

TO: Roger Breed, Ed.D.
Commissioner of Education

FROM: Mark Schultz, Administrator
Vocational Rehabilitation

SUBJECT: Revisions to the State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation Services and
State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services
Program for Fiscal Year 2012

PROPOSED BOARD ACTION

It is recommended that the State Board of Education approve the revisions to the State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation Services and State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program for Fiscal Year 2012.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A revised State Plan is required for Vocational Rehabilitation to continue to receive Federal funds after October 1, 2011. The Board approved the current State Plan at its July, 2010 meeting.

Estimated Cost

Approval of the revised State Plan will assure Nebraska continues to receive \$3.69 in federal matching funds for each \$1.00 of state funds expended on the program.

Supporting Documentation Included:

Attachment 4.2(c): Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council; Responses of the Designated State Unit and Explanations for Rejection of Inputs or Recommendations

Attachment 4.8(b)(1): Cooperation with Agencies That Are Not in the Statewide Workforce Investment System and with Other Entities

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

Attachment 4.8(b)(4): Evidence of Collaboration Regarding Supported Employment Services and Extended Services

Attachment 4.10: Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

Attachment 4.11(b): Annual Estimates of Individuals to be Served and Costs of Services

Attachment 4.11(c)(1): State's Goals and Priorities

Attachment 4.11(c)(3): Order of Selection

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

Attachment 4.11(d): State's Strategies and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

Attachment 4.11(e)(2): Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Identified Goals and Priorities and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

For additional information on this item: Call Mark Schultz (402) (471-1202) or e-mail (mark.schultz@nebraska.gov).

VR 2012 State Plan Public Hearing
May 10, 2011
3:00 p.m.

The public hearing was held at the VR Lincoln Service Office, 3901 N. 27th Street, Suite 6 and included video conferencing sites in Scottsbluff, North Platte, Kearney, Grand Island, Columbus, Norfolk, Lincoln NSOB, and two sites in downtown and west Omaha.

The hearing was jointly conducted by Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation and the State Rehabilitation Council. Presiding over the meeting were Mark Schultz, VR Director and Kip Ransom, SRC Chairman.

Public in attendance:

Norfolk: Michelle Prauner, Employment Works

Lincoln: Kara Magdanz, HOPE - Mental Health Association
Kasey Moyer, HOPE - Mental Health Association
Victoria Rasmussen – Client Assistance Program

Mark Schultz provided an overview of the state plan in general and covered some specific goals, priorities, and strategies in the 2012 State Plan.

Kasey Moyer, Program Coordinator for HOPE provided the only public comment.

Comment: My concern is that we have seen folks come in with a Substance Dependent Diagnosis only. Upon further discussion with the individual, especially when talking about medications, we find out he or she has an undiagnosed mental health condition. If a mental health diagnosis is found through further assessment, might the individual then qualify for placement in the Order of Selection Priority Category I and be served through the Behavioral Health Supported Employment Program.

Response: Once Vocational Rehabilitation has determined such an individual eligible for VR services, we could determine the need for, and obtain, further mental health assessment. Depending upon the results of the assessment, the diagnosis and the presenting functional limitations, the individual may meet the criteria for placement in Priority Category One. Such placement would mean the individual could participate in the Behavioral Health Supported Employment Program.

STATE PLAN FOR THE STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES PROGRAM AND STATE PLAN SUPPLEMENT FOR THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM

State Plan for Fiscal Year 2012

SECTION 1: STATE CERTIFICATIONS

- 1.1 The (enter the name of designated state agency or designated state unit below)...
Nebraska Department of Education
... 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... (enter the name of the designated state agency below) ^[3]
Nebraska Department of Education
... 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.
- 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.
- 1.5 The state legally may carry out each provision of the State Plan and its Supplement.

- 1.6 All provisions of the State Plan and its Supplement are consistent with state law.
- 1.7 The (enter title of state officer below)
State Treasurer
... 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)...
Commissioner of Education
... 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.

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/programs/8003/assurancesed80013.doc>) for both the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.

Signed? yes
 Name of Signatory Roger D. Breed, Ed.D.
 Title of Signatory Commissioner of Education
 Date Signed (mm/dd/yyyy) 07/07/2011

The designated state agency and/or the designated state unit provide the following assurance(s) in connection with the approval of the State Plan for FY 2012

Signed? yes
 Name of Signatory Roger D. Breed, Ed.D.

Title of Signatory Commissioner of Education

Date Signed (mm/dd/yyyy) 07/07/2011

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

SECTION 1 FOOTNOTES

- [1] Public Law 93 112, as amended by Public Laws 93 516, 95 602, 98 221, 99 506, 100-630, 102-569, 103-073, and 105-220.
- [2] Unless otherwise stated, "Rehabilitation Act" means the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.
- [3] All references in this plan to "designated state agency" or to "the state agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.
- [4] No funds under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved State Plan in accordance with Section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR part 361.
- [5] Applicable regulations include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR Parts 74, 76, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 85 and 86 and the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program regulations in 34 CFR Part 361.
- [6] No funds under Title VI, Part B, of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved Supplement to the Title I State Plan in accordance with Section 625(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.
- [7] Applicable regulations include the EDGAR citations in footnote 5, 34 CFR Part 361, and 34 CFR Part 363.

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), 361.20(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.

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.

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) a state agency that is primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities; or
 - (B) X 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.
- (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 Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation

4.2 State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council. (Sections 101(a)(21) and 105 of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.16 and 361.17)

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).

or

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

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

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

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

- (a) individuals and groups of individuals who are recipients of vocational rehabilitation services or, as appropriate, the individuals' representatives;
- (b) personnel working in programs that provide vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities;
- (c) providers of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities;
- (d) the director of the Client Assistance Program; and
- (e) the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has a council.

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

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

4.5 Local administration. (Sections 7(24) and 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.5(b)(47) and 361.15)

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, 361.26, and 361.60(b)(3)(i) and (ii))

- (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, 361.23, 361.24, and 361.31, 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.
No
 - (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, 361.19 and 361.51(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), 361.29, 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.

SECTION 5: ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

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

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

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

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

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

- (a) The designated state unit is able to provide the full range of services listed in Section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.48, as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the state who apply for services.
No
- (b) If No:
 - (1) Individuals with the most significant disabilities, in accordance with criteria established by the state, are selected first

for vocational rehabilitation services before other individuals with disabilities.

- (2) Attachment 4.11(c)(3):
 - (A) shows the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services;
 - (B) provides a justification for the order of selection; and
 - (C) identifies the state's service and outcome goals and the time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
- (3) Eligible individuals who do not meet the order of selection criteria have access to the services provided through the designated state unit's information and referral system established under Section 101(a)(20) of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.37, and subsection 5.1 of this State Plan.

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

- (a) Prior to providing any vocational rehabilitation services, except those services identified in paragraph (b), to an eligible individual or to members of the individual's family, the state unit determines whether comparable services and benefits exist under any other program and whether those services and benefits are available to the individual.
- (b) The following services are exempt from a determination of the availability of comparable services and benefits:
 - (1) assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs by qualified personnel, including, if appropriate, an assessment by personnel skilled in rehabilitation technology;
 - (2) counseling and guidance, including information and support services to assist an individual in exercising informed choice consistent with the provisions of Section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act;
 - (3) referral and other services to secure needed services from other agencies, including other components of the statewide work force investment system, through agreements developed under Section 101(a)(11) of the Rehabilitation Act, if such services are not available under this State Plan;
 - (4) job-related services, including job search and placement assistance, job retention services, follow-up services, and follow-along services;
 - (5) rehabilitation technology, including telecommunications, sensory and other technological aids and devices; and
 - (6) post-employment services consisting of the services listed under subparagraphs (1) through (5) of this paragraph.
- (c) The requirements of paragraph (a) of this section do not apply if the determination of the availability of comparable services and benefits under any other program would interrupt or delay:
 - (1) progress of the individual toward achieving the employment outcome identified in the individualized plan for employment;
 - (2) an immediate job placement; or
 - (3) provision of vocational rehabilitation services to any individual who is determined to be at extreme medical risk, based

on medical evidence provided by an appropriate qualified medical professional.

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

5.5 Individualized plan for employment. (Section 101(a)(9) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.45 and 361.46)

- (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), 361.61 and 361.62(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 361.32)

- (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.

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 363.50(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 363.20)

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 363.52)

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.

SECTION 7: FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION

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

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

7.2 Use of funds in providing services. (Sections 623 and 625(b)(6)(A) and (D) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 363.6(c)(2)(iv), 363.11(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.

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 361.46 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): Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council; Responses of the Designated State Unit and Explanations for Rejection of Inputs and Recommendations

The following summarizes the State Rehabilitation Council's (SRC) input, recommendations and collaborations with Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). The agency agrees with all the recommendations and will take or has taken necessary action to implement.

SRC Input

- I. SRC members provided input on many issues including: client satisfaction surveys, IPE booklet, Bridges Out of Poverty project, a proposed video conferencing system, the federal stimulus projects, and the agency's TBI grant project.
- II. Project Search was discussed in depth and VR was encouraged to expand where possible. There were 5 projects as of September 30, 2010. Three of the 5 were funded through the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant.
- III. SRC members provided the newly developed VR marketing team ideas for marketing the program. Suggestions included visits to support groups to share VR service information, school parent advisory groups, Omaha Special Education Committee, and interviewing employers recognized during Disability Awareness Month for suggestions on the best way to market to employers. The SRC provided suggestions on ways to reduce printing costs.
- IV. SRC members provided input on the agency proposed changes to the Consumer IPE Booklet.

