-stop career centers
- 7) training opportunities to practice self-advocacy and self-determination skills in work and college settings services that will ensure they meet employment goals, and
- 8) work experience in community-based settings including service learning

The number of parents who wish to stay involved in their child's case after the child reaches age 18 seems to be increasing. In focus groups parents routinely request some form of continued involvement in their child's case after the child reaches age 18. Although options exist to allow continued involvement, parents would like a more "assertive" stance by VRS to encourage parental participation. This is slightly tempered by children who want to assert their independence and do not wish to have their parents involved after the age of 18.

Employment Preparation Needs

Consistent and Documented

Research and comments by VRS counselors indicate that the VR program has a consistent need for a strong measurable counseling relationship to support writing a plan, following the plan and gaining competitive employment. Regular and predictable contact by the VRS counselor during

the time a VRS consumer is attending training, schooling or receiving placement services has been identified as a key factor in consumer success and there is a need to better track and analyze contacts between counselor and consumer.

A variety of work experiences was a regularly mentioned need to help prepare persons with disabilities to gain competitive employment. These experiences could include competitive work experiences, internships, job shadowing, and job tryouts. To meet individual consumer needs at different points in the employment preparation process (acceptance, plan development, plan implementation, job search and long-term supports), the VR program needs more options in both service intensity (very low to very high) and cost (inexpensive to expensive).

The Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) Advisory Committee, which provides advice and feedback to VRS, identified needs which, if addressed, could contribute to an increase in successful employment outcomes. There is some overlap between their observations and the observations of others that reinforces the importance and prevalence of certain needs.

The CRP Advisory Committee identified the following needs:

- 1) ensure that a high quality "Assessment of VR Needs" is conducted by the counselor and accompanies referral for placement
- 2) promote greater use of a team approach in referral decisions - where possible involve counselor, consumer and potential CRP/LUV placement professional to improve employment rate for placement referrals
- 3) after a signed placement plan, reconvene the team (counselor, consumer and placement professional) for a 90-day "check-in" to assess progress of the employment plan. Amend plan (services, outcomes, expectations) if necessary to achieve employment, restructure the PBA (performance based agreement) payment system to better align compensation with when the work occurs. The job search and support phase tend to be the most intensive part of the process
- 4) re-educate placement teams so they understand that the employment plan process is flexible and fluid and should provide a level of support (from low to high) commensurate with the needs of the consumer (e.g., serious mental health needs, interpreters for deaf clients and reasonable accommodations)

In 2011, 44 percent of VRS consumers with a signed placement plan did not find employment prior to having their case closed. This represents a significant need to improve placement outcomes. The CRP Advisory Committee recommended more widely available work exploratory options such as time-limited work experiences, internships, mentorships, and job shadowing.

In terms of working to match consumer job goals with employers employment needs (e.g., matching the demand with the supply), VRS does well. Looking at a point in time, the job goals of consumers looking for competitive employment were generally 10 percent (frequently 5 percent or less) of the statewide openings in a month. This would seem to indicate there are sufficient openings to potentially absorb the job goals of VRS consumers, However, in a couple

of job categories where the percentage of VRS consumers is as high as 25 percent of available statewide job openings, the competition for those position may be more fierce and not as advantageous to VRS consumers. For "Other Office and Administrative Support Workers," VRS consumers who would like a job in the category comprised about 24 percent of the job openings statewide. For "Building Cleaning and Pest Control Workers," VRS consumers who would like a job in that category comprised about 26 percent of the job openings statewide.

National discussions of the employee pool often seem to indicate that most future jobs will require post-secondary education and related work experience, and that they will be mostly full-time jobs. But the data indicate otherwise. The percentage of jobs that must meet those three criteria varies dramatically; there are still many jobs for individuals without post-secondary education or related work experience, and who prefer part-time work. Part of VRS's dilemma with the last point is VRS's desire to place consumers in competitive employment at a wage and hours of work which progressively reduces the client's dependence on public benefits. Part-time work rarely results in a consumer "going off" benefits.

There is generally good alignment between the job goals of VRS consumers and the projected hires by occupation for the period 2010-2020. Three of the occupations which are low job priorities for VRS consumers but projected as high hiring areas are: Health Diagnosing and Treating Practitioners (5th in projected hires, 26th in rank as a VRS job goal), Construction Trade Workers (6th, 30th) and Business Operations Specialists (7th, 27th). Two occupations which are higher job priorities for VRS consumers but lower projected hires are: Secretaries and Administrative Assistants (28th, 12th) and Other Food Preparation and Serving - Related Workers (29th, 10th).

Potential and Emerging Needs

With the planning and implementation of the Health Care Exchanges of the Affordability Care Act, there is a need to understand the how Minnesota's implementation will affect health care and rehabilitation services for VRS consumers and if there will be additional costs or savings for the VRS program.

Employer Relationships Needs

Consistent and Documented Need

Current and potential employers have a need to know the financial and employment implications of hiring persons with disabilities. Surveys and studies indicate that businesses would appreciate knowing the effect on their bottom line - their return on investment - for hiring persons with disabilities. Businesses would like to hear from other businesses about real cases and real costs for making ADA accommodations. Survey results suggest that VRS should be able to explain the "value added" for businesses that hire persons with disabilities. In addition to understanding the financial benefits, businesses also want to be altruistic and community-minded, so VRS needs to explain the altruistic benefits for hiring persons with disabilities.

While some businesses were familiar with VRS and its services, just as many businesses needed more information and clarity about the scope of VRS's services, especially what supports VRS could offer after a person with a disability was hired.

In response to survey questions about the hiring process, businesses identified four specific needs which if addressed could increase their hiring of persons with disabilities:

- 1) access to experts and trusted, credible sources of information/data related to disability employment
- 2) evidence of applicant performance
- 3) coaching and support for supervisors and
- 4) follow-up communication

Businesses would like a local reliable information resource on state and federal disability policies and accommodations. That need is heightened with the proposed federal regulations requiring businesses with federal contracts to work towards a goal of 7 percent of their work force being persons with disabilities.

Discussions with members of the State Rehabilitation Council surfaced three needs for improving employment:

- 1) VRS needs to have methods for "telling" employers that VRS has a large employment-ready work force
- 2) VRS needs to recruit businesses which have hired persons with disabilities and are willing to share their hiring and work experiences with businesses considering hiring persons with disabilities and
- 3) VRS needs to recruit a smaller group of businesses with extensive experience employing persons with disabilities who would be willing to formally mentor a business which wants to hire persons with disabilities but would like a support team of both business and VRS representation.

Long-Term Supports Needs

Consistent and Documented Needs

Previous Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessments have consistently identified a high need for long-term supports. Learning to both identify long-term support needs during the development of the Individual Employment Plan and identify possible long-term support service options for the consumer (including VRS's own Extended Employment/Supported Employment program) has been identified as a needed training competency for VRS counselors.

When considering long-term support service options to meet the need, there are a variety of trends and issues affecting both need and service. While virtually all VRS consumers would benefit from long-term supports, research and community input identified certain populations as noticeable underserved: mental illness, traumatic brain injury, autism spectrum disorders and deaf and hearing impaired. In the case of the deafness and hearing impairments, there is the additional need for better access (increased funding) to sign language interpreters during long-term support services. As an example, the outcome-based funding for VRS's Extended Employment program may or may not cover a community provider's costs to provide sign language interpreter services. The provider has to decide whether to cover the unfunded costs with discretionary funds from their budget.

