

State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program Minnesota Vocational Rehabilitation Services State Plan for Fiscal Year 2015 (submitted FY 2014)

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 Signatory ***Kimberley T. Peck***

Title of Signatory ***Director, Vocational Rehabilitation Services***

Date Signed (mm/dd/yyyy) ***06/24/2014***

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 ***2015 No***

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 B was selected/Option A was not 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 that

1. is responsible under state law for operating or overseeing the operation of the vocational rehabilitation program in the state and is primarily concerned with the vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities in accordance with subparagraph 4.1(a)(2)(A) of this section.
2. is consumer controlled by persons who:
 - A. are individuals with physical or mental impairments that substantially limit major life activities; and
 - B. represent individuals with a broad range of disabilities, unless the designated state unit under the direction of the commission is the state agency for individuals who are blind;
3. includes family members, advocates or other representatives of individuals with mental impairments; and
4. undertakes the functions set forth in Section 105(c)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(h)(4).

(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

(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.

(Option B was selected)

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

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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

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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.

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://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities/councils/rehab-council.jsp>

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. Notice of openings is posted early to recruit potential members in time for the governor's office to make the appointments prior to the legislative session. The appointment process went smoothly this year. However, since this is an election year, there may be a change in governor and/or the governor's staff. It will be important for VRS to work closely with any new staff to maintain timely appointments.

The SRC works to have strong linkages with the governor's staff. SRC-G and SRC-B meet with governor's staff in the early fall to discuss need for timely appointments. Openings are announced at all meetings and public forums. Targeted recruitment materials are developed. Recruitment is considered an ongoing task.

2. **Recommendations for Transition-Aged Youth:** For the purposes of these recommendations, transition-aged consumers are those students with disabilities aged 16 to 21 who 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 is in the second year of 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, and the Workforce Center System Coordination Office called for public comment on the accessibility of Workforce Centers. SRC members were encouraged to make public comment. People with disabilities are 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 council did not request an update on the cost allocation plans from the VRS Director for the current fiscal year. Instead, the council focused on the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act and how this legislation may affect the local workforce centers. The Chair of the council met with key national legislators and provided information on the effects of various reauthorization proposals.

Public Forums

The State Rehabilitation Council convened two 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.

June public forum: Minnesota's Olmstead Plan - Freedom of Choice and Opportunity for People with Disabilities

The June forum was jointly sponsored by the State Rehabilitation Councils (General and Blind), the Statewide Independent Living Council and the Minnesota State Council on Disability. The forum provided an opportunity for people to provide public comment on the first draft of the Olmstead Plan, especially the chapter on employment. The plan adopts an "employment first" philosophy, meaning the preferred employment outcome is one in the most integrated setting.

Three goals are established: Expand integrated employment; align policies and funding to support this expanded focus on integration; and provide training and technical assistance to enable families, providers, education and others to adopt this philosophy. The forum was attended by 155 people, and an additional 83 people viewed the live stream of the forum on the internet.

September public forum: The current and future economic environment in Rochester, Minnesota

The September forum was held in Rochester, Minnesota and jointly sponsored by the State Rehabilitation Councils (General and Blind) and the Statewide Independent Living Council. Rochester is a rapidly growing community of 107,000 people in southeast Minnesota. The Mayo Clinic, the community's largest employer, is planning a multi-billion dollar expansion of their medical campus. The city anticipates this expansion will create 35,000 to 40,000 new jobs in the community. The purpose of the forum was to obtain public comment on ensuring that people with disabilities benefit from this rapid growth.

An initial discussion was facilitated by DEED-Labor Market Information staff on the current and projected labor market, wages and opportunities for job seekers in southeast Minnesota. The Mayo Clinic then discussed their efforts to expand the talent pool by developing key relationships with veterans, people with disabilities and other under-represented groups. Some of the key efforts the clinic has put in place include: Developing relationships with professionals that work with people with disabilities; developing employee awareness of disability issues by utilizing a half day curriculum developed by DEED; being deliberate about hiring people with disabilities; working to assure people with disabilities are comfortable self-disclosing and requesting accommodations; developing an employee resource group discussing recruitment and retention of people with disabilities; providing high school career education; and offering education sessions on resume writing, interviewing, and understanding Mayo's complex hiring process. The final discussion was facilitated by VRS and CRP school to work transition staff. The discussion focused on the role schools and service providers have in meeting the area's labor market needs by preparing students with disabilities for careers in the local economy. A panel of young adults in transition then provided their perspectives on the strengths of the current system and areas where improvement is needed.

The next public forum will focus on the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model for providing supported employment services for people with serious mental illness.

In addition to the formal recommendations and public forums, the State Rehabilitation Council has provided advice on a variety of topics including Order of Selection and the closing of categories, managing the budget and the impact of sequestration, the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, WIA re-authorization, planning for the cross-agency work that will be needed to implement the Olmstead Plan, Minnesota's changing cultural/ethnic profile and the need for a more diverse VRS staff, youth in transition services, and the relationship between VRS, counties and schools.

This screen was last updated on Jun 12 2014 11:28AM by John Fisher

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

This agency **has** requested a 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.

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.

