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NEBRASKA

2015 STATE PLAN FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (VR) SERVICES PROGRAM AND SUPPLEMENT FOR THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT (SE) SERVICES PROGRAM PUBLIC HEARING

10:00 A.M. (CST), Thursday, May 29, 2014
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES OFFICE
3901 N. 27th Street, Suite 6, Lincoln, NE

Attend by interactive videoconference at the following Vocational Rehabilitation Offices

Columbus – 3100 23rd Street, Suite 5
Fremont – 827 North D Street
Grand Island – 203 E. Stolley Park Road, Suite B
Kearney - 315 W. 60th Street, Suite 400
Norfolk - 1212 Benjamin Ave.
North Platte - 200 South Silber, Bldg, 2,
Omaha - 1313 Farnam on the Mall
Omaha - 12011 Q Street
Scottsbluff – 505A Broadway, Suite 500

Attend by non-interactive streaming video: http://channel.vbrick.com/NET/MultiDeviceIndex.aspx

The State Rehabilitation Council is conducting a public hearing on the Vocational Rehabilitation 2015 State Plan draft. The public hearing is an opportunity for members of the public, including individuals with disabilities to comment on the goals, strategies and policies of the VR agency.

The 2015 State Plan draft is available for review on the website for Nebraska VR and at each Vocational Rehabilitation Office. Interested parties are invited to attend and to make comment. If reasonable accommodations are needed for the public hearing at any of the sites, please contact Vocational Rehabilitation at 402-471-3649 at least five days before the public meeting date.

Interested parties may also submit written comments by e-mail to pat.bracken@nebraska.gov or by mail to:

Pat Bracken, Program Director
Nebraska VR
P.O. Box 94987
Lincoln, NE 68509-4987

Written comments must be received by the close of the public hearing on Thursday, May 29, 2014 to be made part of the hearing record.

State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and
State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program
Nebraska Division of Rehabilitation Services - State Department of Education State Plan for Fiscal Year 2015 (submitted FY 2014)

Preprint - Section 1: State Certifications

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

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

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

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

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

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

1.7 The (enter title of state officer below) ***Yes***

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)... ***Yes***

Nebraska VR Assistant Commissioner/Director

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

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

State Plan Certified By

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

Signed?***Yes***

Name of Signatory***Mark Schultz***

Title of Signatory***Nebraska VR Assistant Commissioner/Director***

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

Assurances Certified By

At the request of RSA, the designated state agency and/or the designated state unit provide the following assurance(s), in addition to those contained within Section 2 through 8 below, in connection with the approval of the State Plan for FY ***2015 No***

Section 1 Footnotes

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

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

[3] All references in this plan to "designated state agency" or to "the state agency"

relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

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

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

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

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

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

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

(a) Conduct of public meetings.

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

(b) Notice requirements.

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

(c) Special consultation requirements.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Preprint - Section 4: Administration of the State Plan

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

(a) Designated state agency.

1. There is a state agency designated as the sole state agency to administer the State Plan or to supervise its administration in a political subdivision of the state by a sole local agency.

2. The designated state agency ***is a state agency that is not primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities and includes a vocational rehabilitation unit as provided in paragraph (b) of this section (Option B was selected/Option A was not selected)***

3. In American Samoa, the designated state agency is the governor.

(b) Designated state unit.

1. If the designated state agency is not primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities, in accordance with subparagraph 4.1(a)(2)(B) of this section, the state agency includes a vocational rehabilitation bureau, division or unit that:

A. is primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities and is responsible for the administration of the designated state agency's vocational rehabilitation program under the State Plan;
B. has a full-time director;
C. has a staff, at least 90 percent of whom are employed full-time on the rehabilitation work of the organizational unit; and
D. is located at an organizational level and has an organizational status within the designated state agency comparable to that of other major organizational units of the designated state agency.

2. The name of the designated state vocational rehabilitation unit is

Nebraska Division of Rehabilitation Services

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

The State Plan must contain one of the following assurances.

(a) The designated state agency is an independent state commission that

1. is responsible under state law for operating or overseeing the operation of the vocational rehabilitation program in the state and is primarily concerned with the vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities in accordance with subparagraph 4.1(a)(2)(A) of this section.

2. is consumer controlled by persons who:
   A. are individuals with physical or mental impairments that substantially limit major life activities; and
   B. represent individuals with a broad range of disabilities, unless the designated state unit under the direction of the commission is the state agency for individuals who are blind;

3. includes family members, advocates or other representatives of individuals with mental impairments; and

4. undertakes the functions set forth in Section 105(c)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(h)(4).

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

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

(Option B was selected)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If "Yes", the designated state agency:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This agency is ***not*** requesting a waiver of statewideness.

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

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

1. nonfederal share of the cost of these services is met from funds provided by a local public agency, including funds contributed to a local public agency by a private agency, organization or individual;
2. services are likely to promote the vocational rehabilitation of substantially larger numbers of individuals with disabilities or of individuals with disabilities with particular types of impairments; and
3. state, for purposes other than the establishment of a community rehabilitation program or the construction of a particular facility for community rehabilitation program purposes, requests in Attachment 4.7(b)(3) a waiver of the statewideness requirement in accordance with the following requirements:

A. identification of the types of services to be provided;

B. written assurance from the local public agency that it will make available to the state unit the nonfederal share of funds;

C. written assurance that state unit approval will be obtained for each proposed service before it is put into effect; and

D. written assurance that all other State Plan requirements, including a state's order of selection, will apply to all services approved under the waiver.

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

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

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

system.

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

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

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

1. cooperation with and use of the services and facilities of the federal, state, and local agencies and programs, including programs carried out by the undersecretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture and state use contracting programs, to the extent that those agencies and programs are not carrying out activities through the statewide work force investment system;

2. coordination, in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 4.8(c) of this section, with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services;

3. establishment of cooperative agreements with private nonprofit vocational rehabilitation service providers, in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 5.10(b) of the State Plan; and,

4. efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other state agencies and entities with respect to the provision of supported employment and extended services for individuals with the most significant disabilities, in accordance with the requirements of subsection 6.5 of the supplement to this State Plan.

(c) Coordination with education officials.

1. Attachment 4.8(b)(2) describes the plans, policies and procedures for coordination between the designated state agency and education officials responsible for the public education of students with disabilities that are designed to facilitate the transition of the students who are individuals with disabilities from the receipt of educational services in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services under the responsibility of the designated state agency.

2. The State Plan description must:

A. provide for the development and approval of an individualized plan for

employment in accordance with 34 CFR 361.45 as early as possible during the transition planning process but, at the latest, before each student determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services leaves the school setting or if the designated state unit is operating on an order of selection before each eligible student able to be served under the order leaves the school setting; and

B. include information on a formal interagency agreement with the state educational agency that, at a minimum, provides for:

i. consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to postschool activities, including vocational rehabilitation services;

ii. transition planning by personnel of the designated state agency and the educational agency for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and completion of their individualized education programs under Section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;

iii. roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services; and

iv. procedures for outreach to students with disabilities as early as possible during the transition planning process and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

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

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

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

1. There is in the state a recipient(s) of a grant under Part C of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services for American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing on or near federal and state reservations. ***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, .19 and .51(a) and (b))

(a) In general.

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

(b) Employment of individuals with disabilities.

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

(c) Facilities.

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

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

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

following:

(a) Data system on personnel and personnel development.

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

1. Qualified personnel needs.

A. The number of personnel who are employed by the state agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;

B. The number of personnel currently needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services, broken down by personnel category; and

C. Projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services in the state in five years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

2. Personnel development.

A. A list of the institutions of higher education in the state that are preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals, by type of program;

B. The number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and

C. The number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

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

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

(c) Personnel standards.

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

1. standards that are consistent with any national- or state-approved or recognized certification, licensing, registration, or, in the absence of these requirements, other comparable requirements (including state personnel requirements) that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing vocational rehabilitation services.