SRC Annual Events

- I. Disability Awareness Month – October, 2009: SRC members identified the following employers to receive awards recognizing their efforts to hire individuals with a disability.
 - Walmart
 - Apogee Retail, LLC
 - Lincoln Action Program
 - Park 'N Go Airport Parking
 - Marshalls
 - Specialty Network
 - Heartland Family Service
 - Goodwill Store & Donation Center
 - Subway
- II. The SRC hosted a state Legislative luncheon on February 16, 2010 to provide information about VR. This was well attended by State Senators and their staff.
- III. Entrepreneur of Year Awards: The Entrepreneur of Year Awards was held on July 14, 2010. Awards were given to four VR clients who have succeeded in their self-employment ventures. In addition, the City Administrator from South Sioux City was presented an SRC Entrepreneurial Spirit Recognition Award for his support and contributions. The Governor participated in the awards ceremony.

SRC Recommendations

- I. SRC members recommended the development of a Consumer Input Committee (CIC) and the agency agreed to support its implementation. The CIC was established and comprised of 13 current or recently closed VR clients who agreed to respond to emailed questions. The CAP Director poses the SRC and/or agency questions to the CIC. The input is reported back to the Council and agency. During FY 2010, questions around 3 topics were presented to the CIC:
 - Computerized surveys
 - Consumer accountability in regard to the case service authorizations
 - Staff dress code

- II. The SRC recommended that an Employer Survey be developed to assess the satisfaction of employers who have worked with VR.

The survey of businesses resulted in 60 replies. The results of the survey indicated individual personal contact with businesses by VR staff was very important. Overall, employers were very satisfied with VR placement services. The survey provided valuable information on how VR can effectively work with temporary staffing agencies.

**Attachment 4.8(b)(1): Cooperation with Agencies That Are Not in the Statewide Workforce Investment System
and with Other Entities**

Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation seeks to work cooperatively with numerous other state and local agencies and programs. Collaborative efforts are manifested through coordinated committees throughout the state with VR state office and local staff actively participating. Examples of the committees Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation serves on includes, but are not limited to, Nebraska Planning on Developmental Disabilities Council, State Advisory Council on Mental Health Services, Ticket to Work Infrastructure Committee, TBI Advisory Council, Local Community Resource Committees, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Special Education Advisory Committee, Palliative Care Advisory Committee, Madonna Community Advisory Council, ATP Advisory Council, Money Follows the Person Project Advisory Panel, Alternative Finance Loan Advisory Council, local Chambers of Commerce, etc.

Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation maintains interagency agreements with Nebraska Health and Human Services, Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and the Veterans Administration–Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program for purposes of providing an understood and coordinated effort to achieve employment goals for persons with disabilities.

Written agreements are maintained with Liberty Centre Services Employment Program, Cirrus House, Inc., Central Nebraska Goodwill, Community Alliance, Office of Juvenile Services, Mosaic, Douglas County Correctional Services, State Parole Office, PAKS Developmental Services, Developmental Disabilities of Nebraska, Vital Services, Mid-Nebraska Individual Services, South Central Developmental Services, Employment Works, Region V Services, Community Alternatives, Eastern Nebraska Community Office of Retardation, Career Solutions, Rainbow Center, Ability Building Services, Versatile Support Services, Assistive Technology Partnership, Easter Seals - Nebraska, Abilities Fund, North Star, Black Hills Workshop, Autism Center, Omaha Tribe of Nebraska, Southeast Community College, Center for People in Need, Project Search, St. Francis Hospital, Good Samaritan Hospital, and Associated Builders and Contractors Inc. These written agreements coordinate efforts and services to assist persons with disabilities to achieve employment success. These agencies represent various locations throughout the state and serve individuals experiencing a variety of disabilities such as severe and persistent mental illness, developmental disability, brain injury, learning disability, and those experiencing multiple disabilities.

To maximize limited resources and assist individuals to access other programs which can provide needed services essential to individuals achieving employment, Vocational Rehabilitation works cooperatively with and utilizes numerous services and facilities within the state. These services and facilities include Centers for Independent Living, the Parent Information and Training Center, Apprenticeship Program, schools, Housing and Homelessness Commission, Educational Service Units and employers.

Vocational Rehabilitation works cooperatively with and utilizes Rural Economic Area Partnerships, and other programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture, when these programs and resources are available to local communities for economic development, and to the extent such cooperation and utilization is permissible under §101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

The State of Nebraska does not have a state use contracting program.

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

Coordination with Nebraska Department of Education-Special Education, Nebraska Department of Education

Vocational Rehabilitation and the Nebraska Department of Education-Special Education co-funded a Transition Program Director, a Youth Leadership Facilitator, and a Youth Leadership Council.

The statewide Youth Leadership Council provides an opportunity for youth with disabilities to develop leadership skills and promote self-advocacy. The Council will work with youth and organizations across the state to promote the Council's goals and activities and the development of Regional Youth Leadership Councils.

In partnership with Special Education and the Department of Health and Human Services, a Youth Rehabilitation and Training Center Liaison assists youth with disabilities as they leave the state's juvenile correctional facilities and return to their home community. The Liaison assists youth as they re-enter high school, post-secondary training, or employment.

In addition, Special Education and Vocational Rehabilitation have an interagency agreement to facilitate the transition of students receiving special education services. Special Education is the educational agency responsible for providing a free appropriate public education. Vocational Rehabilitation is the adult service agency responsible for providing vocational rehabilitation services. This agreement provides for —

- Consultation and technical assistance to assist local educational agencies and Educational Service Units in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including employment, post-secondary education, vocational rehabilitation services, or services from an appropriate adult service agency.
- Transition planning by personnel of Vocational Rehabilitation, local school districts and Educational Service Units to facilitate the development and completion of individualized educational programs providing for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities.
- Identification of local school districts roles and responsibilities for the provision of a free appropriate public education to students with disabilities to the point of exit from school, including the planning and provision of transition services, and Vocational Rehabilitation's roles and responsibilities for providing consultation and technical assistance to local school districts, upon request, and the provision of other assistance in planning for the transition of students with disabilities during their school years to the extent determined by cooperative agreements with local school districts.
- Identification of the local school district as the lead agency responsible for providing transition services and responsible qualified personnel to students with disabilities to the point of exit from school, and Vocational Rehabilitation as the lead agency responsible for providing services and qualified personnel after the point of exit to those students meeting Vocational Rehabilitation eligibility and order of selection requirements.
- Identification of the local school district as having the financial responsibility for providing transition services to students with disabilities to the point of exit from school, and Vocational Rehabilitation as having the financial responsibility for providing services and qualified personnel after the point of exit to those students meeting Vocational Rehabilitation eligibility and order of selection requirements. Any student eligible for the VR program will have their Individualized Plan of Employment completed before exiting school. Other financial responsibilities, including joint responsibilities, may be specified in cooperative agreements between Vocational Rehabilitation and local school districts or Educational Service Units.
- Procedures for enhancing outreach to and identification of students with disabilities in need of transition services, including those students with disabilities who qualify for assistance under §504 of the Rehabilitation Act, but not a free appropriate public education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Vocational Rehabilitation serves on the Nebraska Department of Education's Special Education Advisory Council's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Standing Committee. This committee meets twice a year to share information, identify issues, and coordinate secondary education and transition services for deaf and hard of hearing students.

Coordination with local school districts and Educational Service Units

As a result of Nebraska's strong tradition of local control, over 250 local school districts offer secondary education. Most districts are small, enrolling fewer than 100 secondary students, and having less than 10 students with disabilities. Vocational Rehabilitation has a two prong directed outreach effort to secondary school districts —

- Outreach and identification efforts directed to special education, vocational education, guidance counseling, school nursing, and school personnel having knowledge of students with disabilities, including those not receiving special education services.

- Development of a Transition Partnership Planning process for schools, Educational Service Units, and VR at the local level. This process is used to promote a coordinated effort between the local school, ESU, and the local VR Office. The planning process identifies the nature and scope of services the local VR Office will provide in coordination with the efforts of the school and/or ESU. The process addresses the schedule of events and activities, expected outcomes, and a process to evaluate the effectiveness of the partnership.

Attachment 4.8(b)(4): Evidence of Collaboration Regarding Supported Employment Services and Extended Services

On the state level, Vocational Rehabilitation works collaboratively with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Divisions of Developmental Disabilities Services and Behavioral Health Services to coordinate the system of service delivery for supported employment services. While the funding models for supported employment services in these two systems are different, both models contain performance-based provisions.

The Health and Human Services Division of Developmental Disabilities has expanded and supported employment opportunities through its Community Supports Program (CSP). This allows consumers and their families to hire private individuals, not associated with any agency, to serve as a job coach to help the individual achieve a supported employment outcome. Vocational Rehabilitation is developing policies to support this effort and to financially participate in this innovative supported employment effort.

Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation has a grant with the Autism Center of Nebraska to provide supported employment and job coaching for individuals with autism. This demonstration project provides an opportunity for the Autism Center to develop services and strategies that will create competitive employment opportunities for individuals who have not generally had the necessary supports to achievement an employment outcome. This project is funded by ARRA funds and is intended to be sustained after the grant period as a fee for services community-based activity.