This screen was last updated on Jun 12 2014 11:31AM by John Fisher

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 Plan that was submitted to the U.S. District Court on November 1, 2013. 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 employment section of the plan listed two population-level indicators: 1) Increase the employment rate of persons with disabilities so that it is comparable to the employment rate of persons without disabilities and 2) Increase the employment earnings of persons with disabilities so that they are comparable to the earnings of persons without disabilities. The State Rehabilitation Council-General, State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind, Minnesota State Council on Disability and the State Independent Living Council conducted 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. The task force supports expanding transition program options and employment opportunities for teens and adults with autism, particularly innovative community-based programs (e.g., Project Search--www.projectsearch.us/) that better meet the unique needs of this population. The legislature has not funded the Task Force for the coming fiscal year, and it appears the Task Force may sunset.

Collaboration Grants to Provide Independent Living Services: Since 2008, the VRS/IL collaboration has served Minnesotans with the most significant disabilities who require both vocational rehabilitation and independent living services to meet their goals for working and living in the community. In FFY 2013 VRS dedicated \$1,027,466 in SSA program income to fund locally designed collaboration grants with each of Minnesota's eight Centers for Independent Living.

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.

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): VRS maintains an agreement with Goodwill Easter Seals 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.

Ticket to Work Employment Networks: VRS, State Services for the Blind and SSA co-host periodic 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.

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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 renewed 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 the 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.

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.

Interagency Agreement to Purchase used Assistive Technology Devices

When a child with a disability transitions into a work environment or postsecondary program, VRS or SSB may purchase any assistive technology device that the child's former school district purchased on the child's behalf.

This screen was last updated on Jun 12 2014 11:40AM 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 44 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 63 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. 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.

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 and providing training for VRS and CRP job developers on rapid engagement and fully engaging the consumer in the placement process.

This screen was last updated on Jun 12 2014 11:44AM by John Fisher

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 appropriation provides \$300,000 annually to provide ongoing supports for persons who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

In state fiscal year 2013, 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 2013, VRS served 19,534 consumers and ended the year with an active caseload of 12,928 individuals, including 384 in applicant status. In FFY 2014, we anticipate serving approximately 18,620 consumers, and ending the year with an active caseload of 12,324, including 366 in applicant status. In FFY 2014, counselors will have an average caseload of about 77. U.S. Census Bureau data on the geographic distribution of Minnesotans with

disabilities is used to determine the distribution of staff. The metro region has 152 positions, the northern region has 64 positions, and the southern region has 75 positions.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Services leadership team consists of a director, eight managers and an Office Services Supervisor. Direct supervision of field staff is provided by seventeen rehabilitation area managers and five rehabilitation supervisors. Twenty seven rehabilitation specialists and three other administrative specialists support the work of both administrative and field staff by providing technical assistance, training, and consultation. Direct service to VR consumers is provided by 156 rehabilitation counselors, augmented by five rehabilitation representatives, twenty one job placement coordinators, a business services specialist, two community liaison representatives, and two Occupational Communication Specialists (sign language interpreters); seventy-five vocational rehabilitation technicians and 17 clerical staff provide support to both field and administrative offices.

VRS had nine retirements in calendar year 2013. There were nine voluntary resignations. The number of voluntary resignations has remained constant (around 2 percent) over the past five years. Between 2014 and 2019, 33 percent of VRS staff, including 23 percent of counselors and 44 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)	10	0	5
2	Rehabilitation Area Managers/supervisors (Field)	22	0	10
3	Rehabilitation Specialists	27	0	10

4	Rehabilitation Counselors	156	1	36
5	Rehabilitation Representatives	5	0	1
6	Job Placement/Business Services	21	0	9
7	Vocational Rehabilitation Technicians	75	0	30
8	Clerical Support	17	0	6
9	Other Admin/Field	10	0	5
10	TOTAL	343	1	112

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 the University of Wisconsin - Stout. VRS maintains a collegial relationship with these programs, recruiting for 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	15	2	0	8
2	St. Cloud State University	25	0	0	9
3	University of Wisconsin - Stout	61	4	11	30
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. Seven students completed internships in 2013. One person completed an internship thus far in 2014, and two are currently in progress. We anticipate hosting additional interns beginning for the fall 2014 semester. A staff development specialist devotes approximately 10 percent time as the point of contact for managers, professors, interns, supervising counselors, and Human Resources to coordinate intern placement and supervision, and for counselor recruitment. 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. Two VRS employees graduated with Rehabilitation Counseling graduate degrees in 2013-2014, one of whom has since been promoted to a counselor position; five 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. VRS works to maintain a high level of employee engagement through statewide staff communication about the vision, mission, values, strategic goals and agency achievements, and a robust training and development program. VRS completed an Organizational Vitality survey in April 2013 and again in May 2014. Survey response rate increased to from 85% in 2013 to 88% this year. Findings indicate strong employee engagement on the key indicators measured. For example, 93 percent agreed that the VRS mission makes them feel their job is important, 93 percent agreed that they have the necessary training to do their job well, and 79% agreed that they were informed of decisions and issues that affect them and their work. 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 repeat the survey annually as a measure of employee engagement and as a tool to identify needed improvements in organizational effectiveness.