Consumers and organizations familiar with long-term support needs listed certain needs to consider for the period six months, 12 months, 18 months, and longer after a consumer has started employment. Those needs included:

- 1) personal support for life issues that accompany a job
- 2) how to disclose a disability
- 3) how to quit a job
- 4) how to make oneself visible and promotion-worthy within a company
- 5) negotiating workplace accommodations, and
- 6) understanding the performance appraisal purpose and process

The VRS/Independent Living (IL) collaborative does a very good job preparing consumers, but VRS funding ends when VRS has to close the case; there is a need for identifying ongoing IL funding to support ongoing IL services. County budget reductions coupled with a decline in the number of waiver slots poses significant challenges to providing joint VRS/Department of Human Services/county funding for services for long-term supports.

Areas outside of Minnesota's metropolitan areas have unique long-term support and Extended Employment/Supported Employment needs. Historically, those geographic areas have had limited access to long-term support either through VRS's Supported Employment program or services provided by CRPs. The factors limiting access affect the service needs for long-term support:

- 1) more CRPs willing to provide long -support and Supported Employment services to consumers and
- 2) a richer mix of Supported Employment services from those CRPs currently providing Supported Employment

Resolving long-term supports needs also includes a need for additional data and program evaluation to answer certain questions:

- 1) Are VRS's pay-for-performance rates high enough to draw providers to underserved areas?
- 2) Is the need a capacity issue (need more providers or more slots in existing programs)?
- 3) Is the need a coordination issue (more efficient/effective use of county waiver funds and VRS Supported Employment funds)?
- 4) Does the need involve the capability of potential providers to provide effective long-term support services?
- 5) Does the need involve financial issues (e.g., cash flow from contract payments is insufficient to recoup start-up costs in a reasonable amount of time)?

Potential and Emerging Needs

Similar to the addition of a specialist for ASD, explore the possibility of creating a program specialist position(s) for planning and promoting long-term supports including Supported Employment.

Communication Needs

Consistent and Documented Need

The rehabilitation community has a general consensus of a need to better describe the purpose, availability and extent of rehabilitation services in Minnesota. VRS convened a work group consisting of communication representatives from various CRPs. That group created a descriptive list of the needs for improved communication:

- 1) Helping vocational rehabilitation communities to develop key messages and to speak with one voice
- 2) Addressing branding challenges and opportunities for the VR Community
- 3) Getting better at "Telling Our Story"
- 4) Developing an effective, system-wide media outreach plan
- 5) Helping the general public understand what services are available
- 6) Developing messages that speak to each audience in language they understand
- 7) Working to motivate others into action - shifting mindsets to increase awareness, interest and support for competitive employment for people with disabilities and other barriers

- 8) Gathering and synthesizing relevant inputs on outreach needs, messages and efforts
- 9) Providing support for stronger VR communication strategy and execution
- 10) Working on actual projects that help progress/results toward strategic outreach goals
- 11) Creating more streamlined access to important information and resources such as contacts, expertise, and links for education and training

Return on Investment

Legislators, businesses and the general public need to know whether public expenditures for VRS services are effective and a good investment of public dollars. There are many demands for public funding and it is incumbent on VRS to be able to show, as one of its measures of effectiveness, if the investment of public dollars is a wise and prudent financial decision. VRS examined the Return on Investment for a cohort of clients from 2003. Based on the results of that analysis, there is a need for further parsing the information for that cohort (2003) and a need to analyze another cohort (2007) to see if the trends for the 2003 cohort are similar for a later cohort.

This screen was last updated on Jul 9 2013 4:26PM by John Fisher

Attachment 4.11(b) Annual Estimates

- Identify the number of individuals in the state who are eligible for services.
- Identify the number of eligible individuals who will receive services provided with funds under:
 - Part B of Title I;
 - Part B of Title VI;
 - each priority category, if under an order of selection.
- Identify the cost of services for the number of individuals estimated to be eligible for services. If under an order of selection, identify the cost of services for each priority category.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED AND COST OF SERVICES

Estimate of the Total Number of Persons Who Will Be Served

In FFY 2014, Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) anticipates serving about 19,500 persons under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, all of whom will be individuals with either a significant disability or a most significant disability under Minnesota's administrative rule for vocational rehabilitation. It is estimated that about 13,120 (67 percent) will be persons who have a most significant disability, and about 6,380 (33 percent) will be persons with a significant disability.

Estimate of the Number of Persons Potentially Eligible for Services

Of the approximately 225,000 Minnesotans between the ages of 16 and 64 with two or more long-lasting disabilities, it is estimated that approximately 150,000 are eligible for vocational rehabilitation services.

Estimates within Priority Categories

In FFY 2014, it is estimated that about 13,120 persons with serious limitations in three or more functional areas (priority category one) will be served at an approximate case service cost of \$13 million; about 4,620 persons will be served who have serious limitations in two functional areas (priority category two) at an approximate case service cost of \$4.3 million; and about 1,760 persons will be served who have a serious limitation in one functional area (priority category three) at an approximate case service cost of \$1.7 million.

Estimate of Supported Employment Services

It is estimated that 2,490 individuals will have individualized employment plans with a supported employment goal in FFY 2014 under Title VI Part B, Supported Employment Services Program. The approximate cost of purchased services for these individuals will be \$2,985,000. Under the administrative rule enacted to establish Minnesota's order of selection, all persons receiving supported employment services must be found to have three or more serious functional limitations (priority category one).

Estimate of Outcomes

In FFY 2014, approximately 2,540 individuals will obtain a competitive, supported, or other vocational outcome that is approved by the U.S. Secretary of Education. All of these will be individuals with significant or most significant disabilities.

Category	Title I or Title VI	Estimated Funds	Estimated Number to be Served	Average Cost of Services
Priority Category One	Title I	\$13,000,000	13,120	\$990
Priority Category Two	Title I	\$4,300,000	4620	\$930
Priority Category Three	Title I	\$1,700,000	1760	\$965
Priority Category Four: Closed	Title I	\$0	0	—
				—
				—
				—
				—
				—
				—
Totals		\$19,000,000	19,500	\$974

This screen was last updated on May 30 2013 12:34PM by John Fisher

Attachment 4.11(c)(1) State Goals and Priorities

The goals and priorities are based on the comprehensive statewide assessment, on requirements related to the performance standards and indicators, and on other information about the state agency. (See section 101(a)(15)(C) of the Act.) This attachment should be updated when there are material changes in the information that require the description to be amended.

- Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the state VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has a council.
- Identify if the state VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has such a council, jointly reviewed the goals and priorities and jointly agreed to any revisions.
- Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.
- Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas:
 - the most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates;
 - the performance of the state on standards and indicators; and
 - other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107.

STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

Four revised goals, including strategic priorities for each goal, have been developed based on the comprehensive statewide needs assessment, a review of agency performance for the previous fiscal years, and input from the State Rehabilitation Council and CRP Advisory Committee. The goals were jointly approved by Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the Minnesota State Rehabilitation Council.

Goal 1 is the primary goal. Goals 2 through 4 support the achievement of Goal 1. Progress in achieving the goals is measured by establishing outcome measures for Goal 1 and process measures for the remaining goals.

Goal 1: More jobs, better jobs

The result of this goal is expanded job opportunities and improved employment outcomes for Minnesotans with disabilities.

Goal 1 Strategic priorities and measures:

VRS will:

A. Increase the number of employment outcomes

1. Using the results from FFY 2013 as the baseline, employment outcomes will increase by 25 in each of the next two FFYs (2014 and 2015)

B. Increase the quality of employment outcomes

1. All VRS managers, counselors and VR Technician Seniors will have attended four informational sessions on Social Security work incentives and benefits planning by the end of FFY 2015.
2. During FFY 2014 VRS will collect baseline data on consumer satisfaction with their employment outcomes. The baseline data will be used to establish future targets for customer satisfaction.