At the local level, Vocational Rehabilitation enters into written agreements for the provision of supported employment services with financial assistance provided by Vocational Rehabilitation. These agreements are used with public or private non-profit community rehabilitation programs and private for-profit entities providing supported employment services. Vocational Rehabilitation maintains written procedures for entering into these agreements.

Each agreement describes the time-limited services that will be provided to eligible persons with the most significant disabilities using funds from Vocational Rehabilitation prior to the transition to extended services. These services may include any of those described in Attachment 6.3.

Cooperating organizations must assure the availability of the minimum extended services of (1) twice monthly monitoring at the work site of each individual to assess job stability and (2) based on that assessment, coordination or provision of specific services needed to maintain job stability. If off-site monitoring is determined to be appropriate, then each month, there must be two contacts with the employed person and, if the person has disclosed their impairment to their employer, one contact with the employer each month. These mandatory extended monitoring services apply to all agreements.

Attachment 4.10 Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

This attachment describes the comprehensive system of personnel development. The State Rehabilitation Council had an opportunity to review and comment on the development of plans, policies, and procedures necessary to meet the requirements of 34 CFR 361.18(b), (c), (d), and (f).

Data systems on personnel and personnel development

Vocational Rehabilitation maintains a system for collecting and analyzing data on qualified personnel needs which includes: the number of personnel currently employed by Vocational Rehabilitation, by personnel category; the number of positions currently available to Vocational Rehabilitation, by personnel category; and projections of the number of personnel who will be needed in 5 years, by personnel category. The table summarizes this information for direct service personnel as of April 30, 2011:

Direct Service Personnel Employed:

	Rehab Specialist	Service Specialist	Associates
Direct Service Personnel Employed	67	43.5	39.9
Personnel to Consumer Ratio	1:101	1:131	1:160
Projected Staffing Requirements	67	48.5	39.9
Current Vacancies	0	5	.5
Projected Replacement Needs (5 year total)	33	30	14

Non-Direct Service Personnel Employed

	Senior Administrators	Program Directors, Specialists & Associates	Information Technology	Office Directors	Office Associates
Non-Direct Service Personnel Employed	2	16	6	12	2
Projected Staffing Requirements	2	16	7	14	2
Current Vacancies	0	1	1	2	0
Project Replacements (5 year total)	1	6	0	6	1

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.

There are no institutions of higher education in Nebraska receiving funds under Title III of the Rehabilitation Act to prepare vocational rehabilitation professionals in the disciplines designated in the Act (29 USC 771(b)(1)(B)). Consequently, there is no personnel development data system.

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.

Plan for recruitment, preparation, and retention of qualified personnel.

There is a projected need to replace an average of 13 - 17 VR service delivery staff annually due to resignations and retirements over the next 5 years. We anticipate no new hires through growth.

Recruitment

The ability of Vocational Rehabilitation to recruit qualified specialists is grossly impaired by the absence of

- (1) a federal traineeship support for a long-term rehabilitation training program in Nebraska,
- (2) the lack of an active state chapter of the National Rehabilitation Association or any of its divisions, and
- (3) the totally inadequate regional supply of qualified applicants with an obligation to the public vocational rehabilitation program.

This last year, the agency participated in the Fall and Spring Career Fair at the University of Nebraska– Lincoln (UNL). This career fair, while held at UNL, is attended by students from most of the colleges in Nebraska. In addition, the agency participated in the Small College Career Fair at Doane College.

Qualified rehabilitation and service specialists (i.e., those who meet academic degree standards) will be actively recruited from Nebraska higher education institutions listed below as well as the following rehabilitation education programs located primarily in the Midwest. The agency supplements the distribution of Rehabilitation and Service Specialists' vacancy postings by the state's Personnel Office by sending announcements directly to the following counseling programs.

In Nebraska, there are two programs accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). They are the University of Nebraska at Kearney and the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Both programs offer an M.A. in Community Counseling.

University of Nebraska at Kearney
University of Nebraska at Omaha

There are 6 institutions of higher education, accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools that offer an M.A. in Counseling, Clinical Counseling, or Community Counseling. Because these are generic counseling programs, the agency must conduct a transcript analysis to determine which applicants meet the Professional Counseling certification criteria.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Creighton University

Bellevue University
Chadron State College
Doane College
Wayne State College

These are the rehabilitation education programs in adjacent and surrounding states that the agency sends specialist vacancy announcements.

Master' s Rehabilitation Programs

Drake University
East Central University
Emporia State University
Langston University
Maryville University of St. Louis
Minnesota State University, Mankato
St. Cloud State University
The University of Iowa
University of Northern Colorado

Undergraduate Rehabilitation Programs

East Central University
Emporia State University
Illinois Institute of Technology
Southern Illinois University - Carbondale
University of Illinois Urbana
University of North Dakota
University of Wisconsin – Stout

Recruitment of Personnel from Minority Backgrounds and Individuals with Disabilities

There will be active recruitment of qualified personnel with disabilities and those from racial and ethnic minority. Current employees from a minority background and employees with disabilities often recruit from their networks. Our vacancy postings are listed with the Commission on Latino-Americans, the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska, the Urban League of Nebraska, the State Independent Living Council, the five Nebraska Centers for Independent Living and the CIL in Council Bluffs, Iowa. In addition, an increased salary differential is offered to individuals who are bilingual or fluent in American Sign Language (ASL). The agency currently has 13 minority staff and while we do have a number of staff with a reported or observed disability, we do not officially collect this information.

Preparation

New Vocational Rehabilitation staff receive intensive structured training in basic vocational rehabilitation values, principles, and practices during their initial probationary period. Participation is funded in part through the In-Service Training Grant.

Retention

All staff will be afforded the opportunity for 20 contact hours annually of continuing education in vocational rehabilitation knowledge, skills, and abilities to enhance job performance and improve job retention. This conforms to the annual contact hour requirement for the state's highest applicable standard. Participation is funded in part through the In-Service Training Grant.

The Director and Assistant Director conduct video conversations with new staff during their first month, fifth month, and seventh month on the job. The video conversations are an opportunity to

- become acquainted with each new staff member and his/her background,
- provide an opportunity for a new staff member to ask questions and provide feedback,

- assess how a new staff member is progressing in his/her training,
- determine if a new staff member is finding his/her job to be what they expected consistent with how the job was presented, and
- demonstrate the agency's interest in his/her success.

The agency grants work time to staff to attend classes and earn up to 7 semester credit hours or 9 quarter credit hours per year. In addition, there are staff enrolled in evening and weekend programs to obtain either a BA or MA degree including the Drake University part-time weekend programs in Rehabilitation Counseling and Rehabilitation Administration.

The Director and Assistant Director offer an opportunity to staff for face-to-face, one-on-one interviews. This is an opportunity for all staff to provide personal feedback on specific policies and procedures and to discuss their role on their team and in the agency. In addition, staff have an opportunity to anonymously post questions about policy, rumors, or any concern to the Director on an internal website.

The Assistant Director and the Program Director for VR HR conduct exit interviews with all staff leaving the agency. The goal of the interviews is to assess why people leave, look for trends, and to learn if there was anything the agency could have done to retain them.

Personnel standards

Vocational Rehabilitation employs staff in 13 self-directed teams throughout the state to provide direct services and supports (including financial assistance to help pay for the cost of services) that are responsive to the unique needs and circumstances of each person with significant disabilities served.

During FY 2003, Vocational Rehabilitation implemented the new "Service Specialist" personnel classification. This position was created as the result of a Nebraska Department of Education position classification study based on job analyses of current job incumbents. The study contractors found that the direct service work performed by Vocational Rehabilitation staff fell into 3 distinct classes of personnel, and recommended that Vocational Rehabilitation create a third position, intermediate between associates and rehabilitation specialists and made of some duties currently performed by them.

Associate position

Associates provide direct support to teams serving persons with disabilities seeking employment. Their responsibilities include: monitoring persons with disabilities engaged in agreed on vocational rehabilitation plans; arranging and coordinating team activities; arranging and coordinating transportation; maintaining individual service records; and arranging financial assistance necessary to obtain agreed on goods and services from community providers.

Associate academic degree standards

There are no national or state approved or state-recognized standards applicable to the associate position. The highest entry-level academic degree required for comparable work in State personnel requirements is the high school diploma. All currently employed associates meet or exceed this standard.

Service specialist position

Service specialists provide direct support to persons with disabilities seeking employment. Much of their work involves providing services to groups of consumers. Their responsibilities include: conducting orientation to Social Security benefits and benefits analysis; providing personal management training, social skills training, job placement assistance, job seeking skills training and other instruction of persons with disabilities using standardized curricula and instructional methods; and providing information about the purpose, nature, and scope of vocational rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities, service providers, and the general public.

Service specialist academic degree standards

There are no national or state approved or state-recognized standards applicable to the service specialist. The highest entry-level academic degree required for comparable work in State Personnel requirements is the baccalaureate degree. All currently employed service specialists meet this standard.

Rehabilitation specialist position

Rehabilitation specialists make determinations and provide specialized direct services to persons with disabilities pursuing employment goals. Their responsibilities include: eligibility, IPE and amendment approval, IPE progress, and employment outcome determinations; community assessment; career counseling, disability awareness counseling, personal adjustment counseling, rehabilitation engineering, independent living skill training, personal management training, social skills training, job placement assistance, and job retention assistance. These activities generally require independent complex decision-making and problem solving based on extensive knowledge of disability, human behavior, the world of work, and the community.