2. To the extent that existing standards are not based on the highest requirements in the state applicable to a particular profession or discipline, the steps the state is currently taking and the steps the state plans to take in accordance with the written plan to retrain or hire personnel within the designated state unit to meet standards that are based on the highest requirements in the state, including measures to notify designated state unit personnel, the institutions of higher education identified in subparagraph (a)(2), and other public agencies of these steps and the time lines for taking each step.

3. The written plan required by subparagraph (c)(2) describes the following:

A. specific strategies for retraining, recruiting and hiring personnel;

B. the specific time period by which all state unit personnel will meet the standards required by subparagraph (c)(1);

C. procedures for evaluating the designated state unit's progress in hiring or retraining personnel to meet applicable personnel standards within the established time period; and

D. the identification of initial minimum qualifications that the designated state unit will require of newly hired personnel when the state unit is unable to hire new personnel who meet the established personnel standards and the identification of a plan for training such individuals to meet the applicable standards within the time period established for all state unit personnel to meet the established personnel standards.

(d) Staff development.

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

1. A system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the

designated state unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement and rehabilitation technology.

2. Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination to designated state unit professionals and paraprofessionals significant knowledge from research and other sources.

(e) Personnel to address individual communication needs.

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

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

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

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

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

(a) Comprehensive statewide assessment.

1. Attachment 4.11(a) documents the results of a comprehensive, statewide assessment, jointly conducted every three years by the designated state unit and the State Rehabilitation Council (if the state has such a council). The assessment describes:

A. the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the state, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of:

i. individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;

ii. individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program carried out under this State Plan; and

iii. individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide

work force investment system.

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

2. For any year in which the state updates the assessments, the designated state unit submits to the commissioner a report containing information regarding updates to the assessments.

(b) Annual estimates.

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

1. number of individuals in the state who are eligible for services under the plan;

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

3. costs of the services described in subparagraph (b)(1), including, if the designated state agency uses an order of selection, the service costs for each priority category within the order.

(c) Goals and priorities.

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

2. The designated state agency submits to the commissioner a report containing information regarding any revisions in the goals and priorities for any year the state revises the goals and priorities.

3. Order of selection.
   If the state agency implements an order of selection, consistent with subparagraph 5.3(b)(2) of the State Plan, Attachment 4.11(c)(3):

A. shows the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services;

B. provides a justification for the order; and

C. identifies the service and outcome goals, and the time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.

4. Goals and plans for distribution of Title VI, Part B, funds.
Attachment 4.11(c)(4) specifies, consistent with subsection 6.4 of the State Plan supplement, the state's goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of funds received under Section 622 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services.

(d) Strategies.

1. Attachment 4.11(d) describes the strategies, including:

A. the methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities, including how a broad range of assistive technology services and assistive technology devices will be provided to those individuals at each stage of the rehabilitation process and how those services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities on a statewide basis;

B. outreach procedures to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities in accordance with subsection 6.6 of the State Plan supplement, and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program;

C. as applicable, the plan of the state for establishing, developing or improving community rehabilitation programs;

D. strategies to improve the performance of the state with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators established pursuant to Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act; and

E. strategies for assisting other components of the statewide work force investment system in assisting individuals with disabilities.

2. Attachment 4.11 (d) describes how the designated state agency uses these strategies to:

A. address the needs identified in the assessment conducted under paragraph 4.11(a) and achieve the goals and priorities identified in the State Plan attachments under paragraph 4.11(c);

B. support the innovation and expansion activities identified in subparagraph 4.12(a)(1) and (2) of the plan; and

C. overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Program and State Supported Employment Services Program.

(e) Evaluation and reports of progress.

1. The designated state unit and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state unit has a council, jointly submits to the commissioner an annual report on the results of an evaluation of the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program and the progress made in improving the effectiveness of the program from the previous year.

2. Attachment 4.11(e)(2):

A. provides an evaluation of the extent to which the goals identified in Attachment 4.11(c)(1) and, if applicable, Attachment 4.11(c)(3) were achieved;

B. identifies the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals and priorities;

C. describes the factors that impeded their achievement, to the extent they were not achieved;

D. assesses the performance of the state on the standards and indicators established pursuant to Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act; and

E. provides a report consistent with paragraph 4.12(c) of the plan on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion activities were utilized in the preceding year.

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

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

1. development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities under this State Plan, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities, consistent with the findings of the statewide assessment identified in Attachment 4.11(a) and goals and priorities of the state identified in Attachments 4.11(c)(1) and, if applicable, Attachment 4.11(c)(3); and

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

Section 705(e)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 364.21(i).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(a) The designated state unit is able to provide the full range of services listed in Section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.48, as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the state who apply for services. ***Yes***

(b) If No:

1. Individuals with the most significant disabilities, in accordance with criteria established by the state, are selected first for vocational rehabilitation services before other individuals with disabilities.

2. Attachment 4.11(c)(3):

A. shows the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services;

B. provides a justification for the order of selection; and

C. identifies the state's service and outcome goals and the time within which these

goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.

3. Eligible individuals who do not meet the order of selection criteria have access to the services provided through the designated state unit's information and referral system established under Section 101(a)(20) of the Rehabilitation Act, 34 CFR 361.37, and subsection 5.1 of this State Plan.

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

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

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

1. assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs by qualified personnel, including, if appropriate, an assessment by personnel skilled in rehabilitation technology;

2. counseling and guidance, including information and support services to assist an individual in exercising informed choice consistent with the provisions of Section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act;

3. referral and other services to secure needed services from other agencies, including other components of the statewide work force investment system, through agreements developed under Section 101(a)(11) of the Rehabilitation Act, if such services are not available under this State Plan;

4. job-related services, including job search and placement assistance, job retention services, follow-up services, and follow-along services;

5. rehabilitation technology, including telecommunications, sensory and other technological aids and devices; and

6. post-employment services consisting of the services listed under subparagraphs (1) through (5) of this paragraph.

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

1. progress of the individual toward achieving the employment outcome identified in the individualized plan for employment;

2. an immediate job placement; or
3. provision of vocational rehabilitation services to any individual who is determined to be at extreme medical risk, based on medical evidence provided by an appropriate qualified medical professional.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

individuals with disabilities residing in the state.

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

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

1. who has achieved an employment outcome in which the individual is compensated in accordance with Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (29 U.S.C. 214(c)); or
2. whose record of services is closed while the individual is in extended employment on the basis that the individual is unable to achieve an employment outcome in an integrated setting or that the individual made an informed choice to remain in extended employment.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(c) There is compliance with the requirements in 34 CFR 361.62(b) that ensure the use of the

construction authority will not reduce the efforts of the designated state agency in providing other vocational rehabilitation services other than the establishment of facilities for community rehabilitation programs.

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

(a) Contracts with for-profit organizations.

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

(b) Cooperative agreements with private nonprofit organizations.

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

Preprint - Section 6: Program Administration

Section 6: Program Administration

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Attachment 4.8(b)(4) describes the efforts of the designated state agency to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other

state agencies and other appropriate entities to assist in the provision of supported employment services and other public or nonprofit agencies or organizations within the state, employers, natural supports, and other entities with respect to the provision of extended services.

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

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

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

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

Preprint - Section 7: Financial Administration

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

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

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

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

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

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

Preprint - Section 8: Provision of Supported Employment Services

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(b) The individualized plan for employment:

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

sources will become available.

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

Attachment 4.2(c): 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 VR. The agency agrees with all the recommendations and will take or has taken necessary action to implement.

SRC Input

SRC members were informed of and provided input on many issues including: educating the public about VR & other marketing ideas, marketing materials and brochures, internal & external agency web sites, outreach to minorities and underserved groups, conducting a business survey, streamlining the VR process, evaluating the effectiveness of Project Search and certificate programs.