C. Expand development of long-term supports

1. Increase annually the number of VRS consumers who are leveraging Extended Employment/Supported Employment funding for on-going supports.

D. Improve consistency of transition services received by students who are in high school

1. Increase work experience opportunities for VRS consumers in school to work transition.

Goal 2: Organizational vitality

The result of this goal is a vibrant organization providing the best possible services to Minnesotans with disabilities.

Goal 2 Strategic priorities for FFY 2014:

VRS will:

- A. Develop a program evaluation framework.
- B. Establish a leadership development program for current and emerging leaders.
- C. Implement the first stage of a University of Wisconsin research study to assess counselor competency in motivational interviewing.

Goal 3. Effective partnerships

The result of this goal is the establishment and strengthening of system-wide collaborative partnerships that fully use resources to serve Minnesotans with disabilities.

Strategic priorities:

- A. In FFY 2014 and 2015 the Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee, State Rehabilitation Council and Statewide Independent Living Council will rate the effectiveness of their partnership with VRS as at least 80 percent effective.

B. In FFY 2014 VRS and the VR community, led by the VRS Community Outreach Team, will prepare and implement a collaborative system-wide marketing and branding outreach plan.

Goal 4. Employer engagement

The result of this goal is that VRS and the VR community will embrace serving businesses and other employers as key customers. This effort will produce long-term, enduring, mutually satisfying relationships and increased employment outcomes for VRS consumers.

Strategic Priorities

A. Throughout FFY 2014 and 2015 VRS and Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) managers will continue to develop local placement partnerships throughout each of Minnesota's three regions and to create a locally consistent framework for service that engages and meets the needs of businesses and employers.

B. By the end of FFY 2014, an active placement partnership will be established for 80 percent of the VR teams. By the end of FFY 2015, an active placement partnership will be established for 95 percent of VR teams.

C. Placement partnership members will share and track job leads within the VR Community on a timely basis and in a coordinated manner in order to a) improve responsiveness to employers, and b) increase employment outcomes for VR consumers.

This screen was last updated on Jun 18 2013 1:00PM by John Fisher

Attachment 4.11(c)(3) Order of Selection

- Identify the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services.
- Identify the justification for the order.
- Identify the service and outcome goals.
- Identify the time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
- Describe how individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities.

Justification for order of selection

ORDER OF SELECTION

Minnesota Vocational Rehabilitation Services implemented an Order of Selection in 1993, setting forth who will be served first when the program cannot serve all eligible individuals. Determination of eligibility and qualification for service is based on the applicable Minnesota administrative rule and the Minnesota Vocational Rehabilitation Policy and Procedure Manual.

Annual State and Federal resources allocated for Minnesota's Vocational Rehabilitation Services program continue to not be sufficient to serve all Minnesotans who are eligible for services. Conclusions regarding capacity of the Minnesota vocational rehabilitation program in any given year are based on:

- 1) an analysis of resources available for annual operation of the vocational rehabilitation program,
- 2) expenditures required to implement employment plans approved prior to commencement of the fiscal year,
- 3) the anticipated costs for determining eligibility and qualification for service of new applicants during the fiscal year,
- 4) the anticipated costs of implementing approved vocational rehabilitation plans for new applicants during the fiscal year, and
- 5) reasonable and necessary costs related to administration of the vocational rehabilitation services program.

Program expenditures are exceeding annual program resources for the current fiscal year, requiring the agency to use carryover funds from the previous year to meet all financial obligations.

The budget forecast for FFY 2014 indicates a continuing trend in deficit spending with less than \$0.5 million of carryover funds available. This fiscal situation has required the agency to

implement several budget reduction measures, including a "soft freeze" in filling staff vacancies and a reduction in leased office space.

Priority Category Four (individuals who have a disability that makes them eligible for service but do not have a serious limitation in a functional area) is currently closed and will remain closed throughout FFY 2014. It is anticipated that Priority Category Three (individuals with a significant disability that results in a serious functional limitation in one functional area) may also need to be closed at some point in FFY 2014. The agency currently has surplus state match dollars that could be used to draw down additional federal dollars if funds become available through the reallocation process.

It will be determined if sufficient resources will be available to develop plans for new applicants who are in Priority Category Three after determining the total budget that will be available for FFY 2014, and factoring in the ongoing obligations for all consumers currently in plan development or receiving services under an existing employment plan. The State Rehabilitation Council receives monthly updates on the budget situation, including the impact of sequestration, and is actively involved in the process to determine if and when to close Priority Category Three. RSA will be consulted and the State Plan amended if it becomes necessary to close another category.

There are currently two individuals on the Priority Category Four waiting list. Individuals on the waiting list are provided information and referral to other programs that may meet the person's needs.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Eligibility for VR Services

A person is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services from the general VR agency when they have a physical or mental impairment that constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment, and they require vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment.

Qualifications for VR Services

A person is qualified for vocational rehabilitation services from the General VR agency when they are eligible and found to have serious functional limitations due to a severe impairment and wish to obtain, retain, or regain employment.

Service Priority

The order of selection establishes service priority based on the number of functional areas in which a person has significant limitations to employment. Persons with limitations in more functional areas are deemed to have more significant disability. It is intended by the order of selection that persons with the most significant disabilities will be served first when all persons who are eligible cannot be served.

Waiting List

When annual program resources are insufficient to serve qualified new applicants and to serve all current customers through the end of the fiscal year, a priority category may be closed. New applicants who qualify in a closed category are then placed on a statewide waiting list for that category. Closing a category slows the rate of increase in the number of persons being served. It conserves resources so that obligations to persons who are already being served may continue to be met.

Functional Areas

Serious limitations in life skills in one or more of the following areas, as defined:

- A. Communication: the ability to effectively give and receive information through words or concepts, such as reading, writing, speaking, listening, sign language, or other adaptive methods
- B. Interpersonal skills: the ability to establish and maintain personal, family, and community relationships as it affects, or is likely to affect, job performance and security.
- C. Mobility: the physical and psychological ability to move about from place to place inside and outside the home, including travel to and from usual destinations in the community for activities of daily living, training, or work.
- D. Self-care: the skills needed to manage self or living environment, such as eating, toileting, grooming, dressing, money management, and management of special health or safety needs, including medication management, as they affect an individual's ability to participate in training or work-related activities.
- E. Self-direction: the ability to independently plan, initiate, organize, or carry out goal-directed activities or solve problems related to working.
- F. Work skills: (1) the ability to do specific tasks required to carry out job functions; and (2) the capacity to benefit from training in how to perform tasks required to carry out job functions.
- G. Work tolerance: the capacity or endurance to effectively and efficiently perform jobs requiring various levels of physical demands, psychological demands, or both.

Serious Limitation

A serious limitation in a functional area means that, due to a severe physical or mental impairment, the individual's functional capacities in the specific area are restricted to the degree that they require services or accommodations not typically made for other individuals in order to prepare for, enter, engage in, or retain employment. Accommodations are defined as special working conditions, job re-engineering, rehabilitation technology, or substantial support and/or supervision.

List of Physical or Mental Disabilities

Physical or mental disabilities resulting from amputation, arthritis, autism, blindness, burn injury, cancer, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, deafness, head injury, heart disease, hemiplegia, hemophilia, respiratory or pulmonary dysfunction, mental retardation, mental illness, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, musculoskeletal disorders, neurological disorders including stroke and epilepsy, paraplegia, quadriplegia, and other spinal cord conditions, sickle cell anemia, specific learning disability, and end-stage renal disease, or another disability or combination of disabilities determined on the basis of an assessment for determining eligibility and priority for services to cause comparable serious functional limitation.