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, offers 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 provides 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.

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, 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. Annual performance reviews between supervisor and employee include a review of training and development needs of 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. TACE V is supporting Minnesota's MI training initiative via a contract with the Institute for Individual and Organizational Change (IFIOC) to provide individualized audiotape coding and phone feedback for VRS staff. The Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Evidence Based Practice in Vocational Rehabilitation is currently conducting a study of the impact of our MI training efforts. The purpose of the study is to investigate the effect of motivational interviewing training for VR counselors on MI competencies, readiness to use MI in clinical practice, the working alliance with consumers, and case management performance; a counselor survey was deployed in February 2014 and researchers are analyzing 911 case service data relative to counselor survey responses and level of MI training completed.

We continue to offer a variety of in-service training programs to enhance counselor skills. As VRS expanded the Individual Placement and Support model for Persons with Serious Mental Illness (IPS), staff involved in the expansion projects received training on the IPS model of service delivery. Training has also been offered on Rehabilitation Approaches to Serving People with Mental Health Disorders, Mental Health First Aid, and ADHD, LD and EBD: Effective Rehabilitation Approaches. "Transition Services for 2013 and Beyond", offered in collaboration with PACER Center, addressed two critical training topics: 1) Counselor Advocacy with the Educational System, and 2) Engaging Families of Transition-age Youth. Transition Counselors also noted that a new training program offered this year "Understanding Special Education Evaluation Summary Reports" was extremely impactful on their practice. Training on Social Security Work Incentives is offered annually. "Assistive Technology: Basics of Principles and

Practice”, a new training program, provided introductory level of training on AT; team AT Liaisons also received advanced training in Assistive Technology. All field staff received training on a new Mandated Reporting policy, and refresher training was offered on “Determining Eligibility: Ability to Benefit”.

VRS continues to support staff in attending external training that addresses individual development needs related to serving unique populations, including participation in the Minnesota Rehabilitation Association Conference, which this year offered two full day programs on serving individuals with mental health disorders and on working with families of transition-age youth.

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. 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. Given the needs noted for improvements to the Assessment of VR needs and Employment Plans, supervisors received training on a training module on Assessment of VR Needs they can implement at the team level. The 2013-2014 review cycle will be completed by September 30, 2014.

VRS and CRPs in Minnesota continue to make a concerted effort to work in partnership to serve VR consumers. Placement 101, a foundational training program in job placement for new VRS and CRP placement staff is offered on a quarterly basis with an average of 18 participants in attendance. The training design team also developed a training program on Business Engagement; implementation is pending infrastructure enhancements that will enable the rehabilitation community to successfully meet the needs of businesses. Training on a VRS initiated pilot project “Next Generation Placement”, occurred in Fall 2013; the pilot is designed to implement and assess the effectiveness of an enhanced team approach to providing job placement services.

Between August 2012 and March 2014, field 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. Members of the VRS Leadership team participated in a separate two-day overview of Clinical Supervision program with the goal of acquiring knowledge to be able to support field managers with integrating clinical supervision into their supervisory practices; we are working to identify local resources with clinical supervision expertise to provide follow up training and support to fully integrate clinical supervision practices. The VRS leadership team has defined a set of leadership competencies for the agency. A leadership development program for VRS staff has been designed and will be launched in October 2014. Two employees were sponsored to participate in the State of Minnesota’s 7-month Emerging Leaders Institute, a program designed to enable participants to explore leadership in State government.

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 to build counseling and counseling supervision skills along with developing internal capacity to provide ongoing training in Motivational Interviewing, to implement a Leadership Development program for VRS, to develop strategies and resources to support regional staff development activities, and to continue to build skills of VRS and CRP Placement staff.

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.

The addition of a highly qualified State Coordinator on Deaf Services in 2012 has greatly enhanced agency capacity to serve consumers who are deaf or hard of hearing. In addition to the State Coordinator on Deaf Services, twenty four staff are conversationally competent in American Sign Language, including six VRS managers/supervisors, ten counselors, three placement specialists, two VR technicians, a Rehabilitation Representative, and two Occupational Communication Specialists (who are also certified sign language interpreters). Deaf and hard of hearing specialists in eight locations are using a video remote interpreting platform called Polycomm's Real Presence to supplement the use of onsite interpreting services and provide more options for accessibility. Counselors are also using videophones, FaceTime and Microsoft Lync to communicate, and new video communication platforms are being offered which allow hearing staff to communicate directly with deaf and hard of hearing consumers via desktop or laptop computers.

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 has a collaborative agreement with the Minnesota Department of Education, Minnesota's secondary education system. This is augmented by Department of Education representation on the State Rehabilitation Council and VRS participation on the Minnesota State Interagency Coordinating Team, with staff support by VRS program specialists for transition services and services for people with autism.

This screen was last updated on Jun 24 2014 10:50AM 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.

Executive Summary, Findings and Conclusions

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. These entities are recognized by Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), United States Department of Education, as the state's vocational rehabilitation agency and council under the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

A full version of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment is posted on the VRS website: <http://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities/research/index.jsp>

Executive Summary

Needs framework

The project team examined needs across various populations, subgroups, and disabilities, using a large variety of sources, including providers, agencies, experts, advocates and consumers. In addition to the objective data and qualitative data about consumer needs, this needs assessment contains updates to the literature review.