SRC Annual Events

1. The SRC hosted a State Legislative Luncheon in February 2013 that was well attended by State Senators and their staff. The SRC provided an overview of Nebraska VR services and a client success story.

2. Entrepreneur of the Year Awards: The Entrepreneur of the Year Awards were held in July 2013. Three Entrepreneur of Distinction Awards were presented. Awards were given to Nebraska VR clients who succeeded in their self-employment ventures.
   Entrepreneur of Distinction Awards:
   • Lee Andersen — Havelock Electric of Lincoln, NE
   • Kristi Paben — Clao of Beatrice, NE
   • Michael Saalfeld — Saalfeld Construction & Roofing of Seward, NE

SRC Recommendations

1. The SRC developed a Council mission statement.
2. The SRC assisted in the development of a marketing strategy to include a new logo with innovative ways such as the use of social media to market the VR brand.
3. The SRC provided feedback in the development of the Pilot program for Certificate Programs that was modeled after Project SEARCH and is gaining national attention.
4. The SRC provided feedback on the focus groups for the Latino population and the deaf and hard of hearing population and are currently in the process of gathering recommendations to identify barriers and develop outreach strategies.
5. The SRC assisted in modifying the format to the VR post-employment services survey, categorizing the responses to enhance understanding and to make the data more meaningful.
6. The SRC provided feedback on the State Plan.

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

Nebraska VR seeks to work cooperatively with numerous other state and local agencies and programs. Collaborative efforts are manifested through coordinated committees throughout the state with Nebraska VR state office and local field staff actively participating. Examples of the committees Nebraska VR 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, Nebraska Special Education Advisory Council Standing Committees on 1) Autism Spectrum Disorders, 2) Out of Home Placements (OHP) Committee, 3) Transition, 4) Deaf and Hard of Hearing, 5) Youth Leadership Council, Brain Injury Advisory Council, Local Community Resource Committees, Aging and Disability Resource Center and Money Follows the Person Program Core Leadership Group, Madonna Community Advisory Council, ATP Advisory Council, Alternative Finance Loan Advisory Council, Nebraska Children's Commission Juvenile Services Committee, Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness Advisory Council, local Chambers of Commerce, etc.

Nebraska VR 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., Goodwilll Industries of Greater Nebraska, Vocational Development Center Inc., Apogee Retail Inc., Community Options Individual and Family Services, Community Alliance, Mosaic, Douglas County Correctional Services, State Parole Office, Developmental Disabilities of Nebraska, Vital Services, Mid-Nebraska Individual Services, South Central Developmental Services, Employment Works, Inc., 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, The Autism Center of Nebraska, Center for People in Need, Project Search, Walmart, Faith Regional Hospital, Norris Public Schools, Waverly Public Schools, Columbus Public Schools, York Public Schools, Educational Service Unit #9, St. Francis Hospital, Mercy Medical Center, and Good Samaritan Hospital. 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, autism spectrum disorders, 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, Nebraska VR 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.

Nebraska VR 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

Nebraska VR 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 addition, Special Education and Nebraska VR 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. Nebraska VR 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 Nebraska VR, 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 Nebraska VR'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 Nebraska VR as the lead agency responsible for providing services and qualified personnel after the point of exit to those students meeting Nebraska VR 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 Nebraska VR as having the financial responsibility for providing services and qualified personnel after the point of exit to those students meeting VR 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 Nebraska VR 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.

Nebraska VR serves on the Nebraska Department of Education's Special Education Advisory Council Committees on 1) Autism Spectrum Disorders, 2) Out of Home Placements (OHP) Committee, 3) Transition, 4) Deaf and Hard of Hearing, 5) Youth Leadership Council. These committees meet throughout the year to share information, identify issues, and coordinate secondary education and transition services for students with disabilities.

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. Nebraska VR 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.
- Transition partnership planning occurs with schools, Educational Service Units, and VR at the local level. This planning promotes 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)(3): Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Nebraska VR Service Providers

Nebraska VR has written procedures for establishing written agreements with service providers, including private nonprofit vocational rehabilitation service providers. These procedures emphasize the role of local VR offices in identifying needs for specific vocational rehabilitation services responsive to the needs of persons with significant disabilities in their areas. They also emphasize the role of local VR and community rehabilitation staff in monitoring the agreements, including usage and effectiveness of services.

Background screening is required for all individual providers with written agreements who provide job coaching, independent living skills exploration and training, supported employment, and self-employment consultation. Providers who employ individuals who deliver services requiring background screening must furnish written assurances that those employees have not been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor involving neglect and/or abuse of a child or vulnerable adult before the written agreement is approved.

Currently, Nebraska VR does not have any formal Cooperative Agreements that utilize state and local dollars for matching federal funds.

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

On the state level, Nebraska VR 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 clients 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. Nebraska VR is developing policies to support this effort and to financially participate in this innovative supported employment effort.

Following a successful demonstration project with the Autism Center of Nebraska to provide supported employment and job coaching for individuals with autism, Nebraska VR established a performance-based contract to provide these services.

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

1. Data systems on personnel and personnel development

Nebraska VR maintains a system for collecting and analyzing data on qualified personnel needs which includes: the number of personnel currently employed by Nebraska VR by personnel category; the number of positions currently available to Nebraska VR 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 2, 2014:

Direct Service Personnel Employed:

	Rehab Specialist	Service Specialist	Associates
Direct Service Personnel Employed	61	52	38
Personnel to Client Ratio after IPE	1:111	1:130	1:178
Personnel to Clients Ratio All Clients	1:185	1:217	1:296
Projected Staffing Requirements	62	55	38
Current Vacancies	1	3	0
Projected Replacement Needs (5 year total)	30	30	20

Non-Direct Service Personnel Employed

	Senior Administrators	Program Directors, Adm. Specialists & Adm. Associates	Information Technology	Office Directors	Office Associates
Non-Direct Service Personnel Employed	1	18	8	13	1.13
Projected Staffing Requirements	1	18	9	13	1.13
Current Vacancies	0	1	0	0	0
Project Replacements (5 year total)	0	4	0	3	.565

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

There is a projected need to replace an average of 17 - 21 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 Nebraska VR to recruit qualified specialists is 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 inadequate regional supply of qualified applicants with an obligation to the public vocational rehabilitation program.

In FY 2013, the agency participated in the Fall and Spring Career Fairs 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 small college career fairs at Concordia University, Peru State College, and Union 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 rehabilitation education programs located primarily in the Midwest. The agency supplements the distribution of Rehabilitation and Service Specialists' vacancy postings by the State 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 – Community Counseling
University of Nebraska at Omaha – Community Counseling and School Counseling

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

Adler School of Professional Psychology
Drake University
East Central University
Emporia State University
Illinois Institute of Technology
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. Our vacancy postings are listed with the Nebraska Latino-American Commission, the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska, the Urban League of Nebraska, the State Independent Living Council, 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 Spanish or American Sign Language (ASL). The agency currently has 19 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

Newly hired Nebraska VR 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 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 conducts video conversations with all new staff during the first month, fifth month (6-month probationary positions), and in the seventh month on the job (1 year probationary positions). 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 and is consistent with how the job was presented, and
- demonstrate the agency's interest in his/her success.

The agency grants work time or tuition reimbursement to staff to attend classes and earn up to 7 semester credit hours or 9 quarter credit hours per year.

The Director offers 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 a staff member has to the Director on an internal website.

On-line exit interviews are offered to staff exiting the agency. The goal of the interview 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
Nebraska VR 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, Nebraska VR 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 found that the direct service work performed by Nebraska VR staff fell into 3 distinct classes of personnel instead of the 2 that existed. It was recommended that VR create a third intermediate position between associates and rehabilitation specialists and be comprised of some of their former duties.

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. 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, Individualized Plan for Employment (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, Nebraska VR's hiring standard exceeds that of other state agencies and equals the highest standard in the state. For 30 years, all rehabilitation specialists hired at Nebraska VR 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 32 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 a) statewide training needs identified by Program Directors in their specialty area, b) training needed to implement planned innovation and expansion activities, and c) 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. A Program Director has been designated with the responsibility to work with the VR Leadership Council in the development of a long-term strategy.