Description of Priority categories

Service Priority Categories

Persons are served according to their priority category. When priority categories must be closed, lower priority categories are closed before higher categories. Persons leave their waiting list according to the priority of their category and their date of application for VR services.

- Priority Category One (first priority for service) includes all individuals with a most significant disability, that is, persons whose condition results in serious limitations in three or more functional areas.
- Priority Category Two (second priority for service) includes all individuals with a significant disability that results in serious functional limitations in two functional areas.
- Priority Category Three (third priority for service) includes all individuals with a significant disability that results in a serious functional limitation in one functional area.
- Priority Category Four (fourth priority for service) includes all other eligible customers. These customers have a disability that makes them eligible for service but they do not have a serious limitation in a functional area. It is anticipated that this category will remain closed in FFY 2013.

Priority of categories to receive VR services under the order

Service Priority: The order of selection establishes service priority based on the number of functional areas in which a person has significant limitations to employment. Persons with limitations in more functional areas are deemed to have more significant disability. It is intended by the order of selection that persons with the most significant disabilities will be served first when all persons who are eligible cannot be served.

Service and outcome goals and the time within which the goals will be achieved

FFY 2014 Service and Outcome Goals and the Time Within Which the Goals will be Achieved for Each Category of the Order:

In FFY 2014, under the order of selection currently in effect, approximately 19,500 individuals will be served. Approximately 2,540 individuals will achieve employment outcomes in FFY 2014.

Priority Category	Number of individuals to be served	Estimated number of individuals who will exit with employment after receiving services	Estimated number of individuals who will exit without employment after receiving services	Time within which goals are to be achieved	Cost of services
1	13,120	1,690	1,183	26.5 months	\$1,300,000
2	4,620	619	433	24.8 months	\$4,300,000
3	1,760	231	161	23 months	\$1,700,000
4	0	0	0		

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Attachment 4.11(c)(4) Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds

Specify the state's goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of funds received under section 622 of the Act for the provision of supported employment services.

Estimate of the Number of Persons to Be Served

During FFY 2014, about 2,490 individuals will be served with Title VI, Part B funds supplemented by Title I funds, at a purchased service cost of about \$2,985,000. Under the administrative rule that sets forth Minnesota's priority-for-service categories, all persons receiving supported employment have three or more serious functional limitations.

The Contribution of State Funding

Title VI B and Title I funds are used to prepare people for supported employment. The VRS Extended Employment Program (VRS-EE) provides ongoing employment supports using state funding of

\$12,075,000 annually that flows to community rehabilitation programs. More than 80 percent of this state funding provides extended services for persons in supported employment. The VRS-EE "basic" program serves all disability groups. An additional state appropriation of \$1,555,000 is dedicated to extended supported employment services for persons with serious mental illness since it has been historically difficult to obtain ongoing support services for this population. The 2013 Minnesota Legislature also made a one-time, one-year appropriation of \$1 million for extended supported services for persons with serious mental illness, effective July 1, 2013, for state fiscal year 2014.

System Complexity and Limited Capacity

Funding for supported employment, within which Title VI Part B funds play a relatively small part, is governed by a myriad of federal and state laws and rules covering many categories of services. For example, a network of private, not-for-profit organizations, licensed by the Department of Human Services Disability Services Division, provides training and habilitation services that may include supported employment. People with mental illness may receive work-related support through the State Comprehensive Mental Health Act. In these instances, each county determines the level of service that will be provided.

Title VI B supported employment funds are distributed on a fee-for-service basis under fee schedules developed with service providers. VRS collaborates with the Departments of Education and Human Services and county and local service providers to facilitate access to other funding and service resources. During development of a vocational rehabilitation employment plan, the vocational rehabilitation participant and the service team design a supported employment framework that best meets the participant's needs. Planning for eventual long-term supports in the community is a crucial part of planning during VRS' time-limited

period of service. Minnesota's limited capacity for extended ongoing supports has been identified as a barrier to the effectiveness of supported employment services provided under time-limited VR services.

Strategic Goal for Effective Partnerships

In FFY 2014, under the designated state unit's strategic goal for effective partnerships, VRS will continue to facilitate a statewide planning collaboration to better understand Minnesota's supported employment needs, current service capacity and gaps, particularly those related to the development needs of community rehabilitation programs, the needs of transition-age youths, and the needs of underserved populations.

This screen was last updated on Jun 25 2013 3:00PM by John Fisher

Attachment 4.11(d) State's Strategies

This attachment should include required strategies and how the agency will use these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome any barriers to accessing the vocational rehabilitation and the supported employment programs. (See sections 101(a)(15)(D) and (18)(B) of the Act and Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)).

Describe the methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities.

Innovation and Expansion activities are developed in response to needs identified in the Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of Need, with a focus on ensuring equal access to services regardless of specific disability, impediment to employment, economic status, public assistance status, race, national origin, gender, sexual orientation or age.

This activity specifically addresses program access, and adherence to the employment non-discrimination principles requirements of Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act. VRS seeks partnerships with other public and private entities to increase access to vocational rehabilitation services and other employment services.

The State Rehabilitation Council plays a crucial role in identifying the needs of citizens with disabilities. The council conducts 10 meetings annually, along with public forums and numerous committee meetings to carry out its consultative and participative roles in the work of Vocational Rehabilitation Services. In 2014 the council will participate in updating the VR state plan and the comprehensive needs assessment, engage in strategic planning, review the policies and practices that guide the delivery of VRS services, and assist in identifying program evaluation needs.

In FFY 2012, VRS utilized \$1,437,000 in funding, or approximately 3.3% of the budget, for innovation and expansion activities. This includes funding for the State Rehabilitation Council, salaries for rehabilitation specialists focused on service innovation and program evaluation, and state funds for the Minnesota Employment Center for Individuals who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing.

Identify how a broad range of assistive technology services and assistive technology devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process; and describe how assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities on a statewide basis.

A rehabilitation technology specialist provides onsite assistive technology assistance to staff and consumers. He also coordinates with the Minnesota Department of Education to promote inclusion of assistive technology in transition plans, and coordinates with the national AgrAbility project to assist agricultural workers with disabilities maintain their employment. The specialist is supported by three regional liaisons and a local liaison on each VR team. Placement coordinators assist employers in using rehabilitation technology to resolve employment barriers. The VRS website has an assistive technology page with links to nationally recognized websites.

Identify what outreach procedures will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities; and what outreach procedures will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program.

VRS continues to expand services to minority populations. The New Americans VRS office in St. Paul employs multi-lingual staff of East African descent to provide outreach and services to recent immigrants, primarily from Somalia, who are not fluent in English. Other VRS offices hire bilingual staff as opportunities arise.

VRS and the Department of Corrections (DOC) utilize the same online interest and aptitude assessment to assist people make a smoother transition from incarceration to VR services. The goal is to assist people develop a vocational goal early, and then enroll in appropriate DOC adult basic education classes or other training programs while incarcerated. As part of the community release plan, the person then transitions to VR if appropriate for continued training and/or job placement assistance.

It is estimated that there are 315,000 Minnesotans of working age living with serious mental illness. VRS collaborates with the Department of Human Services (DHS) Adult Mental Health Division and with community partners to build supports and services for persons with serious mental illness (SMI), who now comprise 33 percent of the VR caseload and 31 percent of employment outcomes. Two models are currently in use to provide VRS and on-going support services.