The data have been organized into four general categories (Transition Services, Employment Preparation, Employer Relationships and Long Term Supports) which represent areas of need consistently identified in previous assessments. Within those categories, needs were identified as either "Consistent and Documented" or "Potential and Emerging". The fifth category – Communications – identifies both internal and external communication needs.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services Needs

Transition Services

Consistent and Documented

To improve the likelihood of future employment, Transition Plans should contain a Career Development section. The section should contain expectations for Work Experiences or Internships to explore potential careers and work experience opportunities. So that deaf and hard of hearing transition consumers can participate in Career Development, there is a need for ASL interpreters for career development classes and work experiences/internships. Career development discussions should begin as early as the ninth grade and possibly in middle school.

Parents consistently express two ways to improve the transition planning process: 1) alternative meeting locations, other than just the school, for meetings between VRS counselor and consumer and 2) parent forums or parent support groups where parents of transition-age consumers can air their concerns and issues with other parents and VRS staff in an informal setting.

In 2012, a survey of VRS staff serving transition-age youth found:

- 56 percent of staff had seen a large increase in the last two years in the amount of time spent with transition-age consumers with challenging disability-related barriers;

- 53 percent of staff wanted additional training in career development services;

- 42 percent of staff wanted additional training on developing and maintaining productive relationships with parents and family.

Potential and Emerging

There is an increasing incidence of individuals diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). The diagnosis usually occurs while the individual is a child. In FFY 2006 VRS served 175 ASD consumers. In Federal Fiscal Year 2012 VRS served 488 ASD consumers. Emerging needs in the provision of services to persons with ASD include: a) individuals without cognitive disability may be ineligible for developmental disability services but require long-term, ongoing supports, b) staff and programs may have little experience with ASD clients, and best-practices research is limited, c) traditional services are often not suitable for persons with ASD, as highly individualized services are required, and d) there are not good assessment and vocational evaluation tools for persons with ASD. The increasing number of youth with ASD provided focus on their specific needs for career development:

- Guidance to develop individualized postsecondary education, employment and independent living goals for life after high school

- 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

-Training and opportunities to practice self-advocacy and self-determination skills in work and college settings services that will ensure they meet employment goals

-Work experience in community-based settings including service learning,

Many parents have a preference for 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

Historically, approximately 44 percent of VRS consumers with a signed placement plan do not find employment before having their case closed. Research continues to stress the importance of a consistent and engaged counseling relationship between counselor and consumer. Engagement needs include regular and predictable VRS counselor contact while a consumer attends training/schooling and then when the consumer begins looking for employment.

Consumers need a variety of work experiences to prepare for competitive work. These could include: internships, job shadowing, job tryouts. Within those work experiences, consumers need more options for the intensity of services (very low to very high) and cost (inexpensive to expensive) in order to meet their needs at different points in the employment preparation process.

The Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee identified several strategies to increase the number of successful employment outcomes: a) ensure a high quality "Assessment of VR Needs" by the counselor and include the assessment with all referrals to a CRP, b) promote greater use of a team approach in referral decisions; involve counselor, consumer and potential CRP/LUV placement professional, c) after a placement plan is signed, reconvene the team (minimum of counselor, consumer and placement professional) for a 90-day check-in to assess progress of the Employment Plan, d) amend plan (services, outcomes, expectations) when necessary to achieve employment, e) restructure the PBA (performance based agreement) payment system to better align benchmark payment timing and amount of payment with when the work occurs (the job search and job support phases tend to be the most intensive part of the process), d) re-educate placement teams that the Employment Plan process is a flexible and fluid process which should provide a level of support (from low to high) commensurate with the needs of the consumer.

National discussions about the quality and skill level of potential employees suggest that all future job candidates must have post-secondary education along with related work experience and a readiness to work full time. But the data indicates otherwise. Business surveys show that the percentage of jobs which requires those three things varies dramatically by job class and geographic area. There are still many jobs for individuals who lack a post-secondary education or related work experience, and who prefer to work part time. VRS's desire to place consumers

in competitive employment at a living wage and progressively reduce the client's dependence on public benefits can run counter to a consumer's desire to only work part time and not reduce their 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 consumer job goal), Construction Trade Workers (6th in projected hires, 30th in rank as a VRS consumer job goal) and Business Operations Specialists (7th in projected job hires, 27th in rank as a VRS consumer job goal). Two occupations which are higher job priorities for VRS consumers but lower projected hires are: Secretaries and Administrative Assistants (28th in projected hires, 12th as a VRS consumer job goal) and Other Food Preparation and Serving – Related Workers (29th in projected job hires, 10th as a VRS consumer job goal).

Potential and Emerging Needs

Minnesota has closed three out of four VRS service categories and is now working primarily with consumers with the greatest needs. How to prepare these consumers in the best manner possible so that employers see these individuals as viable employees is a constant and evolving need.

