



PROPOSED AGENDA ITEM RATIONALE

DATE: July 23, 2025

TO: Dr. Brian L. Maher
Commissioner of Education

FROM: Ami Stubben-Goetsch, Project Director, Nebraska VR's CPAP 2.0 Grant
Lindy Foley, Nebraska VR Office Administrator

PROPOSED AGENDA ITEM: Renew the contract for the Career Advancement Initiative Model Demonstration Project Grant

AGENDA ITEM TYPE (contract/grant/rule/program/other): Contract Renewal

RATIONALE/BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Nebraska VR was awarded a 5-year, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Rehabilitation Training: Disability Innovation Fund — Career Advancement Initiative Model Demonstration Project Grant for \$8,469,796. This grant began on October 1, 2021 and ends September 30, 2026. Initial approval for this contract was given on November 5, 2021 with subsequent renewals approved each year. This contract renewal agenda item is for 10/1/25-9/30/26.

The Nebraska Career Pathways Advancement Project (CPAP 2.0) grant maintains a dual customer approach for Nebraska VR to serve both businesses and past Nebraska VR clients. CPAP 2.0 contacted Nebraska VR clients closed successfully in FY 2017-FY 2022 who were employed in the career pathways of administrative support, architecture/construction, health science, lodging, manufacturing, professional sales, restaurant & food beverage service or transportation, distribution, and logistics (TDL) and offers them the opportunity to advance in their careers. CPAP 2.0 also contacts businesses to partner with upskilling incumbent workers. Openings from upskilling incumbent employees can be backfilled with Nebraska VR clients. The goal of CPAP 2.0 is to successfully upskill 350 clients who will be working full time with an average wage of \$18.00 per hour and receiving employer benefits.

The Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at the University of Massachusetts-Boston partners with Nebraska VR on the RSA Disability Innovation Fund — Career Advancement Initiative Model Demonstration Project. As written in the grant, the ICI will continue to serve as an independent evaluator of Nebraska VR's CPAP 2.0 grant. ICI is responsible for designing and executing the evaluation plan, aligning evaluation data collection, analysis, and reporting with Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) measures, and generating evaluation reports documenting Nebraska VR's progress toward key objectives, challenges, and strategies to address challenges and impact on targeted outcomes.

Key components of the ICI's evaluation include:

- Progress Reporting including RSA requested reports (quarterly, annually, GPRA measures)
- Process Evaluation including document review, key informant interviews, surveys, and administrative data analysis to describe the implementation of the model demonstration in progress
- Fidelity Assessment including developing a tool to measure fidelity of implementation and yearly assessment
- Outcome Evaluation including administrative data analysis, surveys (participant, employer, and training provider), and qualitative interviewing of a subpopulation of participants and employers

The ICI also provides training and technical assistance to Nebraska VR staff to implement the career advancement model by a) supporting the alignment of resources that facilitate and promote career advancement as an agency priority and b) increasing the capability (knowledge and skill of staff) to serve model demonstration participants effectively.

Lastly, the ICI will engage in knowledge translation activities designed to support the dissemination goals of the model demonstration program.

ICI was chosen as an independent evaluator due to the long-term, on-going relationship with Nebraska VR. The data provided by ICI is used for Annual Progress Reports (APR) that are required by RSA.

PROPOSED BOARD MEETING (MONTH/YEAR): August 2025

ESTIMATED COST: \$375,378

FOR CONTRACTS AND GRANTS:

- Indicate the Funding Source: Disability Innovation Fund-Career Advancement Initiative Model Demonstration Project PR/Award# H421C210021. Federal funding. The funds for this contract are included in the grant award for this program.
- New or Renewal: Renewal
- If renewal, date of first approval: November 5, 2021

FOR NEW CONTRACTS OR OTHER CONTRACTS REQUIRING PROCUREMENT:

- Indicate the method of procurement: Non-Competitive Negotiation
- Rationale for method of procurement: The service is available from a single source as it was written into the grant application and approved as part of the Federal Grant Award.
- Rationale for contractor selection: Contractor was identified in the grant application and Nebraska VR is required to contract with this contractor for evaluation services as part of the federal grant award.

FOR GRANT SUBAWARDS: Describe the grantee selection process: N/A