The Individual Placement and Support model (also referred to as Evidence Based Practices) is based on research conducted by the Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center with financial support from the Johnson and Johnson Foundation. IPS emphasizes integration of employment within mental health treatment. Participants receive services from a community based multi-disciplinary team consisting of mental health providers and an employment specialist. Work is viewed as an integral part of the person's recovery from serious mental illness. This model is funded by \$470,000 in VRS funding for time limited services and \$285,000 in state dollars for long term supports. Six providers now offer this model of services.

The Coordinated Employability Project is a more traditional model. VRS coordinates short term services with 19 community rehabilitation programs that then provide the long term supports using state Extended Employment dollars. VRS is currently examining these two SMI service models to determine the impact national health care reform and state mental health budget cuts will have on this activity.

Historically, VRS has provided state funding to the Minnesota Employment Center (MEC) for Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, using an annual pass-through appropriation of \$300,000. VRS time limited services and MEC supported employment services have been closely coordinated to enhance employment opportunities for people who are deaf or have significant hearing loss. However, a legislative change in 2013 has redirected the direct

appropriation into a competitive grant pool, and MEC will now compete for available funding, beginning October 1, 2013. VRS has filled a vacancy for a specialist for deaf/hard of hearing services.

About 40 percent of VRS applicants receive SSA benefits. VRS was instrumental in establishing the Work Incentives Connection, a program of Goodwill Industries that provides work incentives planning and assistance for consumers and work incentives training for VRS staff. SSA, VRS and State Services for the Blind co-host quarterly meetings of the Employment Networks. In addition to providing in-service training, the meetings provide an opportunity to learn more about the services offered by each Employment Network to assist consumers make informed choices when selecting a vendor for employment services and/or on-going job retention services. The current focus of this group is to expand the use of Ticket to Work funding to provide ongoing supports.

VRS has hired a school to work transition specialist. A substantial part of her responsibilities is to assist in the development of improved services for students with autism, Asperger's and other related conditions.

If applicable, identify plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs within the state.

Program access to CRPs is monitored by reviewing compliance with CARF policies on program access, and by continuously monitoring the geographical coverage provided by the network of 56 CRPs.

VRS has an active CRP Advisory Committee to assist in achievement of common goals. The committee will meet a total of 9 times in FY 2013. Priority topics include "telling our story" (development of a Community Outreach Team to develop a strategic marketing and communications plan for the public/private partnership), input into the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment through completion of a community survey to identify strategic priorities, enhanced placement services through collaboration, preliminary work on a return on investment study, CRP input into the VRS administrative structure, collaborating with CRPs to provide paid internships for consumers, enhancements to supported employment services, and shared coordination and delivery of staff training. A sub-committee is currently actively involved in developing training for VRS and CRP job developers (Placement 101 for new employees and Next Generation Placement for experienced staff). The Advisory Committee is also engaged in defining CRP quality measures that will support VRS' goals and priorities.

Describe strategies to improve the performance of the state with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators.

Performance, five-year trends, and specific strategies utilized to improve the agency's performance in meeting the evaluation standards and performance indicators, are included in Attachment 4.11(e)(2). The State Rehabilitation Council and VRS developed revised the goals and priorities to improve the quality of service, with an emphasis on improving the rehabilitation rate, the number of hours worked, and the starting wage. The revised goals and priorities are fully discussed in Attachment 4.11(c)(1).

Describe strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce investment system in assisting individuals with disabilities.

WorkForce Centers (WFCs) serve a significant number of people with disabilities beyond the customers served by VRS and SSB. The needs assessment indicated that notable progress has been made toward achieving universal design; almost 100 percent of survey respondents indicated they felt WFC resources were universally available. However, WFCs need to articulate and better disseminate information about their program access.

VRS is an active participant in the development of the Department of Employment and Economic Development's Unified Plan. VRS also provides consultation to the WFCs' Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) federal grant.

Describe how the agency's strategies will be used to:

- achieve goals and priorities identified in Attachment 4.11(c)(1);
- support innovation and expansion activities; and
- overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the state Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and the state Supported Employment Services Program.

The agency's strategies to achieve the goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion, and overcome identified barriers are fully discussed in Attachment 4.11(e)(2).

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Attachment 4.11(e)(2) Evaluation and Reports of Progress

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Supported Employment (SE) Goals

1. Clearly identify all VR program goals consistent with the goals described in the FY 2012 Attachment 4.11(c)(1), including an evaluation of the extent to which the VR program goals were achieved.

- Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.
- Provide a description of the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

EVALUATION AND REPORT OF PROGRESS

The State Rehabilitation Council and VRS are committed to a disciplined process for making decisions that shape and guide VRS as an organization. Consumers, stakeholders and VRS staff contributed insights over many months to the planning process, resulting in the five goals. A strategic planning process is never finished. Changing consumer needs - as reflected by the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, program evaluation and ever-changing social, legal and economic circumstances - prompts an annual review of the goals and process measures.

Goal 1: More jobs, better jobs

The result of this goal is expanded job opportunities and improved employment outcomes for Minnesotans with disabilities.

VRS will:

- A. Increase the number of employment outcomes
- B. Increase the quality of employment outcomes
- C. Improve service to minority and underserved populations
- D. Expand development of long-term supports
- E. Improve consistency of transition services received by students who are in high school

Goal 1 Outcome Measures:

- A. Employment outcomes will increase annually.
- B. The percentage of consumers with employment outcomes who exited the program after receiving services will increase to 60% within two years.

C. The percentage of individuals with significant disabilities whose employment outcome results in income equal to or greater than SGA level at closure will increase to 60% within two years.

D. Of all individuals from minority backgrounds exiting the VR program after receiving services, the percentage achieving employment outcomes will increase to 50% by the end of FFY 2012.

The following key measures show progress to date:

A1. The number of consumers achieving employment outcomes.

RSA National Standard: Equal or exceed previous year.

2008: 2,620

2009: 2,389

2010: 2,143

2011: 2,477

2012: 2,490

The 2013 performance to date is 1,387, a 153 increase over the previous fiscal year performance for the same time period.

B1. The percentage of consumers with employment outcomes who exited the program after receiving services.

RSA National Standard: 55.8%

2008: 60.5

2009: 49.1

2010: 47.8

2011: 60.2

2012: 56.7

B2. The percentage of consumers with competitive employment outcomes.

RSA National Standard: 72.6%

2008: 97.6

2009: 96.0

2010: 97.7

2011: 99.1

2012: 99.0

B3. Consumers' average wage compared to all other Minnesota workers. RSA National Standard: .52

2008: .492

2009: .491

2010: .501

2011: .458

2012: .457

B4. Percentage change, from application to closure, of earned income as the primary source of financial support.

RSA National Standard: 53.0

2008: 63.3

2009: 64.1

2010: 65.4

2011: 67.9

2012: 64.4

C1. The percentage of individuals with disabilities whose employment outcome results in income equal to or greater than SGA level at closure will increase to 60% by the end of FY 2012.

2008: 60.0

2009: 55.3

2010: 56.2

2011: 60.0

2012: 58.0

D1. The ratio of minority and non-minority service rates. RSA National Standard .80

2008: .80

2009: .87

2010: .84

2011: .81

2012: .85

D2. Of all individuals from minority backgrounds exiting the VR program after receiving services, the percentage achieving employment outcomes will increase to 50% by the end of FY 2012.