Employer Relationships Needs

Consistent and Documented Need

Current and potential employers want to know the financial and employment implications of hiring persons with disabilities. Surveys suggest 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 accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). VRS should be able to explain the “value added” for businesses which hire persons with disabilities and to explain the altruistic benefits for hiring persons with disabilities. VRS needs to better describe the scope of VRS's services and what supports VRS offers after a person with a disability is hired.

Businesses identified four specific needs which could increase their hiring of persons with disabilities: 1) access to trusted, credible sources of information related to disability employment, 2) evidence of applicant performance, 3) follow-up coaching and support for supervisors, 4) regular communication between employer and the VRS. Businesses want local reliable information resources on Minnesota 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 workforce being persons with disabilities.

On the consumer side of the equation, the State Rehabilitation Council identified three needs for improving employment: a) use old and new recruitment strategies for “telling” employers that VRS has a large employment-ready workforce, b) recruit a group of businesses with extensive

experience employing persons with disabilities who would be willing to “mentor” a business that would like to start hiring persons with disabilities.

The research of Song, et. al. (2013) picks up on this theme. They found that employers tend to have low expectations about the job skills of a person with disabilities, but factors other than job skills are more important to employers – following instructions, integrity/honesty, punctual, being respectful and attending to safety. Reading/writing competencies and basic work skills were in high demand. In a good trend, employers increasingly recognize that costs associated with hiring individuals with disabilities are reasonable and negotiable. As would be expected, if an employer hires a person with disabilities, they show favorable attitudes towards hiring additional persons with disabilities and can identify the advantages of those hires. The reverse tends to be true for employers who have not hired a person with disabilities.

Long-term Support Needs

Consistent and Documented Needs

Previous Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessments have identified a high level of need for long-term supports. The skill level of VRS counselors 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 an area needing additional training. While virtually all VRS consumers would benefit from some type of 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.

Consumers and organizations familiar with long-term support needs listed certain support services for the period 6 months, 12 months, 18 months, and longer after a consumer has started employment. Those services included: a) personal support for life issues that accompany a job, b) how to disclose a disability, c) how to quit a job, d) how to make oneself visible and promotion-worthy within a company, e) negotiating workplace accommodations, and f) understanding the performance appraisal purpose and process.

There is a need to identify ongoing funding resources for independent living support services. County budget reductions coupled with a decline in the number of waiver slots poses significant challenges to providing joint VRS/DHS/County funding for services for long-term support.

Greater Minnesota’s circumstances – fewer and more dispersed organizations offering long-term support services – presents a barrier to meeting long-term support needs. Consumers and providers recognize the need for a richer mix of long-term support and Supported Employment services outside of the metropolitan area. Before developing new programs, there is a need to more clearly identify the problem and barriers to resolving the problem: Are VRS’s pay-for-performance rates high enough to draw providers to underserved areas? For providers, are the barriers to entry a capacity issue (need more providers or more slots in existing programs), a coordination issue (more efficient/effective use of county waiver funds and VRS Supported

Employment funds), an effectiveness issue (are the most effective providers receiving the majority of funds) or a financial issues (cash flow from contract payments is insufficient to recoup start-up costs in a reasonable amount of time)

Potential and Emerging Needs

Given the continual identification of long-term supports/Supported Employment as a need, explore the possibility of creating a Program Specialist position(s) for planning and promoting long term supports including Supported Employment among VRS counselors. Consider how the evolving Placement Partnerships could play in role in meeting and/or resolving long-term support needs, especially in Greater Minnesota.

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 comprising communication representatives from various CRPs and that group identified needs for improved communication:

- Helping vocational rehabilitation communities to develop key messages and to speak with one voice
- Addressing branding challenges and opportunities for the VR Community
- Getting better at “Telling Our Story”
- Developing an effective, system-wide media outreach plan
- Helping the general public understand what services are available
- Developing messages that speak to each audience in language they understand
- Working to motivate others into action – shifting mindsets to increase awareness, interest and support for competitive employment for people with disabilities and other barriers
- Gathering and synthesizing relevant inputs on outreach needs, messages and efforts
- Providing support for stronger VR communication strategy and execution
- Working on actual projects that help progress/results toward strategic outreach goals
- Creating more streamlined access to important information and resources such as contacts, expertise, and links for education and training

Legislators, businesses and the general public need to know if the 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 if the investment of public dollars is a prudent financial decision. In 2012, VRS replicated a Return on Investment methodology developed by the State of Virginia Rehabilitation Services and economists from the University of Richmond. That analysis provided a first look at ROI for VRS. Based on the results of that analysis, there is a need for further parsing the information for that cohort (2003) as well as analyze another cohort (2007) to see if the trends for the 2003 cohort are similar for a later cohort.

Other communication needs regarding the use of public funds include: There is a need to understand the difference in costs/wages between the various disability groups and the factors underlying those differences, e.g., type of services received by consumer, length of time of service, speed of wage gains; a need to better utilize technology to improve service and productivity within VRS and to improve and expand the participation of consumers, providers, staff and citizens in the discussion of needs and strategies for VRS.

This screen was last updated on Jun 24 2014 10:56AM 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.