Rehabilitation specialist academic degree standards

The highest entry-level academic degree standard in Nebraska applicable to the discipline of rehabilitation counseling is a master's degree in counseling or a closely related field. This degree is required for certification as a Professional Counselor under Nebraska's Uniform Credentials Act (Neb. Rev. Stat. §38-2132). Other state agencies typically require the bachelor's degree for work comparable to that of specialists. In 1983, after 2 years of use as an informal standard, the agency formally incorporated the master's in counseling or a closely related field academic degree standard into the Nebraska Department of Education personnel system hiring requirements for rehabilitation specialists. Thus, Vocational Rehabilitation's hiring standard exceeds that of other state agencies and equals the highest standard in the state. For 28 years, all rehabilitation specialists hired Vocational Rehabilitation have possessed the master's degree in counseling.

Need for retraining plan

Since the personnel standards have equaled or exceeded the highest applicable standards in Nebraska for 29 years, no steps are necessary to change hiring standards or retrain personnel to meet the existing standard.

Personnel development

Each team assesses the current knowledge, skill, and ability of the team and its members, and identifies the personnel development activities necessary to enable the team and its members to achieve their strategic and performance goals. These team level assessments are analyzed and integrated with statewide training needs identified by specialty area Program Directors, training needed to implement planned innovation and expansion activities, and needs indicated by objective program performance measures. The following summarizes significant staff development needs identified from these assessments

Analysis of the assessments indicates the need for a long-term staff development strategy. In the absence of a long-term strategy, staff development is a series of one-time responses to immediate needs. The impact of this training on organizational functioning deteriorates over time as a result of turnover. For example, even though 100% of staff can be trained at one point in time, with normal turnover, only about 50% of the trained staff will remain 5 years later. Also, in the absence of a long-term strategy identifying the staff development needs of teams and types of specialized knowledge, staff development focuses on individuals and does not respond to the knowledge and performance needs of teams and the organization as a whole. As a result of these problems, there are persistent gaps in critical staff knowledge and skill. A long term staff development strategy is needed to ensure the ongoing renewal and updating of the entire organizational knowledge and skill base to ensure the organization, its teams, and its staff promptly incorporate into practice new knowledge or responses to emerging needs in the consumer population, service delivery processes, or specific team services.

For staff development purposes, the organizational knowledge and skill base is made up of the three major domains and sub-domains shown in Table 1. The Disabilities and Service Delivery Processes domains are critical organizational knowledge and skills, shared by all team members. To effectively communicate among themselves, team members must possess knowledge of consumer disabilities and the way in which these impact upon the consumer, employment, and the provision of services. Every team member must possess knowledge of the organization's service delivery processes and their role and responsibilities in connection with these processes. Consequently, Disabilities and Service Delivery Processes knowledge is team based, possessed by all members of each team. Finally, each team member must possess the knowledge and skill to provide the specific services for which they are responsible. This knowledge is position based, possessed by all staff responsible for providing each service.

Table 1. Organizational Knowledge and Skill Domains and Sub-domains

Disabilities (Team-based)

Musculoskeletal

Central nervous system

Spinal cord disorders

Psychoses

Anxiety & personality disorders

Cognitive disabilities

Endocrine & immune system disorders

Circulatory & respiratory

Autism Spectrum Disorders

Amputations

Hearing impairments

Acquired Brain Injury

Learning Disabilities

Service Delivery Processes (Team-based)

Induction

Goal planning

Work-first (place & train)

Employment preparation (train & place)

Transition into work

Job maintenance & career advancement

Partnerships

Support processes

Team Services (Position-based)

Assessment

Benefits Orientation

Counseling

Placement

Rehabilitation technology

Independent living

Transition

Personnel development needs

1. New staff training. There is a need for Vocational Rehabilitation to replace an average of 12-15 staff annually due to resignations and retirements over the next 5 years. No new hires through growth are anticipated. Nebraska does not have a CORE accredited, RSA assisted, graduate level rehabilitation education program preparing persons for practice in a rehabilitation discipline, while in-migration of qualified personnel to fill vacant positions averages only about 1 per year. Consequently, newly hired specialists, as well as all associates, must be provided with intensive initial post-hire training to assure they possess critical performance related vocational rehabilitation knowledge and skills.

The agency is implementing the use of videoconferencing, podcasts, or streaming videos as a way to deliver timely training to new staff. The typical schedule of new staff training sessions can result in the staff member receiving training months after starting to perform duties in their position. Using media technology would allow the training to be accessed when most relevant to each new staff member.

2. Training in functional aspects of physical and mental impairments. There is a need for on-going training of teams in the functional aspects of physical and mental impairments. Past disability related training has been uneven in frequency and staff coverage, with the result that teams lack the consistent knowledge base necessary for the effective planning and delivery of services. The nature and scope of this training will be described in more detail in the next section. Disorders of the musculoskeletal and nervous systems should be the initial focus of training, since they cause about 66% of all significant work disability.

3. Training in service delivery processes. There is a need for on-going training of teams in our core service delivery processes. We continually refine many core processes to better achieve our standards & indicators. Teams require intensive training and continuing follow-up to implement these changed processes, methods, and procedures. Since service delivery processes are influenced by legislation and current research, service delivery process training incorporates relevant requirements of the 1998 Rehabilitation Act Amendments (including informed choice, use of rehabilitation technology, and servicing culturally diverse populations), as well as evidence-based processes and practices identified in current research, and relevant portions of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

4. Training in team services. There is a need for on-going training to enhance the ability of VR rehabilitation specialists, service specialists, and associates to provide direct services and supports. Specific types of team services provided directly by our staff include: community assessment; career counseling, disability awareness counseling, personal adjustment counseling, rehabilitation engineering (including assistive technology), independent living skill training, personal management training, social skills training, job placement assistance, and job retention assistance. Also included are: Social Security benefits orientation and analysis; job seeking skills training and other instruction of persons with disabilities; monitoring persons with disabilities engaged in agreed on rehabilitation plans; providing information; arranging, coordinating, and scheduling team activities; arranging, coordinating, scheduling, and providing transportation; developing, preparing, and maintaining individual service records; and arranging financial assistance to procure agreed on goods and services. Staff responsible for providing specific services and supports need continuing training to maintain their competence, and to acquire the knowledge and skill needed to implement new best practices and procedures. The agency will conduct monthly training via a videoconference system on topics that are identified as high priority training needs by staff.

5. Individual training. Training needs assessments show a broad and diverse range of training needs related to individual development and performance improvement. These individual needs include leadership development and capacity building.

System of personnel development

The comprehensive personnel development system ensures that all personnel receive appropriate and adequate training related to their ability to provide vocational rehabilitation services leading to quality employment outcomes for persons with significant disabilities. This system is based on our needs assessments and is made up of—

1. New staff training to an estimated 12-15 new staff annually. This responds to the identified need to develop fundamental vocational rehabilitation knowledge and skill related to job performance in newly hired staff.

New employee training classes included the following.

- VR Process (3 days)
- QUEST – Case Management System (3 days)
- New Employee Orientation (2 days)
- Medical Aspects I (2 days)
- Medical Aspects II (2 days)
- Job Planning (2 days)
- Employment & Job Planning Discussion (2 days)
- Communication Training (1 day)
- World of Work-DOL (1 day)
- Nebraska Career Information System (1 day)

2. Workshops, distance learning, podcasts, and continuing education activities for Vocational Rehabilitation teams and staff in the areas of functional aspects of disability, service delivery process, and team services. This responds to the identified needs for in-service training in these areas. It also provides opportunities for staff certified under Nebraska's Uniform Licensing Act to obtain continuing education contact hours for certification maintenance. (see Neb. Rev. Stat. §71-1,269).

Current videos and podcasts available for team and individual training include the following:

Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital Training

- Multiple Sclerosis and Employment Considerations
- Work Considerations for the Adult with Cerebral Palsy
- Vocational Considerations for the Client with an Amputation
- Vocational Rehabilitation and Spinal Cord Injury

Agency Statewide Training Conference (No statewide training was held in 2010 and there are no plans to hold a statewide training in 2011 due to funding limitations.)

- An Overview of Substance Use, Disorders, Screening and Treatment
- Barriers to Prisoner Re-entry and What Can Be Done to Overcome Them
- Brain Injury: Vocational Strategies for Clients with High-Level Cognitive & Behavioral Challenges
- Drugs of Abuse
- Interpersonal Communication
- Making a Return on Investment Pay Off by Matching People and Personalities in the Workplace
- Mild Traumatic Brain Injury in Returning Combat Veterans and Accessing VA Benefits
- Nine Essential Skills of Love and Logic
- Prisoner Re-Entry in the Midwest
- The Milestones of Adjustment Post-Psychosis (MAPPS) Model
- Transition from School to Work: Planning for Students with Aspergers

Brain Book

- Scenarios
- Webinar

Change in FLSA Status: What Employees and Supervisors Need to Know

Cold Calling Clinic Training

Effective Use of an On-the-Job Training

Employment Specialist Training Video

Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) Overview

HELPS TBI Screening Presentation

On-the-Job Evaluation Training Video

Agency Video Conferencing

- Disruptive Behavior
- Order of Selection Training

Consumer Success Stories

3. Workshops, distance learning, podcasts, and continuing education activities for individual Vocational Rehabilitation staff in identified areas of individual development and performance improvement. This responds to individual needs, as well as organizational needs of succession planning, leadership development, and capacity building.

4. Acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources. These activities ensure that staff have access to new knowledge and learning in the field of vocational rehabilitation. The system of staff development must provide for the ongoing renewal and updating of the entire organizational knowledge and skill base, requiring a long-term training schedule.

Communication with diverse populations

Vocational Rehabilitation, to the maximum extent possible, recruits and hires qualified personnel who are able to communicate in the native languages of applicants and recipients with limited English speaking ability. An increased salary differential is offered to individuals who are bilingual or fluent in ASL. Interpreter services for persons with limited English speaking ability are obtained from agencies, vendors, ethnic organizations and advocacy groups, or individuals (family members, friends, coworkers, volunteers). The AT&T Language Line is used as a backup service for walk-ins or crisis situations where no interpreter is available and there is an immediate need to communicate with a person with limited English speaking ability. Vocational Rehabilitation employs staff with sign language skills in areas with significant concentrations of persons with hearing impairments who communicate in sign language, and obtains interpreter services for the hearing impaired from persons meeting the Nebraska Department of Education's written interpreter qualification standards and policies in other areas. These standards now require the department and agency to use interpreters licensed by the State of Nebraska.

Coordination with the in-service training grant

In-service training grant funds are used to support, in part, the costs of instructional materials, videoconferencing equipment, training consultant expenses, and the lodging and per diem expenses of trainees.

Coordination of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Vocational Rehabilitation coordinates with the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) by: (1) exchanging needs assessment findings in areas or topics of mutual concern, (2) exchanging schedules of training and personnel development activities, and (3) joint development of training programs of mutual concern and priority, and joint funding of trainer costs for conducting joint training, when appropriate.

Attachment 4.11(b): Annual Estimates of Individuals to Be Served
and Costs of Services

1. Estimates of the number of individuals who are potentially eligible for services.

The table shows the number of potentially eligible persons in Nebraska aged 16 to 64 by priority group category*.

Priority 1 Most Significant	Priority 2 Significant	Priority 3 Not Significant	Total
12,901	25,656	50,943	89,500

* This table total is based on the 2008 Disability Status Report for Nebraska by Cornell University, non-institutionalized population 16 to 64 reporting a disability. The disability questions were changed in the 2008 survey resulting in a significant difference in the number of individuals reporting a disability from the previous year's survey.

2. Estimates of the number of individuals who will receive services and their costs.

a. *Number of eligible individuals who will receive services with funds provided by Title I, Part B during FY 2012 and their estimated costs, by priority category in the Order of Selection*

Recipient Priority	Served	Cost**
Priority category 1	2,083	\$7,208,023
Priority category 2	2,739	\$7,840,666
Priority category 3	1,189	\$3,659,994
Total	6,011	\$18,708,683

** Does not include costs of assessment services to determine eligibility and OOS priority.

b. *Number of eligible individuals who will receive services with funds provided by Title VI, Part B during FY 2012 and their estimated costs, by priority category in the Order of Selection**

Recipient Priority	Served	Cost**
Priority category 1	165	\$270,000
Priority category 2	0	0
Priority category 3	0	0
Total	165	\$270,000

* This table assumes no significant changes in current referral patterns, service mix, or cost of supported employment services.

** Includes costs of supplementary assessment services.

Attachment 4.11(c)(1): State's Goals and Priorities

Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation's Goals and Priorities established in conjunction with the State Rehabilitation Council include —

1. **Increase the Rehabilitation Rate (as a part of meeting or exceeding each of the Federal Standards)**

Each time a consumer receives services and is not successfully employed, the agency loses staff time, funds for purchased services and very likely the consumer's satisfaction with VR services. The agency's rehabilitation rate for FY2010 was 60.87%, slightly higher than the rehabilitation rate of 60.85% during FY2009. Given the depth of the economic downturn, maintaining the rehabilitation rate was a success. Based on the most recent cautiously optimistic projections for an improved Nebraska economy, a realistic goal will be to increase the rehabilitation rate to 62% in FY 2012.

Staff follow up with all consumers after plan approval every 30-45 days to discuss services, job retention needs, and to update consumer contact information. Teams are improving the exploration of barriers for returning consumers and enhancing relationships with referral sources that can provide non-employment related supports and services to increase the likelihood of successful employment outcomes.

Measures: Increase the rehabilitation rate to 62%.

2. **Increase the Quality and Timeliness of Services**

In Nebraska, employment services are provided by VR staff. The quality of direct services is often a result of the combination of agency policy, process, and practice, and staff skills, knowledge and experience.

To increase the quality of services, annual team case reviews, as well as periodic targeted case reviews by Program Directors, are conducted to identify quality planning and timeliness issues. Issues specific to the team are addressed with the team. Issues that appear to be statewide or indicative of trends or problems that need to be addressed more globally are brought to the State Office Program Team. The State Office Program Team will research the issue, obtain input from the appropriate committees or work groups, recommend potential strategies to address the problem, and develop a plan for implementation. Opportunities for staff to be involved in the development of policy and procedures have been established through a number of committees and work groups. These include a Counselor Committee, Employment Committee, Transition Committee, Evaluation Committee, and Leadership Council.

Training and support to improve staff skills and knowledge will be enhanced by the use of a videoconference system connecting ten field offices to provide ongoing monthly training opportunities for staff. Training will include conflict resolution strategies, corrections and background screening, vocational evaluation and other topics as identified through case reviews or by any of the Committees.

Timeliness of services will be greatly enhanced with the use of a web-based case management and fiscal reporting system called QE2. Utilizing a web-based system will allow for significant improvement in the amount of time it takes staff to document task notes, enter consumer information, complete IEPs, etc., with the end result being more time available to spend working directly with consumers.

The timeliness of services will also be increased with the use of mobile technology, with a particular focus on iPad technology in the field. With a wireless connection, staff will use the iPad to access case file information, e-mail, calendar, on-line job applications, videos of success stories to promote VR services to businesses and consumers, and to demonstrate disability-related applications. Staff will use voice recognition software in conjunction with the iPad to dictate task notes directly into the case management system. Another application for the iPad will enable a consumer to approve their IEP with an electronic signature by signing on the iPad in the same way one uses a signature pad for credit card charges at most stores. Other opportunities will be explored that will allow consumers to access materials and information online in an effort to shorten the process from referral to outcome.

- Measures:** (1) Each team will conduct team case reviews annually. The team case review will be coordinated by a Program Director and a summary report of findings and recommendations will be completed at the end of the review.
- (2) At least one training will be made available to all staff, primarily through the use of the videoconference system, on a monthly basis.
- (3) Measures will be developed around staff productivity and delivery time for most services and should reflect the impact of the use of mobile technology through decreases in service times and increases in caseload capacity per team. The baseline for each of the measures will be established in FY2011.

3. **Improve consumer satisfaction and engagement**

The consumer's satisfaction with VR services, their engagement in the VR program and their belief that they will be employed is perhaps the most important factors in their success. Therefore this important goal is critical to our success as a program. As a part of the Employment Warranty Program follow up contacts by Easter Seals of Nebraska, questions are asked of consumers in regards to their level of satisfaction with VR services. Satisfactory ratings have consistently been 98% or higher. The State Rehabilitation Council continues to look at alternative methods to obtain consumer satisfaction, especially for individuals not closed as a successful outcome. The SRC will continue to obtain regular input on consumer concerns via feedback from Ombudsman and CAP and their recommendations for policy changes.

The State Rehabilitation Council has established a Consumer Input Committee that provides for direct consumer input into program materials, processes and policy. The Committee will continue to provide a consumer perspective to VR to prevent unintentional barriers to services and to ensure that materials and processes effectively keep individuals engaged. The involvement of individuals with disabilities early on in the development of process and materials enhances the likelihood that the focus remains on consumers in a way that is relevant, meaningful, engaging, and satisfactory.

As part of the goal setting process, VR staff have established a standard for contact with consumers at least once every thirty days. Each team will continue to explore alternatives to improve communication and access to staff members as a strategy to increase consumer engagement.

As part of the agency's dual customer focus, the SRC will annually survey businesses that have worked with VR to determine their level of satisfaction with services. Feedback from the survey will be provided to the Employment Committee to develop recommendations for change.

- Measures:** (1) A satisfactory rating of 98% or higher will be achieved on Consumer Satisfaction Surveys as a part of the Employment Warranty Program follow up contacts.
- (2) A method of obtaining feedback from individuals not closed as a successful outcome will be developed and implemented by the SRC.
- (3) The SRC Consumer Input Committee will review at least four areas of policy, process or materials in the next year, and make recommendations for revisions or alternative strategies.
- (4) Staff will have at least one contact with each consumer every 30 - 45 days, in person, by phone, e-mail, texting or other electronic means, and document the contact in QE2.
- (5) Completion of the annual survey of businesses to determine their level of satisfaction with VR services.

4. **Develop Effective Community Partnerships to Increase Long Term and Independent Living Supports**

Partnerships provide additional supports that are needed for a consumer to be successful and generally occur in the program areas of transition, traumatic brain injury, autism, behavioral health, juvenile justice and corrections. A partnership is a collaboration with another entity that can play an important role in providing needed supports and services for consumers. It may or may not involve an exchange of funds. It is characterized by VR staff involvement, shared responsibility within the team, and a focus on long-term relationships that involves multiple consumers. Focusing on the development of partnerships that provide for long term and independent living support will be critical to address issues, such as those that are related to poverty, that impact on consumer job readiness and the ability to keep a job.