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 client disabilities and the way in which these impact upon the client, employment, and the provision of services. Every team member of the organization must possess knowledge of the service delivery processes and corresponding role and responsibilities. Consequently, disabilities and service delivery process knowledge is team based and necessary for all members of each team.

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

Disabilities (new staff training)

- Spinal cord disorders
- Psychosis
- Anxiety & personality disorders
- Autism Spectrum Disorders

Disabilities (team-based)

- Alcohol & Drug
- Musculoskeletal
- Cognitive disabilities
- Endocrine & immune system disorders
- Central nervous system
- Circulatory & respiratory
- Amputations
- Hearing impairments
- Acquired Brain Injury
- Learning Disabilities
- Intellectual Disabilities

Service Delivery Processes

- VR Process
- Plan Development Overview
- QE2 Training
- Job Planning Training
- Partnerships
- Communication/Customer Service
- Support processes
- World of Work
- Career Connections
- Working As A Team
- Motivational Interviewing
- Correctional Programs
- Transition Initiatives

Team Services

- Assessment/ Vocational Evaluation
- Benefits Orientation
- Counseling
- Placement
- Rehabilitation technology
- Independent living

Personnel development needs

1. **New staff training.** There is an anticipated need for Nebraska VR to replace an average of

17-21 staff annually due to resignations and retirements over the next 5 years. Until recently this turnover has primarily occurred among direct line staff. The agency has recently been experiencing significant turnover among administrative and management staff due to retirement. New hires through growth are anticipated to be negligible.

Nebraska does not have a Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) accredited, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) assisted, graduate level rehabilitation education program preparing persons for practice in a rehabilitation discipline of counseling, evaluation or administration. In-migration of qualified personnel to fill vacant positions averages only about 1-2 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. This training is provided at the central office and can be completed within 12 months barring any need to reschedule a section of New Staff Training.

LINK is an online Human Capital Management program that will assist the state with Sourcing and Recruiting, Learning and Development, Employee Performance Management, On-Boarding & Benefits Enrollment, Succession Planning and Compensation Management. The component supporting Learning and Development will be the Employment Development Center (EDC). EDC is an employee's "one-stop shop" for learning, employee performance management, and employee and employer succession planning. The State of Nebraska continues to make enhancements to LINK and Nebraska VR continues to explore ways to best utilize this system. A feature that will involve identifying training to support an employee's career objectives remains in development.

The agency is exploring different ways of utilizing 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 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. Staff turnover also requires training new staff to provide the quality team services expected by the program.

Specific types of team services provided directly by our staff include: community-based assessment, career counseling, vocational evaluation, 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; 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. Motivational interviewing training has been provided to current staff and new staff will receive the same training. This training is expected to enhance the staff's delivery of team services.

3. **Individual training.** Annual Performance Reviews are now being conducted based on individual continuous service dates rather than annually following the end of the federal fiscal year. The Performance Reviews will include identifying individual training and development needs. Staff requests to attend training not provided or sponsored by Nebraska VR will be approved based on what was identified in the Performance Review.

4. **Technology use training.** Training needs assessments show a broad and diverse range of training needs related to integrating technology into everyday service delivery in order to improve productivity, efficiency, and timeliness of services. Primary focus of the training has been and will continue to be on the use of iPads in case management and associated applications.

5. **Social Media.** This training will focus on the appropriate use of social media as an outreach strategy with clients, businesses, and the public.

System of personnel development

1. New staff training to an estimated 17-21 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)
- QE2– Case Management System (1 day)
- New Employee Orientation (2 days)
- Medical Aspects (2 days)
- Job Planning Training (2 days)
- Communication Training (1 day)
- World of Work-DOL (1 day)
- Career Connections (1 day)
- Motivational Interviewing (2 days)
- Correctional Programs (2 hours)
- Transition Initiative (2 hours)

2. Workshops, distance learning, podcasts, and continuing education activities for Nebraska VR 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. §38-101).

3. The EDC through LINK will be used to identify areas of individual development and performance improvement. The EDC 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 on-going renewal and updating of the entire organizational knowledge and skill base, requiring a long range training plan.

Coordination with the in-service training grant

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

Communication with diverse populations

Nebraska VR, 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 American Sign Language (ASL). Interpreter services for persons with limited English speaking ability are obtained from agencies, vendors, ethnic organizations and advocacy groups. The

Language Line Services, Inc. is used as a 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. In 2013, Nebraska VR entered into a contract with the Language Line Services, Inc. for Video Remote Interpreting for sign language and Spanish.

Nebraska VR employs staff with sign language skills and obtains interpreter services for clients or individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Nebraska state law requires the use of licensed sign language interpreters.

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

Nebraska VR 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(a): Results of Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the Rehabilitation needs of Individual with Disabilities and Need to Establish, Develop, or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs

The Comprehensive Statewide Assessment was conducted between January 1, 2010 and March 30, 2012. During this period, the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) held 10 meetings. To facilitate the Council's role in partnering with the agency in developing, agreeing to, and reviewing the agency's goals and priorities, evaluating the effectiveness of the program, and assisting in the preparation of the State Plan, the SRC, at each of its meetings, was apprised of and provided input on the agency's activities, most recent performance data, consumer satisfaction survey results, client issues addressed by the Client Assistance Program, assessment data results, and partnership updates including presentations by some of the partners.

Individuals with the most significant disabilities
Major service needs include —

- *Impact and challenge from changing demographics in serving individuals with the most significant disabilities.* With 74% of Nebraska counties experiencing declining population and the growing trend of population increase among the more urban cities and counties, the agency will be looking at how best to allocate staff resources throughout the state and how to adequately serve both population sets. The population shift that has occurred typically is accompanied by a similar shift in community resources and employment opportunities.

- *Challenge of locating, accessing and coordinating needed community services and supports.* Consistent with prior comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs, individuals with the most significant work disabilities continue to have complex needs, complicated by poverty. Social services and support networks, both governmental and non-profit, have not been able to maintain much less increase service levels to meet these needs. The loss of local community offices to area call centers has and will further challenge individuals with the most significant disabilities as they seek out, find and manage services and supports.

- *Access to supported employment extended supports for students with developmental disabilities desiring to exit high school at an age appropriate time.* Despite the collaborative efforts, extended supports are still not available for individuals with developmental disabilities under age 21 delaying their access to supported employment services.

- *Transition services for students with the most significant disabilities.* The Nebraska Department of Education Statewide Count of Special Education Students by Impairment shows the four largest impairment groups to be Specific Learning Disability, Mental Handicap, Other Health Impaired and Behavioral Disorders. While Nebraska has one of the highest high school graduation rates in the country (85.77%), there is still concern for the number of students who have dropped out of school or who graduate but do not make a successful transition to employment and independence and become involved within the Juvenile Justice system. As these individuals move into the adult system it presents additional issues as most employers are routinely conducting routine background checks via the internet. A further concern is the over representation of minorities in the juvenile justice systems.

- *Services targeted to individuals with brain injury and autism spectrum disorders.* Strides have been made in using specialized vocational assessments for Nebraska clients with brain injury and other cognitive disorders to identify services and supports required to achieve employment. The identification and use of assistive technology options have also proven to be beneficial to individuals with a brain injury. However, there continues to be limited statewide programs, services and supports. This is also true for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders, a disability population that continues to grow nationally and in Nebraska.

- *Skill training services provided in integrated competitive employment and community settings.* Many individuals with cognitive disabilities struggle with traditional post secondary classroom and/or segregated training programs. While, collaborative skill training programs with employers, schools, and other community partners have proven to be an effective method of preparing individuals with the most significant disabilities into jobs, there are not enough established programs to meet the demand.