Estimate of the Total Number of Persons Who Will Be Served

In FFY 2015, Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) anticipates serving about 16,910 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 14,350 (85 percent) will be persons who have a most significant disability, and about 2,560 (15 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 2015, it is estimated that about 16,910 persons with serious limitations in three or more functional areas (priority category one) will be served at an approximate case service cost of \$15 million; about 1,850 persons will be served who have serious limitations in two functional areas (priority category two) at an approximate case service cost of \$1.7 million; and about 710 persons will be served who have a serious limitation in one functional area (priority category three) at an approximate case service cost of \$643,000.

Estimate of Supported Employment Services

It is estimated that 2,950 individuals will have individualized employment plans with a supported employment goal in FFY 2015 under Title VI Part B, Supported Employment Services Program. The approximate cost of purchased services for these individuals will be \$2,610,000. 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 2015, approximately 2,763 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: Open	Title I	\$15,068,000	14,350	\$1,050
Priority Category Two: Closed	Title I	\$1,674,000	1850	\$904
Priority Category Three: Closed	Title I	\$643,000	710	\$905
Priority Category Four: Closed	Title I	\$0	0	—
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				—
Totals		\$17,385,000	16,910	\$1,028

This screen was last updated on Jun 12 2014 12:02PM 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 were exceeding annual program resources, requiring the agency to use carryover funds from the previous year to meet all financial obligations. The budget forecast for FFY 2014 indicated a continuing trend in deficit spending with less than \$0.5 million of carryover funds available. This fiscal situation required the agency to implement several budget reduction measures, including the closing of Priority Categories Two and Three on October 14,

2013. 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) also remains closed.

The State Rehabilitation Council received monthly updates on the budget situation, including the impact of sequestration, and was actively involved in the process to determine if and when to close Priority Categories Two and Three.

There are currently 523 individuals on the waiting list (5 on Priority Category Four, 92 on Priority Category Three, and 426 on Priority Category Two). 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

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. This category has essentially been closed since 1993.

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

In FFY 2015, under the order of selection currently in effect, approximately 16,910 individuals will be served. Approximately 2,763 individuals will achieve employment outcomes in FFY 2015.

Priority Category	Number of individuals to be served	Estimated number of individuals who will exit with employment after	Estimated number of individuals who will exit without employment after	Time within which goals are to be achieved	Cost of services
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		receiving services	receiving services		
1	14,350	2,062	1,030	23.4 months	\$15,068,000
2	1,850	576	290	24.3 months	\$1,674,000
3	710	125	55	22.2 months	\$643,000
4	0	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.

During FFY 2015, about 2,950 individuals will be served with Title VI, Part B funds supplemented by Title I funds, at a purchased service cost of about \$2,610,000. 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 competitive employment with supports. 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.

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 has redistributed available VRS-EE funding to address waiting lists in some areas of the state.

Strategic Goal for Effective Partnerships

In FFY 2015, 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 12 2014 12:21PM 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 2015 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.

The employment section of the Olmstead Plan, submitted to the U.S. District Court on November 1, 2013, establishes two goals: 1) Increase the employment rate for people with disabilities so that it is comparable to the employment rate of people without disabilities, and 2) increase the earnings of people with disabilities so that it is comparable to people without disabilities. There are four specific strategies that VRS will play an active role in: 1) Expand Individual Placement and supports in 17 additional counties, 2) promulgate changes to the State Rule governing Extended Employment, capping admissions to non-integrated and sub-minimum wage programs and shifting the funding to integrated employment, 3) provide technical assistance to non-integrated employment programs to design new business models that lead to competitive employment in the most integrated setting, and 4) provide information about effective employment strategies, such as supported and customized employment, that make competitive employment possible for individuals with complex and significant disabilities. VRS is currently clarifying policy to ensure that all vocational rehabilitation services are provided in the most integrated setting appropriate for the person.

In FFY 2013, VRS utilized \$1,369,000 in funding, or approximately 2.4% 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. The State Rehabilitation Council is currently studying VR's effectiveness in reaching both New Americans and established Americans who are of minority background.

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.

Individual Placement and Support (IPS) is the evidenced based practice of supported employment for persons with serious mental illness. IPS helps people in community mental health treatment services to become part of the competitive labor market. Research indicates that

IPS is nearly three times more effective than other vocational approaches in helping people with mental illness to work competitively. Research also shows that people who obtain competitive employment through IPS have increased income, improved self-esteem, improved quality of life and reduced symptoms. Approximately half of the people who enroll in IPS become steady workers and remain competitively employed a decade later.

Minnesota VR became part of the Johnson and Johnson Dartmouth Community Mental Health learning collaborative in 2006. VR has supported the implementation of IPS in Minnesota using VRS funding for time limited services via innovation and expansion grants (\$475,000), assignment of VR Counselor liaisons to IPS projects and VR purchase of services for VR time limited services. Minnesota now has eight established projects that have achieved good or exemplary scores on the IPS fidelity scale. In SFY 2014, seventeen additional IPS projects have been launched using State funds and VRS purchase of services for time limited VR services.

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 redirected the direct appropriation into a competitive grant pool. MEC successfully competed for the available funding. It is anticipated that the Legislature may restore the direct appropriation in 2014.

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 periodic 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 job retention supports, and to promote the use of PASS Plans.