In past years, the agency has been in a position to expand the number of partnerships through the provision of financial support. In FY 2011, the agency will begin incorporating criteria to define "effective" community partnerships into agreements in which the agency invests financial support. Prior to renewal of agreements for FY2012, the criteria will be used to establish a baseline for evaluating performance, ensuring that funds are achieving intended purposes, and to establish the level of return on investment of VR resources. The criteria will be used to prioritize funding for community partnerships based on the ability to maximize services and supports to the benefit of VR consumers in subsequent years.

Measures: (1) The agency will incorporate program review criteria into all community partnership agreements.
(2) The agency will use the community partnership performance data for FY2011 agreements to develop a baseline for FY2012 performance and to establish a ranking of community partnerships based on the ability to maximize services and supports to the benefit of VR consumers.

Attachment 4.11(c)(3): Order of Selection

Justification of the Order of Selection

Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation has operated under an Order of Selection for more than twenty-one (21) years when the agency concluded it did not have sufficient funding to serve all eligible individuals. In the early years we, in fact, had a waiting list and were able to only serve Priority Category One. Experience in working with a waiting list has led referral sources to understand who Vocational Rehabilitation is now able to serve and, as a result, the referral sources do not typically refer individuals who would fall into Priority Category Three. The agency has for at least the last 12 years been able to serve all eligible individuals from Priority Category One and Two without a waiting period.

In the past, individuals in Priority Category Three have had the option of being placed on a wait list, few have chosen to do so. In reviewing RSA 113 data for FY 2000 to present, between 1 and 4 individuals each year elect to be placed on the waiting list; however, within 6 – 9 months, those individuals then decided to be removed from the list. For 2012, the agency anticipates serving all 3 Priority Categories until the status of state and federal funding is known.

A cut in state funding and the lack of a COLA increase in federal funds, in combination with increased expenses for personnel and case services, may result in changes to the Order of Selection to include the closing of 1 or more Priority Categories.

Order of Selection Policy

Individuals who have a determination of eligibility or priority within the Order of Selection made during the fiscal year will be selected for the provision of planned vocational rehabilitation services in the following order, to the extent it is determined that personnel and fiscal resources necessary to carry out their Individualized Plans for Employment are available for them.

Priority Category One: All eligible persons who are determined, on the basis of an assessment of eligibility and rehabilitation needs, to be “individuals with the most significant disabilities” as defined below.

Priority Category Two: All eligible persons who are determined, on the basis of an assessment of eligibility and rehabilitation needs, to be individuals with significant disabilities as defined below.

Priority Category Three: All other persons who are determined, on the basis of an assessment of eligibility and rehabilitation needs, to be individuals with disabilities as defined below.

Priority Category One: The Rehabilitation Act requires persons with the most significant disabilities receive services before other eligible persons.

An individual with the most significant disability is one:

1. Who has a severe physical or mental impairment that seriously limits two or more functional areas (mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome, and
2. Who requires multiple services over an extended period of time, and
3. Who has one or more physical or mental impairments resulting from amputation, arthritis, autism, 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, musculo-skeletal disorders, neurological disorders (including stroke and epilepsy), spinal cord injuries, including paraplegia and quadriplegia, sickle cell anemia, specific learning disability, end-stage renal disease, or another disability or combination of disabilities determined on the basis of an assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs to cause comparable substantial functional limitations.

Priority Category Two: This Priority Category provides a priority to all persons with significant disabilities and is consistent with the intent of the Rehabilitation Act to focus services on persons with significant disabilities.

An individual with a significant disability is one:

1. Who has a severe physical or mental impairment that seriously limits one functional area (mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome, and
2. Who requires multiple services over an extended period of time, and

3. Who has one or more physical or mental impairments resulting from amputation, arthritis, autism, 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, musculo-skeletal disorders, neurological disorders (including stroke and epilepsy), spinal cord injuries, including paraplegia and quadriplegia, sickle cell anemia, specific learning disability, end-stage renal disease, or another disability or combination of disabilities determined on the basis of an assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs to cause comparable substantial functional limitations.

Individuals who receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) automatically qualify for Priority Category Two and are assessed to determine whether they qualify for Priority Category One.

Priority Category Three: This Priority Category contains all other eligible persons, and assures that persons with the most significant disabilities and persons with significant disabilities are selected for service before all other persons with disabilities.

All other eligible individuals.

Service and outcome goals for persons served during FY 2012

Recipient Priority	Served	Rehabilitated
Priority Category One	2,083	570
Priority Category Two	2,739	756
Priority Category Three	1,189	316
Total	6,011	1,642

Time Frames

Eligibility: All individuals have a determination of their eligibility made within 60 days of application unless there are mutually agreed upon extensions.

IPE: All eligible individuals who meet the Order of Selection criteria will continue with plan development with a goal of achieving a mutually agreed upon and approved IPE within 120 days. An IPE that includes cost services cannot be developed for individuals in a closed Priority Category. This does not preclude delivery of non-purchased services (i.e., counseling, guidance, placement, referral services, coordination of comparable benefits and services paid by a third party) for these individuals. Persons meeting eligibility requirements but in a closed Priority Category have access to a comprehensive information and referral system.

Average months from application to successful employment outcome:

The agency achieved the following average months from application to successful employment outcome for individuals served in Priority Categories One & Two between FY2005 and FY2009.

FY2005 – 18.7

FY2006 – 18.8

FY2007 – 18.7

FY2008 – 18.1

FY2009 – 16.3

With the agency policy change beginning FY2009 to bring more Transition students into the VR program during their junior year, the agency expected the average to increase because IPE development with secondary students typically takes longer than with adults and the students would be in the VR program for 12 months or more while still in high school. Since RSA had not yet published the FY2010 Annual Review Report tables, we are unable to assess the impact.

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

Goal

To maintain or increase the number of persons with a most significant mental health disability served through a mental health partnership using an evidenced based model supported employment services.

Number served in FY 2010 — 761

To meet or increase the number of persons with a most significant mental health disability who achieve a competitive successful employment outcome through a mental health partnership using an evidenced based model supported employment services.

Number of successful employment outcomes in FY 2010 — 173

Plans For Distribution Of Title VI-B Funds

The funds received under Title VI, Part B will be distributed in the form of contractual payments for the costs of supported employment services provided to eligible persons with the most significant behavioral health disabilities. Vocational Rehabilitation has a written agreement with the state's Division of Behavioral Health Services that promotes evidence-based supported employment services to individuals with behavioral health disabilities. Written contracts have been established with a qualified provider in each of the state's six regions. These contracts identify the need for supported employment, the specific evidence-based supported employment services available from the provider leading to competitive employment in a supported employment setting which may include Transitional Employment, and their negotiated projected outcomes. The Division of Behavioral Health Services also provides funds for supported employment and extended services.

Each contract promotes shared responsibility for outcomes. Each provider, based on negotiated projected outcomes, will receive as quarterly allotments 60% of the maximum VR funding available. The remaining 40% are incentive payments paid out per outcome up to, but not exceeding, the negotiated projected outcomes.

The projected cost of the contracts exceeds the VI-B Funds allocation and is supplemented with Section 110 Funds.

Attachment 4.11(d): State Strategies

and

Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

The State's strategies and use of Title I funds for Innovation and Expansion activities flow out of the areas of need identified as a result of the comprehensive statewide assessment. Statistical and demographic information, staff and consumer surveys, and key informant input from partnership sources were used to establish the general areas of priority and included: transition, a focus on employer relationships, enhancing consumer satisfaction through identification of areas for improvement, improved consumer engagement through enhanced follow up services (including quality assurance case reviews and Employment Warranty[®] monitoring) and the Bridges Out of Poverty initiative, and efforts to enhance or expand services to unserved or underserved populations (palliative care and acquired brain injury). These general areas are supported by the vocational rehabilitation service needs identified in the comprehensive statewide assessment.

In collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council, detailed strategies and activities were developed for each of the following priority areas —

Transition Research demonstrates that students with disabilities are more successful in transitioning to employment and adult life where Vocational Rehabilitation, educators and adult agencies begin the process by age 14, unify planning and share resources. Therefore, Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation will either continue or initiate the following:

- (1) Outreach to students.
- (2) Utilize the Transition IPE Booklet to engage students in career exploration, career planning, career activities and career decisions.
- (3) Disseminate publications and information to transition students and their families.
- (4) Develop statewide and regional Youth Leadership Councils that will provide students with opportunities to develop leadership skills.
- (5) Develop a discharge planning protocol for use by juvenile justice facilities for releasing students to their home school districts.
- (6) Utilize the results of the Transition Survey to schools conducted by the State Rehabilitation Council to improve the partnership between VR and the schools.
- (7) Coordinate with the Nebraska Department of Education and the Department of Labor-Workforce Development on implementing the Career Management System that will be available to all schools.
- (8) Design within QUEST II a better method for collecting and recording transition data in order to provide necessary reports to staff and schools.
- (9) Partner with Assistive Technology Partnership (ATP) in a demonstration project to increase the use of assistive technology in secondary schools.
- (10) Develop internships with businesses targeted to graduating transition students to support employment related education and training.

Employment Services The benefits of employer/vocational rehabilitation partnerships are well documented in recent rehabilitation research. Employers benefit from 1) a diverse workforce, 2) access to a wider range of qualified candidates, 3) reduced turnover and improved attendance of workers and 4) learning how to meet workers' accommodations needs. Rehabilitation benefits from 1) improved knowledge of business culture and needs, 2) increased employment opportunities for people with disabilities, 3) realistic skills training and 4) enhanced consumer satisfaction. Therefore, Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation will either continue or initiate the following:

- (1) Target employers and industries based on labor market information, future occupational trends and quality jobs.