2008: 50.6

2009: 39.8

2010: 38.1

2011: 44.8

2012: 50.5

Goal 2: Organizational vitality

The result of this goal is a vibrant organization providing the best possible services to Minnesotans with disabilities.

VRS will:

- A. Provide VRS staff with the training and resources to do their job
- B. Increase VRS staff diversity in line with demographic normative data
- C. Enhance internal and external communication
- D. Strengthen organizational leadership capacity

Goal 2 Process Measures:

A. 80 percent of direct service staff will complete at least one elective training during the federal fiscal year. It is anticipated that this will help maintain staff qualifications.

B. VRS currently has a soft hiring freeze. VRS will focus on maintaining staff diversity through job retention.

C. An annual survey of staff will indicate that 85 percent of staff feels that they are well informed and they have the resources needed to do their job. VRS will utilize a modified version of the Gallup Organization Q12 survey, a 12-question survey to measure employee engagement. Gallup found that there is a high correlation between high scores on this survey and superior job performance.

Goal 2 Achievements:

A. Approximately 98 percent of staff attended voluntary training on Bridges out of Poverty and a second training on Managing Change and Transition. Approximately 95 percent of staff attended a "highly recommended" refresher training on Supported Employment Services.

B. Staff diversity has remained stable. Voluntary resignations excluding retirements has remained at 2 percent for the past five years. Ten percent of employees have a disclosed disability; 91 percent of employees are white while 7 percent are American Indian, Asian, black or Hispanic/Latino. Two percent of employees opted to not disclose.

C. The VRS annual Organizational Vitality Survey was completed in April, 2013.

* 89 percent of staff agreed or strongly agreed that they have the material and equipment needed to do their job.

* 75 percent of staff agreed or strongly agreed that they are informed of decisions and issues that affect them and their work.

* 90 percent agreed or strongly agreed that they have the necessary training to do their job well.

* 89 percent agreed or strongly agreed that they have had opportunities to learn and grow in the past year.

Goal 3. Effective partnerships

The result of this goal is collaborative partnerships that fully use resources to serve Minnesotans with disabilities.

VRS will:

A. Increase availability of ongoing or long-term supports through policy, practice or resource changes

B. Provide VRS, WFC and community partner staff with training that advances our shared mission

C. Develop a process to evaluate consumer outcomes and satisfaction with services provided by community partners

D. Emphasize partnerships that support transition services E. Identify and expand consumer service best practices

Goal 3 Process Measures:

A. The number of CRPs and CILs accessing Ticket to Work funded job retention services will increase annually.

B.1 In collaboration with the CRP Advisory Committee, VRS will develop and implement joint training for VRS and CRP staff on supported employment services and funding streams during FFY 2012. This training will assist the agency in maximizing the use of existing supported employment funding.

B.2 CRPs, CILs, county financial workers and social workers, and mental health workers will receive training on how to use Disability Benefits 101 software (www.db101.org) to reduce Social Security beneficiaries' fears and to provide accurate information about how income will impact public benefits (SSDI, SSI, Minnesota Supplemental Income, food support and public health insurance). Training of VRS and WFC staff was completed in FFY 2011. This will impact employment outcomes, the percentage of consumers who will achieve employment outcomes, and the percentage of consumers achieving employment above SGA.

C. A CRP Advisory Committee was established in early FFY 2011 to better define and propose strategies to establish, develop, or improve our community rehabilitation programs, and to determine how to better measure consumer satisfaction. Their input is being integrated into our Statewide Assessment and future plans.

Goal 3 Achievements:

A. Training on Partnership Plus services is included as part of the on-going Disability Benefits 101 training. Quarterly meetings of the Employment Networks are held to provide in-service training to ENs and to promote Partnership Plus services. Eight community rehabilitation programs have formed a Ticket to Work consortium to reduce the administrative cost of operating the program. There has been a steady increase in the number of consumers accessing Ticket to Work funded job retention services after VRS case closure.

B.1. It was determined that VRS direct service staff needed refresher training on supported employment services and funding streams prior to implementing joint training with CRP staff. Approximately 95 percent of VRS staff participated in a half day training that was held at multiple locations across the state. It is anticipated that increased staff knowledge of available funding streams will increase the number of supported employment plans.

B.2. Refresher training on Disability Benefits 101 has been held for VRS, CRP and IL staff. DB101 has added new information on benefits planning for school to work transition. The Social Security Administration and Department of Human Services has been conducting training on an "Employment First" initiative encouraging financial workers and social workers to refer people to community based employment services and benefits planning at time of application for public assistance.

C. The CRP Advisory Committee will meet a total of seven times in FY 2013. Priority topics discussed included "telling our story" (development of a strategic marketing and communications plan), enhanced placement services through collaboration, completion of a community survey to develop strategic priorities, preliminary work on a return on investment study, CRP input into the VRS administrative structure, collaborating with CRPs to provide paid internships for consumers, enhancements to supported employment services, shared coordination and delivery of staff training, and planning for sequestration.

Goal 4. Employer engagement

The result of this goal is robust employer relationships and new employment opportunities for Minnesotans with disabilities.

VRS will:

A. Identify potential jobs and needed skills at the regional level

B. Increase the quality of placement services by "raising the bar" through staff training and development activities

C. Capitalize on the VRS/CRP partnership and provide leadership to placement providers by exploring options for sharing Business Advisory groups and exploring options for using temporary agencies for work experience and initial placements

Goal 4 Process Measures:

A. Coordinate with DEED's Labor Market Information office to provide staff training on the use of

"MySkillsMyFuture" software to assist job seekers match their transferable skills to current job openings.

B. Develop and implement "Placement 101" curriculum for VRS and CRP placement staff.

C. The VRS/CRP Advisory Committee will discuss and recommend strategies for improving the quality of placement services.

Goal 4 Achievements:

A. DEED has implemented and provided initial training on DOL's "My Skills, My Future" software that matches a person's skills with training programs and current job opening in the local area. VRS implemented Career Scope, an online vocational assessment tool that measures interests and aptitudes, to assist the person identify O'Net job classifications that can be further explored using the "My Skills, My Future" software. In 2012, training was provided twice to counselors on how to interpret CareerScope reports. As a part of this training, counselors also received training on OASYS, a software program that identifies a person's transferable work skills based on their resume. The skills can then be adjusted as needed if the disability has progressed or changed since the person held the job. The final report is linked to O'Net job classifications to facilitate job search. The above trainings are being repeated in 2013.

B. VRS, in collaboration with seven CRPs, developed and implemented "Placement 101". The three day training program is designed to provide job placement professionals with introductory level knowledge and skills in job placement services. Training is open to all job placement professionals, but due to high demand priority is given to recently hired VRS and CRP employees.

C. In collaboration with the CRP Advisory Committee, VRS has established the "Next Generation Placement Design Team". The purpose of this team is to engage VRS and key partners in a facilitated process to develop the 'next generation' of approach and practices for placement services for the benefit of job seekers and business. The team has determined that the performance based funding mechanism for placement isn't broken and there is no need to completely re-engineer the process, but there are opportunities to improve. Three pilots will be conducted in FY 2013 to begin implementation of the new design. The new approach recognizes the counselor as a team facilitator. The counselor will invite the placement professional to "join the team" as opposed to making a referral and "handing off" the consumer to a placement professional. The counselor will also update the assessment of VR needs to ensure that the consumer is placement ready. The pilots will emphasize timely and ongoing team communications with formal check-ins to make sure placement and job stabilization services are effectively meeting the needs of the person.

Goal 5. Engaged councils

The result of this goal is robust, participatory councils - the State Rehabilitation Council and as appropriate the State Independent Living Council - fulfilling their missions and statutory roles.