Minnesota has been selected by the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at the University of Massachusetts – Boston as a demonstration site for the RSA funded demonstration grant to improve employment outcomes for VR customers who are SSDI beneficiaries (“The SGA Project”). Minnesota VR will be working closely with the ICI to promote rehabilitation counseling techniques that promote consumer engagement, provide early access to financial planning and benefits planning services, and provides early job development activities.

VRS has established a contractual partnership with PACER Center, a parent advocacy organization, to improve outreach, training and assistance to Minnesota families of youth with disabilities, and to improve VRS staff understanding of assistive technology and its impact on youth transitioning to employment.

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 63CRPs.

VRS has an active CRP Advisory Committee to assist in achievement of common goals. 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 and implementing training for VRS and CRP job developers (Next Generation Placement). 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).

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 provides consultation to the WFCs' Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) federal grant to serve youth in transition.

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 2013 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.

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. Expand development of long-term supports
- D. Improve consistency of transition services received by students who are in high school

Goal 1 Outcome Measures:

A1. Using FFY 2013 as the baseline, employment outcomes will increase by 25 annually in each of the next two FFYs (2014 and 2015).

Progress to Date: The 2013 baseline is 2,738 placements. The 2014 performance to date is 1,994, a 147 increase over the previous fiscal year performance for the same time period.

B1. All VRS managers, counselors and VR Technicians Seniors will have attended four informational sessions on Social Security work incentives and benefits planning by the end of FFY 2015.

Progress to Date: All teams participated in training on Developing PASS Plans and a Disability Benefits 101 refresher. New employees participated in benefits planning training provided by local WIPA staff.

B2. VRS will collect baseline data during FFY 2014 on consumer satisfaction with their employment outcomes. The baseline data will be used to establish future targets for customer satisfaction.

Progress to Date: A new Customer Survey has been developed and will be piloted during the fourth quarter of the fiscal year. The mail in survey attempts to measure both satisfaction and the person's level of engagement in the rehabilitation process.

C1. Increase annually the number of VRS consumers who are leveraging Extended Employment/Supported Employment funding for on-going supports.

Progress to Date: All direct service staff have received training on the available funding streams for supported employment. Measuring the impact of this training has been difficult due to the complexity of the funding streams, and the fact that a person may access multiple funding streams to meet specific needs.

D1. Improve work experience opportunities for VRS consumers in school to work transition.

Progress to Date: The Olmsted Plan places heavy emphasis on "Work First". Transition students will have opportunities for integrated work experiences in the community before less integrated options are considered. VRS continues to support on the job training and paid work experiences to assist students make the transition to competitive employment.

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. Develop a program evaluation framework

Progress to Date: VRS has developed and implemented an evaluation framework with three aspects:

1) A Director of Program Evaluation and Service Quality has been hired. He has clarified and articulated a development model of program evaluation and created a plan to progressively move VRS's evaluation work from compliance reports to sophisticated program analytics to measure State Plan and program outcomes and the factors supporting/hindering those outcomes;

2) revised internal operation details to support the model and ensure that there is alignment of evaluation efforts with VRS's direction and that new initiatives develop an evaluation design prior to the start of the initiative, and

3) VRS took steps to "demystify" data and program evaluation and increase the data skills of staff and managers. For common reports and common requests, VRS has been creating a series of Excel spreadsheets which are populated with client data. Each spreadsheet has a specific topic, e.g., placement, assessment, service costs, and includes data elements for those topics. In this way, managers and staff only need knowledge of Excel, Excel's Sort function, some capacity to create tables/charts and rudimentary skill with Pivot Tables to quickly answer their questions in these topic areas. This approach improved the productivity of evaluation staff to more quickly answered manager's questions and continued to embed an "evaluation" culture within VRS.

B. Establish a leadership development program for current and emerging leaders

Progress to Date: "Leadership Exploration and Development" has been designed and is scheduled for implementation during the summer of 2014.

C. Implement the first stage of a University of Wisconsin research study to assess counselor competency in motivational interviewing

Progress to Date: The University of Wisconsin (Stout and Madison campuses) is currently conducting a study of the impact of motivational interviewing training efforts. A counselor survey was deployed in February, 2014, and an analysis of 911 data for key case service elements is in process.

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.

The State Rehabilitation Council conducts an annual survey of the Council to rate the effectiveness of the Council. The average ranking for the questions ranged from 73.5% to 94%. Topics that exceeded the 80% threshold included VRS giving meaningful consideration to Council's advice (92%, with a range of 85 to 100), clarity of the information provided by VRS (81%, with a range of 50 to 95), clarity of data submitted to RSA (90%, with a range of 85 to 100), completeness of the information provided about the required data reports (85%, with a range of 50 to 100), timeliness of discussions (85%, with a range of 50 to 100), and informing the Council of their statutory responsibilities (91%, with range of 80 to 100). Two areas of

concern emerged from the survey. Several members expressed frustration with understanding the budget, sequestration, and the impact this had on the decision to close priority categories. Some members felt member training and development would be improved if members had more opportunities to attend meetings of other Councils and VRS staff meetings.

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.