- (2) Establish long-term relationship with key employers.
- (3) Utilize the National Employment Network, The NET, to connect local labor demands with regional and national opportunities.
- (4) Develop and implement additional Project Search partnerships, a training and employment program targeting hospitals, to increase employment opportunities within the healthcare and other industries.
- (5) Develop and utilize success story videos and other materials to market the program to employers.
- (6) Conduct a job placement roundtable where placement staff will develop collaborative strategies to increase job opportunities for consumers statewide.
- (7) Develop employer internship opportunities for consumers pursuing post-secondary degrees.

Consumer Satisfaction Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation has used various methods over the years of gathering consumer satisfaction. These efforts have yielded limited response and limited value in the information received. In order to improve our program and insure that the program is meeting the needs of our consumers, Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation must develop effective methods of gathering meaningful consumer satisfaction information. Therefore, Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation will either continue or initiate the following:

- (1) Continue to develop and refine consumer satisfaction surveys to gather timely and meaningful feedback.
- (2) Utilize the survey services of the State Rehabilitation Council.
- (3) Contract with outsourced Employment Warranty® monitors to conduct consumer satisfaction survey by phone with consumers after services.
- (4) Utilize reports from the Client Assistance Program and the Agency Ombudsman to identify areas for improvement.

Employment Outcomes Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation continues to see ways to improve the rehabilitation rate of the program. Therefore, Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation will either continue or initiate the following:

- (1) Conduct case reviews to determine factors that contribute to improving our rehabilitation rate.
- (2) Improve the frequency and quality of Vocational Rehabilitation contact and follow-up with consumers throughout the Vocational Rehabilitation process to keep the consumers engaged in their program or services.
- (3) Continue to utilize the placement standards and evaluate performance.

Employment Warranty® This program helps consumers regain, maintain and advance in employment. Monitoring with consumers at 90 days, 180 days and 1-year following their employment outcome, promotes greater job stability for those with significant disabilities who have the least community supports available to them.

- (1) Identify data elements for collection and measurement to evaluate the long-term employment outcomes of consumers.
- (2) Program QUEST II to support Employment Warranty® monitoring and data collection.
- (3) Continue contracting with Easter Seals of Nebraska for Employment Warranty® monitoring to conduct the monitoring with consumers for up to one year after their employment outcome.

Innovation and Expansion I&E funds will be used to support these areas and related activities —

State Independent Living Council — I&E funds will be used for full support of the activities of the State Independent Living Council.

State Rehabilitation Council — I&E funds will be used for full support of the activities of the State Rehabilitation Council.

Contracts and Grants Specialist — I&E funds will be used to pay the salary of this position.

Transition Program and the Youth Leadership Council — I&E funds will be used for 90% of the salary for the Transition Program Director and 50% of the salary of the Youth Leadership Council Coordinator in conjunction with Special Education.

Assistive Technology The agency grants funds to the Nebraska Assistive Technology Partnership (ATP) to provide rehabilitation engineering and assistive technology services to agency consumers at all stages of the rehabilitation process. Consumers are referred to ATP by VR staff for all assistive technology assessments, funding coordination and assistive technology solutions. ATP offices are located throughout the state and in some cities are co-located with the VR office. Based on referral data available at the writing of this plan, the VR agency is expected to make over 500 referrals to ATP.

The agency funds a demonstration project to expand the awareness and knowledge of secondary educators in the use of assistive technology for students.

Individuals with Disabilities who are Minorities The agency continues its commitment to the hiring of bilingual staff. At present, the agency has five bilingual staff members. In an attempt to increase the hiring of bilingual staff, we offer a salary differential incentive. Program materials are offered in Spanish.

There are three Indian Reservations in Nebraska. VR has one representative on the Nebraska Department of Education Native American Education Advisory Council.

Individuals with Significant Disabilities Since Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation has only been serving individuals with significant or most significant disabilities for more than 16 years, our outreach to individuals with significant disabilities continues to be effective.

Individuals who have been Unserved or Underserved The Client Assistance Program (CAP) each year assesses the VR agency's outreach to unserved and underserved individuals with disabilities and will provide comment to the agency if CAP found the agency to be remiss in this area.

Some examples of the agency's efforts on behalf of individuals who are unserved or underserved are as follows:

Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation serves on the TBI Council which is funded through a HRSA grant. The Council is focused on supporting the statewide Brain Injury Association in Nebraska and promoting state legislation and funding for services to individuals with TBI in Nebraska. The Brain Injury Screening Tool is now being administered statewide to all applicants for VR services to aid in the identification of previously undiagnosed brain injuries and residual impediments to employment. Information about Vocational Rehabilitation services is being sent to all individuals identified through the Nebraska Traumatic Brain Injury Registry.

Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation will maintain services to the Criminal Justice population with staff assigned to the Adult Drug Court and Specialized Substance Abuse Services.

A supported employment pilot targeting individuals with autism, originally developed using ARRA funds, has proven to be successful and will continue on a fee for service basis.

The Transportation Network developed in partnership with the Omaha Tribe of Nebraska through ARRA funds will continue to be utilized to increase access to available employment opportunities for Native Americans in rural Nebraska.

Plan for Establishing Community Rehabilitation Programs Since Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation provides direct services in the areas of vocational evaluation, independent living, and job placement, the agency has no plans for establishing any additional community rehabilitation programs. The agency does contract with those community rehabilitation programs that provide evidence-based supported employment services to individuals with behavioral health impairments, autism, and acquired brain injury.

Assisting Components of the Workforce Investment System in Assisting Individuals with Disabilities Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation continues to have representation on all the local WIA boards, serve on the local One Stop Career Center management council at some of the centers, have VR staff at each local One Stop Career Center on an itinerant basis.

Presentations are made to Center staff on vocational rehabilitation services and other topics related to serving individuals with disabilities. One Stop staff have standing invitations to attend VR's Medical Aspects training programs.

Attachment 4.11(e)(2): Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Identified Goals and Priorities and Use Of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

The following presents our evaluation and report of progress for FY 2010. Needs identified in the comprehensive statewide assessment of needs, and to achieve greater success in our identified goal and priority areas are addressed by focusing our strategic activities and the expenditure of innovation and expansion funds on the six program dimensions listed below.

1. Strategies to Address Needs Identified in the Comprehensive Assessment and to Achieve Identified Goals and Priorities

Develop effective community partnerships

In FY 2010, we:

- (1) Continued to participate in a work group that is developing the Career Management System through the Nebraska Department of Education, Department of Labor, Nebraska Public Power District, and Future Force Nebraska.
- (2) Continued the partnership with Grand Island Public Schools and St. Francis Hospital to provide a training program based on the Project Search Model to prepare transition students for employment in the health care industry. Developed additional partnerships with Walmart and North Platte Public Schools; Kearney Public Schools and Good Samaritan Hospital; St. Elizabeth Hospital and Norris Public Schools, and Waverly Public Schools. Explored and promoted partnership opportunities with other community hospitals and schools.
- (3) Expanded a partnership with Central Nebraska Goodwill Industries to enhance the existing behavior health employment program with the addition of benefits analysis and extended follow-up after successful employment. The intent is to increase the likelihood of achieving nine (9) consecutive months of substantial gainful activity (SGA).
- (4) Utilized ARRA funds to expand the capacity of six (6) community-based mental health providers in providing supported employment services.
- (5) Expanded a pilot site of the Palliative Care Partnership to the Omaha Metro area. The intent of the Partnership is to serve consumers who experience chronic pain to help them achieve employment. This Partnership involved Department of Health and Human Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, Assistive Technology Partnership, and St. Joseph's Villa.
- (6) Established a supported employment program for individuals with acquired brain injury through the use of ARRA funds.
- (7) Established a supported employment program for individuals with autism through the use of ARRA funds.
- (8) Established a partnership with the Center for People in Need to provide a training program in construction trades.
- (9) Explored the development of a Bridges Out of Poverty program with other community partners in Columbus.
- (10) Explored the development of Certificate Programs through community colleges in partnership with employers in the community targeting manufacturing jobs and electricians.
- (11) Expanded the availability of job training programs through partnerships with the Association of Builders and Contractors Inc. for forklift operator training and Southeast Community College for food preparation training.
- (12) Developed a partnership between the National Academy of Railroad Sciences (NARS), BNSF, and Johnson County Community College (JCCC) to train signal workers.

Increase the Rehabilitation Rate

In FY 2010, we:

- (1) Conducted quarterly reviews with management staff to review progress on Standards & Indicators including the rehabilitation rate.
- (2) Conducted reviews of all placement files to ensure placement standards were followed and maintained.
- (3) Established Project Search in 2 hospitals and 1 Walmart Warehouse Distribution Center in Nebraska.
- (4) Represented Nebraska as point of contact on The National Employment Team (NET). Pursued developing partnerships with employers identified through The NET.
- (5) Continued to contract with the Abilities Fund to provide all necessary services for consumers with a self-employment goal.

- (6) Continued use of job retention video with adults and students.
- (7) Initiated a statewide review of cases receiving post-secondary services to determine best practice and to identify any areas of improvement.
- (8) Continued and expanded supported employment services for individuals with most severe disabilities.