•*Rehabilitation technology services to accommodate functional limitations*. Rapid advances in technology require continual monitoring to be aware of and knowledgeable of their potential application through rehabilitation engineering to accommodate individuals within work and living environments. The identification of solutions through a technology transfer approach provides individuals with significant disabilities expanded opportunities for employment. In addition, greater attention by employers to issues such as ergonomics and the aging workforce has led to an increased demand for assistive devices to improve the functional capabilities of individuals and prevent secondary disabilities in the workplace.

•*Transportation for employment and independence*. Lack of transportation limits the opportunities for employment and independence among persons with significant work disabilities. Resources for addressing this need vary by community. Often these services are viewed by cities and counties as likely areas for budget cuts. Private and non-profit transportation resources also struggle with maintaining service levels essential to the elderly and persons with significant disabilities.

Rehabilitation Needs of Minorities

• The state's population growth has primarily been among minority racial and ethnic groups. The growth has occurred in the more populous Nebraska cities and counties. The Hispanic or Latino (of any race) population grew by 77% since the 2000 census and numbers 167,000, which is 9.2% of the state's population. The Asian, non-Hispanic, population grew by 47% and represents 1.8% of the state's population. The Black and African American population grew by 20.9% and represent 4.5% of the state's population. The White, non-Hispanic, population only increased by 0.4%. While Nebraska VR has met or exceeded the Standard/Indicator 2.1 five of the last six years, this has no relation to the number of minorities accessing services. There is a need for Nebraska VR to be more effective in its outreach and marketing to diverse populations to improve minority referrals. Another need throughout parts of the state is the need for foreign language interpreters. As is the case with sign language interpreters, the availability of this service in limited in 65 to 75% percent of the geographic area of the state.

Rehabilitation Needs of Unserved and Underserved Populations
SSDI and/or SSI recipients may be an underserved population by virtue of the fact that Nebraska VR's percentage of clients receiving SSDI and/or SSI is below the national and agency mean. However, SSA data indicates that state's percentage of individual's age 18 – 64 on SSDI or SSI on the basis of a disability is below the national average.

As previously mentioned, youth with developmental disabilities who exit or would like to exit school at an age appropriate time are unserved until they reach the age of 21 and can then receive Developmental Disabilities services and supports.

Nebraska Department of Education Special Education Data by Impairment shows a three-year increase in the number of students identified as experiencing Autism. This identification is an educational diagnosis rather than a medically verified diagnosis. Regardless, individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders experience difficulty in employment due to their social and communication skills and their repetitive and restricted behaviors and interests. Community resources and as well as Nebraska VR staff are challenged in learning and effectively using approaches and techniques for addressing this needs.

Needs of persons with disabilities served by other workforce investment system components
Nebraska VR has in the last two years experienced a decline in individuals with disabilities that substantially impede their employment being made aware of and referred to Nebraska VR. While Nebraska VR serves on the three regional workforce investment boards and has a significant itinerant presence at the One Stop Centers, the move to an online, virtual application system has resulted in significantly less individuals with a disability identifying themselves being informed about Nebraska VR and self referring.

Need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs
The need is for evidence-based, flexible vocational skill training, behavior management, and rehabilitation technology services and supports to be provided in natural environments, including integrated competitive employment sites. There also is a need for expanded, predictable, and stable funding of extended services and supports adequate to maintain persons with the most significant disabilities in supported employment.

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 2013 Annual Disability Statistics Compendium published by the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Statistics and Demographics estimates of number of Nebraskans, ages 18 – 64, with a disability at 94,120. When also considering transition youth under the age of 18 and individuals over the age of 64 with a disability, the upper range of individuals with a disability who are potentially eligible for services falls between 118,000 to 123,000.

The report estimates 41,000 individuals with a disability are working in some capacity with approximately 26,000 are working full-time. Considering that employed Nebraskans with a disability may need VR services to remain employed, best guesstimate of the potential number of Nebraskans who could be eligible for services range from 75,000 to 83,000. In reality, only 6.9 to 7.7% of the potential number of Nebraskans with disabilities will apply for VR services in 2015.

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

a. Title I, Part B

The estimate of eligible individuals who will receive services with funds provided by Title I, Part B during FY 2015 is between 6,300 and 6,850. The estimate of case service expenditures for FY 2015 is between $4,450,230 - $5,528,455. Total Title 1, Part B funds expenditures in FY 2015 are estimated to be between $20,662,368 and 21,075,615.

b. Title VI, Part B

The Title VI, Part B funds are exclusively used to fund the Behavioral Health Supported Employment Programs. These six Supported Employment programs are expected to serve between 600 and 645 individuals. The total allotment of Title VI, Part B funds is $270,000.

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

Nebraska VR'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)

The agency's rehab rate for FY2013 was 60.38%.

Each time a client receives services and is not successfully employed, the agency loses staff time, funds for purchased services and very likely the client's satisfaction with VR services.

Nebraska VR is committed to integrating motivational interviewing as a strategy to help clients determine if they are ready to make decisions about the next steps to getting a job and as a strategy to keep clients engaged in the process. This is a client-centered directive counseling approach to assist clients to recognize and reduce barriers to change. Motivational interviewing has been shown to increase client motivation and promote more active participation in services. Relative to performance standards and indicators, other VR agencies who have utilized motivational interviewing have experienced increases in their rehab rates. Staff participated in a series of trainings in motivational interviewing provided by the Region VII TACE in November 28-29, 2012 and January 30-31, 2013. Staff have been employing the techniques and are reporting success in moving clients to decisions and engagement.

Since not every client will find they are "ready" for VR services, teams are enhancing relationships with referral sources that can provide non-employment related supports and services to assist clients in addressing their critical non-employment related needs. These needs often contribute to the ambivalence about employment, and once addressed, allow clients to be fully engaged in achieving their employment goals and increasing the likelihood of successful employment outcomes.

Measures: Increase the rehabilitation rate to 65%.

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 1) agency policy, process, and practice and 2) staff skills, knowledge, and experience.

To increase the quality of services during the next fiscal year, Program Directors, relevant to their areas of focus, will be providing a summary report of annual team case reviews, as well as periodic targeted case reviews, to the Agency Director. These case reviews 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 and obtain input from the appropriate committees, work groups and the SRC. The Program Team will then 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, Associate Committee, and Leadership Council..

Training and support to improve staff skills and knowledge is enhanced by the use of a videoconference system connecting eleven field offices for training. A training plan was developed to identify the method of training for agency initiatives, role-specific skills, and individual staff professional development. In addition, a training budget was established for each team to allow for localized decision-making and discretion to meet the needs of staff. Topics are identified through case reviews or by any of the committees, individual staff performance appraisals, and information gathered from an annual team evaluation survey. The training plan will continue to be developed during this next year and include a focus on VR policies and processes at a statewide training event in October 2014.

Timeliness of services has been enhanced with the use of a web-based case management and fiscal reporting system, QE2, that went "live" August 6, 2012. Utilizing the web-based system has allowed for significant improvement in the amount of time it takes staff to document task notes, enter client information, complete IPEs, etc., with the end result being more time available to spend working directly with clients. In FY2015, additional QE2 enhancements, including the move to a paperless environment, will be made to improve staff access to case management information and to ensure the integrity of data input and federal reporting. We will also explore more complete integration of "MyVR," a social media-type application that allows for greater communication and transparency in services between VR and clients, into the QE2 case management system.

Increasing quality and timeliness of services requires greater understanding of the measures used by the agency and RSA. A data dashboard was developed and deployed in March 2014 to provide for statewide, team, and individual tracking and viewing of progress toward compliance with federal standards and indicators, as well as client, expenditure and placement data. The intent is to provide greater transparency and to increase staff understanding of the relevancy of their own day-to-day activities and services to the federal standards and indicators. In the coming year we will evaluate whether the current data elements and graphic data displays are meeting the needs of staff and implement revisions and additions in order to enhance the effectiveness of the dashboard.