VRS will:

- A. Invite participation and seek advice as outlined in the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended
- B. Provide operational and reporting transparency to the councils
- C. Develop and revise policy and procedures with active council involvement
- D. Meet the resource and membership needs of the councils

E. Increase inter-council coordination

Goal 5 Process Measures:

A. VRS staff will respond to all council's information requests within a month.

B. The VRS director will attend all meetings and provide a director's report of current activities and issues. If she is unable to attend, she will arrange for another member of the management team to represent her.

C. SRC and the Client Assistance Program will be informed of all proposed policy and procedure changes in a timely manner, and be invited to attend the Policy Committee meeting to discuss the proposed change.

D. The annual survey of the councils will indicate that the resource and membership needs of the SRC and SILC are being met, and the two councils are aware of the primary activities of both their own council and the other council.

Goal 5 Achievements:

Additional information about SRC activity, including the minutes and 2012 Annual Report, can be found online at:

http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/JobSeekers/People_with_Disabilities/Disability_Councils_Committees/State_Rehabilitation_Council.aspx

SILC minutes and information can be found at <http://www.mnsilc.org/index.htm>.

Progress toward achievement of the goal is measured formally through an annual survey of the members. Following is a discussion of the FFY 2012 survey:

Strategic Priority A: Invite participation and seek advice as outlined in the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The following survey questions relate to this priority:

What grade do you give VRS on consulting with the council on issues of importance to the VR program? The average grade was 88 percent, with a range of 75 - 100. Comments included "Very transparent, clear", "I feel there is stuff I should know, but I don't know what to ask in order to be better informed", "Still learning- new member".

What grade do you give VRS for giving meaningful consideration to council discussions, opinions, and advice? The average grade was 87 percent, with a range of 75 - 100. Comments included "More discussion on some issues, there are always time constraints", "Opinions always welcomed, and feedback is always encouraged. We can always use more information".

Strategic Priority B: Provide operational and reporting transparency to the councils. The following survey questions relate to this priority:

Grade the overall clarity and sufficiency of information provided on the program's budget and business operations. The average grade was 85 percent, with a range of 70 - 100. Comments included "Questions are answered quickly and immediately", "More client information, more information from the field", "Very transparent", "We received lots of reports, but the Council doesn't get much about the budget", "Don't believe information on budget was provided".

Grade the clarity and completeness of information provided about the data VRS submits to RSA. The average grade was 90 percent, with a range of 70 - 100. Comments included: "Sometimes we don't know what we don't know", "Reports can be difficult for non-VRS staff", "Loud and clear from Kim Peck's [VRS director] reports", "Information is always provided at the meetings".

Strategic Priority C: SRC and the Client Assistance Program will be informed of all proposed policy and procedure changes in a timely manner, and be invited to attend the Policy Committee meeting to discuss the proposed change. The following survey questions relate to this priority:

How would you rate the timeliness of VRS discussing and requesting input on proposed changes to policy and procedures? The average grade was 95 percent, with a range of 90 - 100. Comments included: "Very good in this area", "Very receptive to our concerns", "Timeliness of consideration for sequestration changes was appropriate", "Whenever there is a change, we are notified".

What grade do you give VRS for giving meaningful consideration to Council discussions, opinions and advice? The average grade was 88 percent, with a range of 75 - 100. Comments included: "We might be able to do more as a Council if it was action oriented", "Our input is valued, not sure it is operationalized", "Director of VRS addresses issues quickly", "Open, listens to comments, recommendations".

Strategic Priority D: The annual survey of the councils will indicate that the resource and membership needs of the SRC and SILC are being met, and the two councils are aware of the primary activities of both their own council and the other council. The following survey questions relate to this priority:

How would you grade the effectiveness with which the council and VRS agree about resources: a) for monthly business meetings, committee meetings and public forums, and b) for payment of members' per diem, travel, meals and lodging. The average grades were 90 percent (range 75 - 100) and 93 percent (range 75 -100) respectively. Comments included: "Technology will be a hot topic for the council meetings going forward", "We have great networks", "Have information at meetings, but would be nice to have it in advance", "Prompt on payment compared to other state councils or governor's committee", "...very accommodating with extra requests for special needs of members", "Paid well".

How would you grade the effectiveness of the appointment process for keeping all Council seats filled throughout the year? The average grade was 52, with a range of 30 - 80. Comments included: "Not RS fault obviously, but this needs improvement", "I blame Governor's Office for this", "Slow, cumbersome", "Boo to the Governor's Office".

How would you grade the effectiveness of new member orientation? Average grade 85, with a range of 65- 100. Comments included: "I need to go back and review documents. Too much to know!", "Really good", "Very informative", "New member orientation delayed by 3 months".

How would you grade efforts by VRS and the council to provide training opportunities that help members become more effective at conducting the Council's business? Average grade was 74 percent, with a range of 20 - 100. Comments included: "We can do more", "Great Council support", "Discussion of mentorship has occurred but would be nice to see formalized plan".

Did the Council have a work plan that guided all or a part of its activities? Average grade was 89 percent, with a range of 70 - 100. Comments included: "Yes, absolutely", "A timeline could be shared with the full council to reference throughout the year".

How would you grade the council's efforts to plan its work in advance? Average grade was 86, with a range of 75 - 100. Comments included: "We have tried to do this", "At times felt like meetings had spontaneous design", "We do a great job given our busy lives", "Excellent".

Strategic Priority E: Increase inter-council coordination. The following survey question related to this priority:

What grade do you give VRS on keeping you informed of the activities of the State Independent Living Council? Average grade was 86 percent, with a range of 50 - 100. Comments included: "Nice job Mickey [Chair of SILC]", "Good, clear, frequent", "I would put the SILC Report right after Kim Peck report - often felt SILC report was rushed right before lunch", "Mickey does a does job providing updates".

Strategic Goal for the Supported Employment Services Program:

Expand Minnesota's capacity to provide long term employment supports.

This strategic goal is to establish a collaborative statewide assessment of Minnesota's service capacity for supported employment, including the service capacity and development needs of community rehabilitation programs in Minnesota, supported employment needs of transition-age youths and young adults, low incidence populations of persons with disabilities and other unserved and underserved populations. This strategic goal is aligned with Strategic Goal Three, along with which its progress is reported. See Strategic Goal Three, above.

2. Identify all supported employment program goals consistent with the goals described in Attachment 4.11(c)(4), including an evaluation of the extent to which the supported employment program goals were achieved.

- Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.
- Provide a description of the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

Strategic Goal for the Supported Employment Services Program: Expand Minnesota's capacity to provide long term employment supports.

This strategic goal is to establish a collaborative statewide assessment of Minnesota's service capacity for supported employment, including the service capacity and development needs of community rehabilitation programs in Minnesota, supported employment needs of transition-age youths and young adults, low incidence populations of persons with disabilities and other unserved and underserved populations. This strategic goal is aligned with Strategic Goal Three, along with which its progress is reported. See Strategic Goal Three, above.

3. Provide an Assessment of the performance of the VR program on the standards and indicators for FY 2012.

Performance and the five-year trends are documented as part of the Goal 1 Outcome Measures.

Indicator 1.1 (Employment Outcomes) was met in FFY 2012 (Standard +1, Achieved +13). Year-to-date data for FFY 2013 indicates that the standard will again be exceeded this current fiscal year.

Indicator 1.2 (Closed with an Active Employment Plan) was also met (Standard 55.8, Achieved 56.7). Year-to-date data for FFY 2013 indicates VRS is currently at 63.7 percent.