The rehab rate for 2010 was 60.87%.

Improve consumer satisfaction and engagement

In FY 2010, we:

- (1) Continued at the direction of the State Rehabilitation Council, a series of consumer satisfaction surveys that clients complete throughout the rehabilitation process. These surveys are available in an electronic and printed format.
- (2) Evaluated and recommended to the State Rehabilitation Council changes to reduce the number of surveys and revise the points of service when the surveys are conducted.
- (3) Reported survey results are tabulated by the Client Assistance Program and provided to the State Rehabilitation Council at each of the meetings throughout the year.
- (4) Provide management staff the ability to review the results of Consumer Satisfaction surveys in order to address any team issues in a timely fashion.
- (5) Requested quarterly reports from the Client Assistance Program on the type of client concerns and CAP's recommendations to VR leadership.
- (6) Established the Consumer Input Committee as a part of the SRC to provide for direct consumer input on program materials, processes, and policies.

Consumer satisfaction has been found to be extremely high, typically ranging from 95-99%.

Increase the opportunity for staff to gain knowledge and skill in the rehabilitation process

In FY 2010, we:

- (1) Continued to provide rehabilitation process and medical aspects training to entry level and existing staff.
- (2) Continued transition, evaluation, and placement roundtables for staff to share best practices and innovative strategies.
- (3) Provided support to staff through training to develop specialized knowledge and skills on acquired brain injury.
- (4) Provided release time for staff to participate in training and/or obtain advanced degrees.
- (5) Updated new staff modules, tools and portfolios for use by office directors and program directors in training new staff.
- (6) Developed a WIKI environment for the Program Manual for the development of policy and process.
- (7) Developed Ask The Director website to provide information and respond to questions regarding policy and process.
- (8) Developed VR News: Now You Know, an internal newsletter, to share information about programs, community resources, and agency activities across the state.

Strengthen Interpersonal relations on employment teams

In FY 2010, we:

- (1) Established the Leadership Council comprised of agency representatives from all teams and personnel classifications to develop, monitor, and revise agency vision and goals.
- (2) Continued utilizing the Gallup Strengthsfinder's model to identify staff member's strengths in support of the team approach.
- (3) Utilized Best Care EAP Services at the team level to address team accountability and work relationships.

Increase the number of transition students who apply for the Employment Program and become successfully employed

In FY 2010, we:

- (1) Had a decrease in the number of transition students (from 906 in 2009 to 813 in 2010) who applied for the Employment Program and became successfully employed.
- (2) Increased the number of transition students who achieved a successful employment outcome from 314 to 340.
- (3) Achieved a 66% rehab rate for students successfully exiting the employment program who entered from the transition program.
- (4) Utilized the transition notebook, "There's a Job in Your Future Discover It! Planning Your Career," to help students make a decision about their post high school goals and applying for services through Vocational Rehabilitation.
- (5) Continued transition policy to require that all post-school direct services must be provided in the adult employment program.
- (6) Developed the programs to prepare students for employment, i.e., Transition Scholarships, Project Search, Coop for Success, and Transition from School to Work Fairs.
- (7) Funded three (3) Youth First Transition Conferences focused on employment with an average attendance of 200 per site.
- (8) Established a liaison position to the Youth Rehabilitation Treatment Centers to connect adjudicated youth back to community schools and VR offices.

Increase the quality and timeliness of placements

In FY 2010, we:

- (1) Provided training about the Project Search Model to foster interest in developing partnerships with VR, hospitals, and schools in the local community.
- (2) Continued a state-imposed standard of 55 days for job search and placement.
- (3) Continued to monitor the standards that have been developed for the placement area.
- (4) Continued to have placement staff marketing with employers to identify specific job openings.
- (5) Provided labor market information specifically addressing each team's local labor market.
- (6) Developed work at home opportunities, i.e., West, Convergys, Info Group/ORC.
- (7) Conducted an employer survey (resulting in 60 responses) to obtain feedback on their level of satisfaction with VR services.

2. Strategies to Carry Out Outreach Activities to Identify and Serve Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities Who are Minorities

Each team develops an outreach plan. As part of the planning, consideration is given on how to best serve minority populations. In addition to minority outreach through the teams, our transition strategy assists in reaching all racial and ethnic minority groups as they occur naturally in schools.

In FY 2010, we:

- (1) Continued our involvement with the Nebraska Department of Education Native American Initiative and working with the reservations.
- (2) Increased transportation options to expand employment opportunities for individuals who reside on the reservations.
- (3) Provided employer development services to Hispanic employers with bilingual staff where available.
- (4) Continued the priority of hiring bilingual staff. Increased pay is available for staff who are bilingual or have ASL skills.
- (5) Identified and have developed job openings with Hispanic employers who are seeking Spanish speaking employees.
- (6) Updated agency brochures and forms translated in other languages.

Our best indicator of the effectiveness of these strategies in FY 2010 is the Minority Access ratio of .86. In 2010, 16.83% of the cases served were minority. Nebraska's 2009 minority population was 16.5%.

3. Strategies to 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

Identified barriers affecting access to and participation in vocational rehabilitation services include:

(1) **Systemic barriers.** Potential applicants with low incomes or in poverty survive on an intricate array of multiple income maintenance and human service supports. The rules, regulations, and requirements underlying these supports interact in unpredictable or unintended ways when participation in vocational rehabilitation services requires significant time or temporary employment for work trial or training purposes, threatening survival and creating substantial disincentives to vocational rehabilitation.

(2) **Individual barriers.** Potential applicants have multiple specific individual and family life circumstances and problems, which interact with each other to interfere with program participation and employment. While the nature of many of these problems is well known (e.g., transportation, child care, housing, etc.), their multiplicity and interactions, in and of themselves, create barriers to program participation and employment. We have developed an evidence-based employment assessment to identify home, community, and on the job issues that interfere with program participation and employment. This assessment is incorporated in the *Discover the Job That Works for You* booklet.

(3) **Programmatic barriers.** Other public programs working with low income and poverty populations encounter the same systemic and individual barriers. Programmatic barriers arise when disability is a complicating factor, and a different approach is required. While some programmatic barriers tie to program policies and practices, others result from staff ignorance of the functional impact of disability on work and independence, or from the cost impact of new approaches.

- (1) Maintained supported employment partnerships for mental health in all six (6) regions of the state.
- (2) Continued pilot programs for supported employment in the area of acquired brain injury and autism.
- (3) Continued an evidence-based supported employment outcome model of service delivery.
- (4) Continued to publicize the housing.ne.gov website to assist people with disabilities to get affordable housing near their worksite. Staff utilize this resource regularly.
- (5) Continued to support and assist consumers in the use of the Alternative Financing and Telework loan programs.
- (6) Continued to use the AT4All.com website which coordinates all available assistive technology for the state. This includes equipment available for loan, for sale, for demonstration and for give away.
- (7) Continued the use of an agency-wide video remote interpreting service to address the shortage of sign language interpreters for the deaf in the rural areas of the state.
- (8) Utilized Title I funds to supplement Title VI, Part B funds to adequately address the supported employment services in the state of Nebraska.

In comparing FY 2009 program indicators with FY 2010 program indicators, the program experienced an increase in consumers served and in successful employment outcome. Our conclusion would be that the strategies were effective with respect to access and participation in services.

Applied for Services

FY2009 — 5,013

FY2010 — 5,069

Eligible for Services

FY2009 — 4,429

FY2010 — 4,513

Started Services

FY2009 — 2,710

FY2010 — 2,955

Received Services

FY2009 — 6,018

FY2010 — 6,397

Successfully Employed

FY2009 — 1,568

FY2010 — 1,677

Supported Employment Outcomes

FY2009 — 201

FY2010 — 212

SE Mental Health Partnership Outcomes*

FY2009 — 179

FY2010 — 173

**SE Mental Health Partnership Outcomes are a subset of the Supported Employment Outcomes*

4. Performance Accountability and Continuous Improvement

Performance accountability and continuous improvement is central to all strategies for meeting the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with significant and most significant disabilities in Nebraska. QUEST is our comprehensive information management system with the capacity to continuously capture and report data on critical processes and outcomes.

In FY 2010, we:

- (1) Began the development of an on-line case management system to improve our efficiency and effectiveness.
- (2) Provided standardized processes through a web-based information portal to enhance efficiency in documentation.
- (3) Provided reports to local management staff to support performance reporting and analysis.
- (4) Explored the use of mobile technology including videoconferencing, iPads, and iPhones as a strategy to expedite service delivery.
- (5) Initiated case reviews, in which all team members participated, to provide information on how to improve accountability, documentation, and strategies for service provision.

5. Innovation and Expansion

I & E funding totaling \$715,169 was used to support the following:

- (1) State Rehabilitation Council (\$13,506)
- (2) State Independent Living Council (\$76,000)
- (3) State Transition Program Director and a portion of Transition related activities (\$107,989)
- (4) Juvenile Justice Program in Omaha and Lincoln (\$71,299)
- (5) Corrections Program Director (\$81,073)
- (6) Youth Leadership Council Coordinator and State Youth Leadership activities in a 50/50 partnership with Special Education (\$36,386)
- (7) Easter Seals of Nebraska (\$388,299)
- (8) Grants & Contracts Management (\$79,895)

6. Standards and Indicators

The agency met all of the performance standards in FY 2010. Through the strategies and activities identified in this state plan, the agency expects in FY 2012 to increase the margins by which it exceeds the federal standards.