Progress to Date: The VRS Community Outreach Team accomplished the following goals: 1) inventoried and catalogued existing system-wide information, outreach and marketing materials and is developing an accessible online archive/clearinghouse for sharing all materials; 2) developed and made widely available a suite of employer outreach and informational materials making the statewide business case for recruiting and hiring people with disabilities; 3) developed collaborative strategies and informational materials for joint legislative and congressional testimony and presentations; 4) shared and disseminated success stories about the statewide rehabilitation system; 5) began to develop a statewide approach to meeting the information, technical assistance and outreach requirements of Minnesota's Olmstead 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.

Progress to date: There are currently 15 local placement partnerships operating across the state. However, some groups are more active than others. Placement 101, the joint training of VRS and CRP placement specialists, continues.

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.

Progress to date: Each of the 17 VRS teams is represented on at least one active placement partnership team. The more established partnerships are hosting job fairs, mentoring new staff, and operating as an effective partnership. Newer partnerships are still defining how they will operate and expanding community awareness of their services.

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.

Progress to Date: Job leads are shared via email or Google, and successful placements are tracked. Members frequently co-host Career Fairs and other employer events to engage employers.

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.

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

VRS utilized a Request for Proposals process to shift Extended Employment funding from areas with surplus capacity to areas with limited resources. This expanded Minnesota's service capacity for supported employment, including the supported employment needs of transition-age youths and young adults, low incidence populations of persons with disabilities and other unserved and underserved populations.

3. Provide an Assessment of the performance of the VR program on the standards and indicators for FY 2013.

Following are the performance measures and the five-year trends:

Indicator 1.1: Number of consumers achieving an employment outcome:

RSA National Standard: Equal or exceed previous year.

2009: 2,389

2010: 2,143

2011: 2,477

2012: 2,490

2013: 2,738

The 2014 performance to date is 1,994, a 147 increase over the previous fiscal year performance for the same time period.

Indicator 1.2: The percentage of consumers with employment outcomes who exited the program after receiving services.

RSA National Standard: 55.8%

2009: 49.1

2010: 47.8

2011: 60.2

2012: 56.7

2013: 59.5

2014 year to date: 65

Indicator 1.3: The percentage of consumers with competitive employment outcomes.

RSA National Standard: 72.6%

2009: 96.0

2010: 97.7

2011: 99.1

2012: 99.0

2013: 99.6

2014 year to date: 99.8

Indicator 1.4: The percentage of consumers with significant disabilities.

RSA National Standard: 62.4%

Under the Order of Selection, 100% of consumers served have a significant disability.

Indicator 1.5: Consumers' average wage compared to all other Minnesota workers. RSA National Standard: .52

2009: .491

2010: .501

2011: .458

2012: .457

2013: .463

2014 year to date: .463

Indicator 1.6: Percentage change, from application to closure, of earned income as the primary source of financial support.

RSA National Standard: 53.0

2009: 64.1

2010: 65.4

2011: 67.9

2012: 64.4

2013: 67.8

2014 year to date: 68.4

Indicator 2.1: The ratio of minority and non-minority service rates. RSA National Standard .80

2009: .87

2010: .84

2011: .81

2012: .85

2013: .86

2014 year to date: .83

4. Provide a report on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized in FY 2013.

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 32.5 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 periodic meetings of the Employment Networks. One result of this is more Employment Networks are providing Ticket-to-Work funded job retention (Partnership Plus) services following VRS intensive services. There are currently 188 consumers receiving 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.

All counselors received SSA sponsored training on how to coordinate VRS and PASS Plan services. There are currently 80 consumers receiving coordinated services. The most typical PASS Plan services are private college tuition above what VRS pays and the purchase of "gently used" cars for reliable transportation.

VRS is currently implementing the "SGA Project" to improve the employment rate and income level for SSDI beneficiaries. The project is part of an RSA funded research project at the Institute for Community Inclusion at the U of M-Boston.

Rehabilitation Technology

Rehabilitation technology, also referred to as assistive technology, enhances employment outcomes, leading to better employment outcomes including higher paying jobs. VRS continues to provide training and coaching to increase the use of rehabilitation technology 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 a technology liaison to their own VR teams. Several staff have completed the RSA funded TechSpec program at the U of W-Milwaukee.

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 2013, there were 38 new applications and 15 people achieved an employment outcome.

Collaborative Projects with Centers for Independent Living

Since 2008, the VRS-IL collaboration has served Minnesotans with the most significant disabilities that require both vocational rehabilitation and independent living services to meet their goals for working and living in the community. In FFY 2013 DEED-VRS dedicated \$1,027,446 in SSA program income to fund locally designed collaboration grants with each of Minnesota's eight Centers for Independent Living.

In FFY 2013, 1,510 VRS consumers were served through the collaboration, with 9,122 service hours being provided. Employment outcomes have improved, and continue to improve, as a result of this collaboration. The employment rate for participants in 2013 was 66.5 percent. For those VRS consumers who did not receive services under the collaboration, the employment rate was 58.5 percent. It is anticipated that funding for the VRS-IL collaboration will be continued for FFY 2015.

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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

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. 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 2013 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 \$11,942,000 in state funding annually to community rehabilitation programs to support ongoing vocational services through community based supported 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.

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System Information

System information

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