Timeliness of services has improved with the use of mobile technology, with a particular focus on iPad technology and the use of social media. Approximately 200 iPads have been deployed to all field and management staff across the state. With a wireless connection, staff use the iPad to access e-mail, calendar, on-line job applications, videos of success stories to promote VR services to businesses and clients, and to demonstrate disability-related applications. Staff also use the iPads to access case management information. Staff have developed other ways to use the iPads to enhance services and the provision of information. User groups (counselors, evaluators, placement) and IT training sessions via video conferencing provide opportunities for staff to learn from each other.

Many transition and placement staff have been issued cell phones or smart phones with texting capabilities to increase engagement of youth and adults through timelier responses and communication. We intend to continue to build off our current mobile technology and social media strategies in 2015 as we explore other potential applications relevant to increasing timeliness of services. Measures will be put in place to evaluate the usage of the technology as well as the impact in terms of cost and efficiency.

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 and provided to the Agency Director at the end of the review.
(2) A training plan will be developed and include a statewide training focused on VR policies and processes in order to enhance staff understanding and consistency in implementation, and include at least six monthly topical trainings to be made available to all staff through the use of the videoconference system.
(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 (iPads and smart phones) in decreasing service times and increasing caseload capacity per team.
(4) A version of MyVR will be integrated into QE2.
(5) The VR agency will move to a paperless electronic environment for case management processes.

3. Improve client satisfaction and engagement

The client'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 Post Employment Monitoring Program follow up contacts, questions are asked of clients in regard to their level of satisfaction with VR services. Satisfactory ratings have consistently been 90% or higher. The State Rehabilitation Council continues to look at alternative methods to obtain client satisfaction, especially for individuals not closed as a successful outcome. The SRC will continue to obtain regular input on client concerns via feedback from the Agency Ombudsman and CAP and their recommendations for policy changes.

The State Rehabilitation Council has established a Consumer Input Committee that provides for direct client input into program materials, processes and policy. The Committee will continue to provide a client 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 clients in a way that is relevant, meaningful, engaging, and satisfactory.

The focus on motivational interviewing as discussed in goal one will also have an impact on client satisfaction and engagement. As a part of the goal setting process, VR staff have established a standard for contact with clients at least once every 30 days. Each team will continue to explore alternatives to improve communication and access to staff members as a strategy to increase client engagement.

Information gathered from focus groups conducted by the Nebraska Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Latino American Commission in the Spring of 2013 has been used to develop strategies to increase outreach and marketing efforts to these targeted populations. Additional strategies to enhance communication such as on-demand Video Remote Interpreting, Spanish interpreting and other languages have been put in place during FY2013. In FY2015, referrals from these targeted populations will be tracked to measure whether there is an increase and to examine how effective we have been in the provision of services (rehab rate).

Measures:
(1) A satisfactory rating of 90% or higher will be achieved on Consumer Satisfaction Surveys.
(2) The SRC Consumer Input Committee will review at least 4 areas of policy, process or materials in the next year, and make recommendations for revisions or alternative strategies.
(3) Staff will have at least one contact with each client every 30 days, in person, by phone, e-mail, texting or other electronic means, and document the contact in QE2.
(4) The effectiveness of the outreach plan will be monitored and evaluated as measured by the number of individuals in each of the targeted groups applying for services and their relative success as reflected by the rehab rate.

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

Partnerships provide additional supports that are needed for a client to be successful and generally occur in the program areas of transition, traumatic brain injury, autism, behavioral health, and corrections. A partnership is a collaboration with another entity that can play an important role in providing needed supports and services for clients. 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 clients. It is not the same as a referral source that refers clients to VR for services, but there is no further collaboration. 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 client job readiness and the ability to keep a job.

Partnerships with schools, community colleges, community businesses, and other agencies will continue with the Project Search and Community College Certificate Programs. These partnerships have proven to be successful in meeting the training needs of individuals with disabilities (especially transition-age youth) and the workforce needs of local community businesses.

In FY2013, the agency began a discussion with the Department of Health and Human Services System, Division of Behavioral Health, to develop a milestone payment process for behavioral health supported employment agreements. In FY2014, benchmarks were developed and a pilot project implemented with community partners to track supported employment services within each of the benchmark areas and the costs of providing those services in order to determine the actual costs to be used to establish the milestone payment amounts. Beginning in FY2015, service agreements will be developed with community partners to provide behavioral health supported employment services using the milestone payment process. Other supported employment service contracts for acquired brain injury and autism will also be converted to milestone payment service agreements as appropriate in FY2015.

Measures:

(1) All behavioral health community partnership service agreements will use a milestone payment process.
(2) Continued support of 12 Project Search sites and development of at least 2 new sites to be operational in FY2015.
(3) Continued support of 10 Community College Certificate programs and development of at least 3 new partnerships to be operational in FY2015.

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 evidence-based model supported employment services.

Number served in FY 2013 — 747

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 evidence-based model supported employment services.

Number of successful employment outcomes in FY 2013 — 212

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. Nebraska VR has a written agreement with the state's Division of Behavioral Health Services that promotes evidence-based supported employment services to individuals with behavioral heath 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.

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

Nebraska VR's Strategies and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities in FY 2015 flow out of the areas of need identified as a result of the current and past comprehensive statewide assessments. While the agency has had significant success in meeting Standards and Indicators and other performance goals, there continues to be a need for the agency to improve services and address challenges due to an ever changing environment.

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

Transition

(1) Update the publication that is sent to transition students and their families and make it a more useful resource for the target audience.

(2) Maintain the statewide and 4 regional Youth Leadership Councils to provide students with opportunities to develop leadership skills.

(3) Create outreach materials to assist VR staff to explain VR services to students, families, and school staff.

(4) Design within QE2 a better method for collecting and recording transition data in order to provide necessary reports to staff and schools.

(5) Continue to collaborate with Assistive Technology Partnership (ATP) to increase the use of assistive technology in secondary schools by increasing awareness through Youth AT Conferences across the state and through the partial support of Transition AT Specialists.

(6) Continue to use Project Search and Certificate Programs to facilitate transition of high school youth to work.

(7) Continue to serve on the Out of Home Placements (OHP) Committee and transition workgroup to support the Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC).

(8) Continue to co-facilitate the Transition Advisory Council and Transition Practitioners Committee with the Office of Special Education.

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 client satisfaction. Therefore, Nebraska VR will continue the following:

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

(2) Employers will be a part of Nebraska VR's outreach and marketing plan to provide input in the development of effective marketing strategies and materials.

(3) Utilize the National Employment Network, The NET, to connect local labor demands with regional and national opportunities.

(4) Continue current Project Search partnerships, a training and employment program targeting hospitals and other businesses, to increase employment opportunities within the healthcare and other industries.

(5) Utilize success story videos and other materials to market the program to employers.

(6) Develop additional employer internship opportunities for clients pursuing post-secondary degrees.

(7) Continue to provide training and technical assistance on Section 503 Compliance to businesses that are federal contractors.

Client Satisfaction Nebraska VR has used various methods over the years of gathering client satisfaction. These efforts have yielded both limited response and limited value in the information received. In order to improve our program and ensure that the program is meeting the needs of our clients, Nebraska VR must develop effective methods of gathering meaningful client satisfaction information. Therefore, Nebraska VR will either continue or initiate the following:

(1) Continue to develop and refine client satisfaction surveys and explore other strategies to gather timely and meaningful feedback.

(2) Utilize the State Rehabilitation Council Consumer Input Committee for feedback on client satisfaction.

(3) Continue contracting to conduct the Consumer Satisfaction Survey by phone with clients after successful outcome.

(4) Utilize reports from the Client Assistance Program and the Agency Ombudsman to identify areas for improvement.

(5) Explore use of social media to provide a forum for gathering additional client satisfaction information.

Employment Outcomes Nebraska VR desires to improve the rehabilitation rate of the program. Therefore, Nebraska VR will continue the following:

(1) Conduct case reviews to determine factors that positively or negatively impact our rehabilitation rate.