Indicator 1.3 (Competitive Employment) was exceeded (Standard 72.6, Achieved 99.0). Year-to-date data for FFY 2013 indicates VRS is currently at 99.6 percent.

Indicator 1.4 (Significant Disability) remains at 100% due to Order of Selection.

Indicator 1.5 (Average hourly Wage) was below standard at .457 (Standard: .52). The average wage was \$10.89 per hour. The average hourly wage for FFY 2013 to date is \$11.11. However, performance remains below standard at .45. The agency goals and priorities have been modified to address this issue.

Indicator 1.6 (Employment Earnings as the Primary Source of Support) was also achieved (Standard 53.0, Achieved 64.4). For FFY 2013 to date VRS is at 69 percent.

With respect to program participation of individuals who are minorities, Minnesota has shown continuous improvement and has met the national standard for the past five years (Standard .80, Achieved .85). It is anticipated that this will be maintained in FFY 2013.

4. Provide a report on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized in FY 2012.

Contributions to Goal Progress from Innovation and Expansion Activities

About 3.3 percent of Minnesota's VR appropriation (\$1.29 m) was used for innovation and expansion activities to improve and increase services to historically underserved populations with the most severe disabilities. These activities represent program response to identified need.

State Rehabilitation Council

Ten monthly meetings of the SRC, committee meetings, and public forums are where council members carry out their consultative and participative roles in the work of VRS. Primary contributions are annual participation in development of the VR Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and State Plan; study of consumer satisfaction, VRS strategic planning, and review of the policies and practices that guide the delivery of services.

Persons with Mental Illness

Collaborative activity at state and local levels between VRS, DHS Mental Health Division, and community partners continues to build supports and services for persons with serious mental illness (SMI), who now comprise 33 percent of the VR program's total caseload and 31 percent of employment outcomes. Innovative projects developed with dedicated state funds are increasing the quality of services and outcomes for this population in urban and rural Minnesota.

SSDI and SSI Beneficiaries

SSA, VRS and SSB continue to co-host quarterly meetings of the Employment Networks. One result of this is more Employment Networks are providing Ticket-to-Work funded job retention services following VRS intensive services (Partnership Plus services). Ticket-to-Work funding is used to supplement Supported Employment funding or to provide continued job retention services beyond the 90 days VRS typically provides. Work incentives basic and advanced training for counselors was provided by work incentives specialists at the Work Incentives Connection. VRS staff, and most CRP direct service staff, also received training on using Disability Benefits 101 to provide benefits counseling.

Rehabilitation Technology

Rehabilitation technology, also referred to as assistive technology, can enhance employment outcomes, leading to better employment outcomes including higher paying jobs. Staff surveys and comprehensive case reviews indicate that rehabilitation technology is an underused tool in the development of employment plans and demonstrate the need for training and coaching to increase its use by both experienced and new staff. Implementation of the VR Rehabilitation Technology Services Plan has involved widespread staff participation, brought focus to rehabilitation technology activity, and honored the work of VR program counselors serving as technology liaison to their own VR teams.

Minorities with Most Significant Disabilities

State demographic data indicates Minnesota's minority populations are growing at a much higher rate than the white, non-Hispanic population. Minnesota has the largest Somali refugee population in the United States.

The New Americans office in St. Paul specializes in addressing the needs of Somali and other East African immigrants who lack fluency in English. In FFY 2012, there were 43 new applications and 15 people achieved an employment outcome.

Collaborative Projects with Centers for Independent Living

Each of the state's eight Centers for Independent Living received grant funding (SSA program income funds) to continue providing IL services that are integrated into the Employment Plan. When feasible, the IL services are provided at the VR office. For example, the Metropolitan Center for Independent Living has placed IL staff in each of the Twin Cities metropolitan area WorkForce Centers. In FY 2012, 1,349 consumers received integrated VR/IL services as part of the employment plan. 283 individuals exited VR with an employment outcome (a 62.6 percent rehabilitation rate). Several Centers have become Employment Networks to fund continuation of the IL services after successful VR closure.

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Attachment 6.3 Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services

- Describe quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities
- Describe the timing of the transition to extended services

QUALITY, SCOPE AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Supported employment services promote the integration of people with the most significant disabilities into the Minnesota workplace. The use of funds from Title VI Part B of the Rehabilitation Act initially allowed for expansion of supported employment services and outcomes. However, currently, the demand for these services exceeds the capacity of systems in Minnesota to provide the extended ongoing supports needed by Minnesotans with the most significant disabilities. Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) continues to work cooperatively with consumers, family members, advocates, employers, service providers and State, county, and local agencies to improve and expand the use of supported employment services statewide.

Approximately 2,400 vocational rehabilitation consumers were served in FFY 2012 with SE funds. VRS uses all federal funds authorized under Title VI, Part B in addition to Title I funds to purchase services for customers on a fee for service basis. Funds are distributed to field offices to purchase needed services for those consumers with a vocational goal that requires ongoing supports. Supported employment expenditures are administered and tracked separately in accordance with federal requirements. The quality of supported employment services in Minnesota is assured by a State administrative rule requirement that vendors from whom more than \$20,000 in services are purchased annually must be fully accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) or have applied for and are actively pursuing accreditation. In addition, vendors who agree to meet professional standards of service but are not CARF-accredited may be granted a limited use provider status, under which their services are limited to \$20,000 or less annually.

The state's major challenge regarding supported employment is one of consumer access to extended ongoing supports when they are needed. Agency structures and funding systems for extended support are governed by a myriad of federal and State laws and rules, each governing a specific piece of the categorical funding available to people with disabilities. A network of private not-for-profit organizations in Minnesota licensed by DHS Disabilities Services Division provides day training and habilitation services that may include such extended supports. People with mental illness may receive work-related support through the State Comprehensive Mental Health Act. Each county determines what level of service will be provided.

The agency's coordination of vocational rehabilitation services with its extended employment services contributes significantly to the quality, scope, and effectiveness of the State's overall SE efforts. When developing a customer's employment plan, the consumer and VR counselor identify the time-limited services to be provided by VRS, the expected ongoing supports needed,

and the source of those supports. This may include natural supports. VRS is a partner in several state level agreements that facilitate provision of these services. With respect to extended employment services, VRS develops contracts with each accredited community rehabilitation program (CRP) that includes an outline of expectations for extended support. Each program submits an application for funding which becomes part of the contract and specifies the number of employment hours that will be funded by VRS.

VRS provides \$13,575,000 in state funding annually to community rehabilitation programs to support ongoing vocational services through in-house and supported employment. Eighty percent of this funding provides ongoing services to people working in integrated community based employment. By coordinating its short-term vocational rehabilitation services and long-term extended employment services, VRS facilitates optimal benefit from time-limited and extended funding for persons in supported employment.

VRS, through state-funded extended employment services, provides ongoing work supports to approximately 5,100 individuals in SE annually. Many of these individuals received time-limited vocational rehabilitation services prior to entering supported employment.

Part of Minnesota's supported employment funding is dedicated to extended supports for persons with serious and persistent mental illness. VRS and the Department of Human Services Mental Health Division collaborate on coordinated employability projects to promote innovation in service delivery, including supported employment services, for this population. The projects are designed to provide functional assessment, individualized career planning, job skill acquisition, job placement, job development, and non-time-limited supports necessary to maintain and advance in employment. All recipients of grants under these projects are required to demonstrate collaboration with counties, the local community support program, VRS, and providers of employment services such as CRPs, regional treatment centers, and community mental health centers.

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System Information

System information

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