(2) Engage clients in their program of services by incorporating motivational interviewing techniques throughout the VR process with the intent of increasing the frequency and quality of contacts and follow-up with clients.

(3) Continue to utilize the placement standards and evaluate performance.

(4) Improve the likelihood of successful employment outcomes with development and implementation of soft skills training with job seekers.

Post Employment Monitoring Nebraska VR is supportive of a client's long-term employment after successful outcome. Monitoring with clients 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 clients.

(2) Program QE2 to support post employment monitoring and data collection.

(3) Continue contracting for post employment monitoring with clients for up to one year after their employment outcome.

Innovation and Expansion I&E funds will be used to support the following —

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

Assistive Technology The agency contracts with the Nebraska Assistive Technology Partnership (ATP) to provide rehabilitation engineering and assistive technology services to agency clients at all stages of the rehabilitation process. Clients are referred to ATP by Nebraska 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.

Referrals by VR to ATP: FY2010 — 417, FY2011 — 443, FY2012 — 531, FY2013 — 564.

Individuals with Disabilities who are Minorities The agency continues its commitment to the hiring of bilingual staff. At present, the agency has 6 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.

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. CAP will provide comment to the agency if the agency is remiss in this area.

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

Nebraska VR, as the Governor designated lead agency, serves on the Acquired Brain Injury Council which is funded through a Health Resources and Services Administration (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 traumatic brain injury (TBI) in Nebraska. The Brain Injury Screening Tool will continue to be 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 Nebraska VR services is being sent to all individuals identified through the Nebraska Traumatic Brain Injury Registry.

Nebraska VR will continue to 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 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds, has proven to be successful and will be continued on a fee for service basis.

Plan for Establishing Community Rehabilitation Programs Since Nebraska VR 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 VR continues to have representation on all the local Work Investment Act (WIA) boards, serve on the local One Stop Career Center management council at some of the centers, and have VR staff at each local One Stop Career Center on an itinerant basis.

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

Nebraska VR continues to address concerns with a decrease of referrals from the One Stop Career Centers due to an on-line application process as a result of the implementation of an electronic One Stop model. This has also resulted in a reduction in the number of community-based One Stop Centers across the state.

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 represents Nebraska VR's evaluation and report of progress on the agency's FY 2013 State Goals and Priorities.

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

Increase the Rehabilitation Rate

In FY 2013, 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) Continued Project Search training programs with hospitals and a Project Search training program with a warehouse distribution center and established Project Search sites in 1 hotel and 1 hospital. Students in these programs achieved an 88% employment rate.

(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 clients with a self-employment goal.

(6) Continued outcome based supported employment services for individuals with behavioral health, acquired brain injury, autism and developmental disabilities.

(7) Updated Job Seeking Skills class and booklet to include current employment strategies.

(8) Developed 4 additional Certificate Training Programs based on local employer needs in conjunction with community colleges and high schools. The rehab rate for 2013 was 80%.

(9) The Omaha Downtown team attributed an increase in their rehab rate from 39.8% in FY2012 to 60% in FY2013 to the use of motivational interviewing.

(10) The statewide rehab rate for FY2013 was 60.38%, a slight decrease from the FY2012 rehab rate of 61.58%.

Increase the quality and timeliness of services

In FY 2013, we:

(1) Provided a 3rd statewide meeting about the Project Search Model to foster interest in developing partnerships with Nebraska VR, businesses, 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 placement requirements that have been developed.

(4) Continued to have placement staff marketing with employers to identify specific job openings.

(5) Provided monthly labor market information specifically addressing each team's local labor market.

(6) Provided additional training through monthly lunch-time video conferencing to all placement staff in the areas of: 503 Compliance, How to Find Labor Market Information on the Department of Labor Website, Effective Resumes, Employer Panel on Effective Interviewing, and Working with Clients Who Have Criminal Backgrounds.

(7) Utilized iPads to enhance timely VR service delivery.

(8) Average consumer wage was $10.51 in FY 2013, a increase from FY 2012's Average Consumer Wage of $10.32.

(9) The amount of time that a client was in employment services was 11 days less than in FY2012. FY2012 was 68.79 days and FY2013 was 57.89 days.

(10) QE2 on-line case management system continues to be revised to enhance utilization.

(11) Developed and began a pilot of MyVR, a computer-based client communication application, to enhance timeliness of communication between staff and clients.

Improve client satisfaction and engagement

In FY 2013, we:

(1) Continued the employment outcome survey conducted at the time of the 90-day employment monitoring follow-up. Client satisfaction was 94.2% in FY2013.

(2) Reported survey results are tabulated by the Client Assistance Program (CAP) and provided to the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) at each of the meetings throughout the year.

(3) Provided management staff the ability to review the results of client satisfaction surveys in order to address any team issues in a timely fashion.

(4) Continued quarterly reports from the CAP on the type of client concerns and CAP's recommendations to Nebraska VR leadership.

(5) Continued the Consumer Input Committee as a part of the SRC to provide direct client input on program marketing materials and marketing strategies.

(6) Continued quarterly agency ombudsman reports to SRC.

(7) Continued the use of LinkedIn and Facebook as communication strategies to enhance client engagement.

(8) Provided another statewide training through Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) and follow-up support on motivational interviewing to improve client satisfaction and engagement.

(9) Developed and implemented a statewide marketing plan including rebranding the agency.

Develop effective community partnerships

In FY 2013 we:

(1) Continued to collaborate and provide funding for Nebraska Career Connections through the Nebraska Department of Education, Department of Labor, Nebraska Public Power District, and Partnerships for Innovation.

(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. Continued partnerships with Walmart and North Platte Public Schools; Good Samaritan Hospital and Kearney Public Schools; St. Elizabeth Hospital and Norris Public Schools/Waverly Public Schools; Columbus Community Hospital and Columbus Public Schools; Faith Regional Services and Norfolk Public Schools; Mary Lanning Medical Services and Hastings Public Schools; Educational Service Unit (ESU) 6 and York General Hospital; Papillion/LaVista Schools and Embassy Suites LaVista; Lincoln Public Schools and Embassy Suites/Lincoln. Additional sites were Omaha Public Schools and Embassy Suites/Downtown Omaha and Mercy Hospital and the Reservations Schools in northeast Nebraska. Continued to explore and promote partnership opportunities with other community hospitals and schools.

(3) Continued the supported employment program for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness through an outcome-based payment process.

(4) Continued the supported employment program for individuals with acquired brain injury through an outcome-based payment process.

(5) Continued a supported employment program for individuals with autism through an outcome-based payment process. The Autism Center of Nebraska program was recognized in SEDL's "Vocational Rehabilitation Service Models for Individuals With Autism Spectrum Disorders Guide to Effective Employment Programs."

(6) Continued to develop a Bridges Out of Poverty program with other community partners in Columbus.

(7) Continued Certificate Programs in Omaha (automotive and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning), Grand Island (electrical), Lincoln (automotive), York (welding) and Columbus (manufacturing).

(8) Established Certificate Programs in Lincoln (childcare), Kearney and Grand Island (welding), Omaha (plumbing).

(9) Continued to implement the 503 Compliance Marketing Plan. Conducted training to Human Resource Associations in Grand Island, Hastings, and Kearney.

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 2013, we:

(1) Based on a recommendation from the SRC, focus groups were conducted in partnership with the Latino American Commission to identify barriers to employment and access of services and to identify strategies to increase awareness of VR services.

(2) Continued the priority of hiring bilingual staff. Increased pay is available for staff who are bilingual or have American Sign Language (ASL) skills.

(3) Updated agency brochures and forms translated in other languages.

(4) Continued to serve individuals with disabilities with a Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).

Our best indicator of the effectiveness of these strategies in FY 2013 is the Minority Access ratio of .8849. In 2013, 19.32% of the cases served were minority. The United States Census Bureau's 2012 estimate of Nebraska's minority population is 18.2%.

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 VR 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 VR services requires significant time or temporary employment for work trial or training purposes, threatening survival and creating substantial disincentives to VR. Policies and procedures are developed and revised in response to identified trends and barriers based on VR service data, SRC input, and reports from the CAP and VR Ombudsman.

(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* tools. Motivational interviewing is also being used as a strategy to help individuals self-identify and address priorities and barriers.

(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's lack of understanding of the functional impact of disability on work and independence, staff turnover, or from the cost impact of new approaches.

(1) Maintained supported employment partnerships for mental health in all 6 regions of the state.

(2) Maintained programs for supported employment in the area of acquired brain injury and autism.

(3) Continued to promote the use of Hotline for Disability Services to identify community resources.

(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 clients 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) Maintained a Service Agreement with Deaf Services Unlimited of Des Moines, IA to provide video remote interpreting services to all Nebraska VR offices. This addresses the shortage of sign language interpreters for the deaf in the rural areas of the state.

(8) Initiated a Service Agreement with Language Line for foreign language and sign language interpreting.

(9) 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, FY 2010, FY 2011, and FY 2012 program indicators with FY 2013 program indicators, the program experienced an increase in successful outcomes. 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
FY2011 — 4,812
FY2012 — 5,246
FY2013 — 5,677

Eligible for Services

FY2009 — 4,429
FY2010 — 4,513
FY2011 — 4,237
FY2012 — 4,439
FY2013 — 5,407

Started Services

FY2009 — 2,710
FY2010 — 2,955
FY2011 — 2,877
FY2012 — 2,845
FY2013 — 3,314

Received Services

FY2009 — 6,018
FY2010 — 6,397
FY2011 — 6,519
FY2012 — 6,364
FY2013 — 6,745

Successfully Employed

FY2009 — 1,568
FY2010 — 1,677
FY2011 — 1,799
FY2012 — 1,806
FY2013 — 1,887

Supported Employment Outcomes

FY2009 — 201
FY2010 — 212
FY2011 — 270
FY2012 — 275
FY2013 — 325

SE Mental Health Partnership Outcomes*

FY2009 — 179
FY2010 — 173
FY2011 — 218
FY2012 — 222
FY2013 — 212

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

Performance Accountability and Continuous Improvement

Performance accountability and continuous improvement is central to all strategies for meeting the VR needs of individuals with significant and most significant disabilities in Nebraska. QE2 is our comprehensive information management system with the capacity to continuously capture and report data on critical processes and outcomes.

In FY 2013, we:

(1) Continued the use of the on-line case management system (QE2) to improve our efficiency and effectiveness.

(2) Provided standardized processes through a web-based information portal (VRIS) to enhance efficiency in and understanding of processes, rules and regulations.

(3) Provided reports to local management staff to support performance reporting and analysis.

(4) Continued the use of mobile technology including videoconferencing, iPads, and iPhones as a strategy to expedite service delivery and operational cost efficiencies.

(5) Continued case reviews, in which all team members participated, to provide information on how to improve accountability, documentation, and strategies for service provision.

(6) Conducted a comprehensive case review of supported employment cases (behavioral health, autism, and brain injury) to evaluate effectiveness and standardize procedures.

Standards and Indicators

The agency met all of the performance standards in FY 2013. Through the strategies and activities identified in this state plan, the agency expects in FY 2015 to increase the margins by which it exceeds the federal standards.

Innovation and Expansion

I & E funding for FY2013 totaling $147,261.06 was used to support the following:

(1) State Rehabilitation Council ($13,418.81)

(2) Transition Program ($61,276.09) and the Youth Leadership Council ($10,670.28) — $71,946.37

(3) Grants & Contracts Specialist ($61,895.88)

The agency has pursued outside funding for the development of innovative activities, such as MyVR and Employer On-Demand Side Strategies (Certificate Program) supported by grants from the Institute for Community Inclusion.

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

Quality of supported employment services

All services provided will be of high quality, as judged by prevailing professional standards and such legal standards as may apply. Persons licensed, certified, or registered in accordance with the laws of the State of Nebraska to perform the services will render these services or, if the service is not regulated by the State, by persons who are able to demonstrate they are qualified by reason of education, training, and experience to perform the services.

Scope of supported employment services

The services made available by Nebraska VR using Title VI-B and Title I, Part B funds is limited to those initial services resulting in stable job performance in an integrated competitive work setting. These may include, as appropriate to individual needs:

1. An assessment of the need for supported employment services which is supplementary to and provided after an assessment of eligibility and rehabilitation need has determined that a person is eligible for services and is a person with a most significant disability.
2. Development and placement in integrated competitive employment for the maximum number of hours possible consistent with the person's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, and capabilities.
3. Intensive on-the-job skills training and other training provided by skilled job trainers, co-workers, and other qualified persons. This training is based on a systematic analysis of the work to be performed, and a systematic analysis of the employer's performance expectations and requirements. It is conducted in accordance with a written plan identifying the methods of teaching, instruction, and behavior management necessary to enable the individual to acquire skills and master the work to be performed, to regulate behavior in accordance with the employer's requirements and expectations, and achieve stable job performance. The training provides for a systematic reduction of intensive teaching, instruction, and behavior management methods to the lowest intervention level necessary to maintain stable job performance.
4. Other vocational rehabilitation services that are needed to achieve and maintain job stability including, but not limited to —
    a. Interpreter services for individuals with hearing impairments to permit communication between the individual and the skilled job trainer.
    b. Occupational licenses and permits required by federal, state, and local law to perform an occupation.
    c. Occupational tools and equipment required by the employer but not routinely provided to new employees.
    d. Rehabilitation technology services including adaptations and modifications of the workplace.
    e. Work clothing and uniforms required by the employer but not routinely provided to new employees, and safety shoes and other articles of clothing necessary to permit safe performance on the job.
    f. Transportation from place of residence to the work site and return until the person can pay for the cost from earnings.
5. Follow-up services, including regular contact with the employer, the individual with a most significant disability, the individual's parents, guardian or other representative, in order to reinforce and stabilize the job placement.
6. On-going monitoring services from the time of job placement until the transition to extended services from one or more extended services providers. These services include, at a minimum, the assessment of employment stability and, based on that assessment, the coordination or provision of specific services needed to maintain employment stability.

Extent of supported employment services

1. Assessment of rehabilitation need for supported employment services are made available to the extent necessary to determine the nature and scope of services to be provided under an individualized written rehabilitation program to achieve supported employment.
2. Job development and placement services are provided to the extent necessary to place the individual into integrated competitive employment consistent with his or her informed choice, or to determine on the basis of clear evidence that an employment outcome cannot be achieved.

3. Intensive on-the-job and other training services are provided to the person to the extent necessary to achieve stable job performance, or to determine on the basis of clear evidence this cannot be achieved. Services are provided for a maximum of 18 cumulative months, beginning on the day the person starts the job, unless a longer period is provided in the individualized written rehabilitation program of the person.
4. Other services are made available to the extent necessary to support the individual in an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) to achieve supported employment.
5. Follow-up services are provided to the individual to the extent necessary to assure that job stability has occurred, or to determine on the basis of clear evidence that job stability cannot be achieved.
6. On-going monitoring services are provided, at a minimum, twice monthly at the work site to assess employment stability and, based on that assessment, to coordinate or provide specific services needed to maintain employment stability. If off-site monitoring is determined to be appropriate, and is included in the person's IPE, it must, at a minimum, include two meetings with the person and one contact with the employer each month.

Transition to extended services

Nebraska VR transitions the person to extended services provided by other public agencies, nonprofit agencies or organizations, employers, natural supports, or other entities no later than 18 cumulative months after placement in supported employment (unless a longer period is established in the IPE), provided that—

- the person has made substantial progress toward meeting any hours per week work goal in the IPE,
- the individual is stabilized on the job, and
- extended services are available and can be provided without a hiatus in services.