

Vocational Rehabilitation Portion of the State of Oregon
Workforce System Combined State Plan
2020-2023



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A. INPUT OF STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

All agencies, except for those that are independent consumer-controlled commissions, must describe the following:

1. INPUT PROVIDED BY THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, INCLUDING INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN, RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL'S REPORT, THE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION, AND OTHER COUNCIL REPORTS THAT MAY HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED AS PART OF THE COUNCIL'S FUNCTIONS;

INPUT 1: The SRC has seen some changes to the new structure of Vocational Rehabilitation and would like to know what the Vocational Rehabilitation Program is most proud of or feels most accomplished about in the time since the last State Plan.

INPUT 2: Regarding Pre-ETS and Youth in Transition, the SRC would like to acknowledge the hard work VR has done implementing these programs and services. However, individuals in rural and underserved areas in Oregon have expressed concern and frustration about the lack of services in their communities. This information shows that while any student in Oregon can request Pre-ETS services, these services are not known to teachers, students, or their families within underserved communities.

RECOMMENDATION: The SRC recommends that a plan to implement these services and education statewide be created and cost evaluated before the next state plan.

INPUT 3: Per WIOA, VR is required to be integrated/ work closely with WorkSource Centers. The SRC wants to stress the importance of making sure these centers are best serving VR consumers by understanding what

services VR offers, knowing how to best assist individuals with disabilities and making sure these centers are fully accessible.

RECOMMENDATION: In order to best support VR's clients, the SRC encourages VR to evaluate the current accessibility of the centers, including but not limited to building access and other ADA guidelines, electronic and print material access, and assistive technology devices and software; as well as provide training to center staff to help them understand VR services and how to work with individuals with all types of disabilities before further integration into these centers takes place.

INPUT 4: In the CSNA 2017, one area of concern to consumers was not being able to receive Assistive Technology in a timely manner.

RECOMMENDATION: To assist in speeding up services to clients who needs Assistive Technology, the SRC recommends that staff be provided training on Assistive Technology service providers throughout the state who conduct assessments to identify most appropriate accommodations based on clients' needs; as well as provide training to staff on the Oregon Statewide Assistive Technology program, which will allow VR Counselors to rent a variety of Assistive Technology to bridge the length of time it may take to purchase equipment following an assessment.

INPUT 5: There is no doubt that VR clients throughout the state need a variety of services in order to be successfully employed in competitive employment with increased independence. Members of the SRC have heard from field staff about the lack of service providers in their areas and the cost to get service providers to more remote areas of Oregon. Some rural office VR staff have even resorted to conducting job development and job coaching tasks in house.

RECOMMENDATION: The SRC recommends creating and distributing a Service Provider Survey in 2020 and using the data from the Survey and the upcoming CSNA report to evaluate areas in the state where service providers are scarce and develop a plan for how to recruit more service providers to fill these needs.

2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S RESPONSE TO THE COUNCIL'S INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS; AND

Thank you for the Input regarding the VR Program. The VR Program looks forward to working with the SRC in the future as we continue to provide quality rehabilitation services to Oregonians with disabilities.

Program Response to Input #1:

The Vocational Program has undergone significant evolution since the previous State Plan was developed in 2016 and updated in 2018. The Program has undergone significant changes in leadership and is proud of the fact that we effectively implemented the requirements of new federal legislation as well as developing a new executive leadership team. With new, cohesive leadership the program can continue to provide high quality Rehabilitation service to both Oregonians with disabilities and the employers of our community.

Program response to Input #2:

Thank you for the input regarding Pre ETS and YTP services. It is the goal of the VR Program to implement Pre ETS and YTP state wide. We have received three FTE from the legislature to support the work in this area. We continue to work with our partners at the Department of Education to make sure that this service known and available to students with disabilities, their families and educators.

Program response to Input #3:

The VR Program looks forward to working within the statewide Workforce system and is proud to be a partner in the development of an accessible and efficient service delivery system regarding employment. It is goal of the workforce system to create a system that is accessible to all Oregonians and the Program stands ready to assist the local WorkSource centers and Local workforce boards in identifying any accessibility and service delivery barriers to Oregonians with Disabilities that wish to access the Workforce

system. We will continue to work with the Oregon Employment Department and our other Workforce partners in this process.

Program Response to Input #4:

The VR Program agrees that further education regarding Assistive Technology is a great benefit to Oregonians with Disabilities and our staff. We have revamped our training unit and continue to integrate Assistive Technology, its uses, its benefits, the resources available to the Program and the procedures to obtain at every level, from assessing the need for it, the purchase and implementation when appropriate. The Program understands the necessity and importance of appropriate Assistive Technology in ensuring employment success for our clients.

Program Response to Input #5:

The Programs agrees the there are certain areas of the state that lack capacity in employment services. The Program will continue to identify these areas and create mitigation plans. The Program is coordinating efforts with State Agencies (ODDS) and community partners to explore and expand capacity. The Program has requested Technical Assistance from Y-TAC to provide guidance in the development of capacity.

3. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S EXPLANATIONS FOR REJECTING ANY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT OR RECOMMENDATIONS.

Oregon VR did not reject any SRC feedback.

Oregon VR and the SRC have undergone significant changes in leadership and personnel in the last 2 years. Both entities are developing new working relationships with each other and in fact, internally. The VR program stands ready to assist the SRC in whatever capacity required to provide quality services to Oregonians with Disabilities and looks forward to a continuing partnership with the SRC and the expertise and input it brings.

B. REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS

When requesting a waiver of the statewideness requirement, the designated State unit must identify the types of services to be provided by the program on a non-statewide basis. The waiver request must also include written assurances that:

1. A LOCAL PUBLIC AGENCY WILL PROVIDE THE NON-FEDERAL SHARE OF COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WAIVER REQUEST;

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) requests a continuation of its waiver of state-wideness for its Youth Transition Program (YTP). Through this program, transition age youth with disabilities are provided with enhanced activities and services that lead to employment or career-related postsecondary education or training.

The Program assures that current IGAs that are in effect provide the non-federal share of the costs associated with the delivery of YTP services. As new LEAs are brought into the system, new IGAs will be completed that insure their participation in the costs of provision of these services.

2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL APPROVE EACH PROPOSED SERVICE BEFORE IT IS PUT INTO EFFECT; AND

Sixty-nine cooperative agreements have been executed with local school districts and educational service districts (representing over 200 schools, consortia of districts, and educational service districts). These agreements will operate local YTP for the July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2021 period. All the proposed services outlined in these cooperative agreements have been approved by VR.

In instances involving multiple districts, the districts involved have additionally be required to have MOUs with each other in order to ensure that the YTP program is appropriately and effectively carried out.

Under the terms of the 2019-2021 YTP Cooperative Agreements, districts participating in YTP will be responsible for providing Pre-employment Transition Services, Core YTP and other activities, services, and supports described above. Provision of these activities, services, and supports will be subject to VR's approval prior to implementation and any and all applicable requirements of VR's State Plan. In addition, the 2019-2021 YTP Cooperative Agreements will:

- Specify that participating districts or ESDs are to provide matching funds equal to one-third (1/3) of the grant awarded by VR to a district or ESD for carrying out the agreement. Moreover, the match must be from a district or ESD's cash funds; and, neither federal nor "in-kind" district resources, including donations or contributions of property or services, may be applied towards the match.
- Require that services provided pursuant to agreements will be provided in accord with the Order of Selection, if invoked, under which VR operates, as long as the Order remains in effect.

3. ALL STATE PLAN REQUIREMENTS WILL APPLY

Requirements of the VR services portion of the 2020 Combined State Plan will apply to any services approved under this waiver.

The contracts with the local entities providing YTP were written with the VR service portion of the Combined Plan in mind and therefore the requirements will be adhered to.

C. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH AGENCIES NOT CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES UNDER THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM.

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

1. FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS;

The Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation Program (VR) has developed and maintains cooperative agreements and cooperative relationships where necessary with federal and state agencies not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce investment system. This cooperation includes, but is not limited to the Centers for Independent Living (CILs), Oregon Developmental Disability Services (ODDS), local I/DD brokerages, county service providers, Oregon's Mental Health Programs (including programs that serve in and out of school youth), the Client Assistance Program (CAP), Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation 121 Programs, Oregon Department of Education (ODE), local school districts, community colleges, Access Technologies Inc. (ATI), and local agencies providing services to our clients. VR strives to have cooperative relationships that streamline referral and service delivery, including joint planning, leverages funds, provide coordinated and non-duplicated services, and maximize the use of wrap around services to ensure success. VR's goal is to simplify, streamline, and expedite services to clients while maximizing access to services that will help with their success.

2. STATE PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

Access Technologies, Inc. (ATI), serves as the Implementing Entity for the Oregon Statewide AT Program; providing all State Level and State Leadership activities as mandated by the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, as amended. ATI has entered into an administrative agreement with Oregon's Lead Agency (the Department of Human Services or DHS). This administrative agreement sets forth the

activities that must be conducted by ATI on behalf of DHS and the system of oversight to be provided by ATI's Board of Directors. DHS has assigned a Project Officer to oversee the administrative agreement, and who will meet with the President of ATI quarterly to discuss activities and the implementation of this state plan. The Project Officer, and/or a representative from the Lead Agency, attends all Advisory Council meetings for ATI. ATI submits monthly expenditure reports to the Project Officer for review and approval, while the Lead Agency Project Officer ensures that the DHS fiscal unit provides timely and appropriate assistance to ATI. ATI also provides annual reports to DHS on activities completed, activities planned, and any data related to those activities.

**3. PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR
RURAL
DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE;**

VR has no cooperative agreements or cooperative relationships with programs currently being carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture.

**4. NONEDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH;
AND**

VR does not currently have any cooperative agreements with non-educational agencies serving out of school youth.

5. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS.

VR utilizes the Statewide Office of Contracts and Procurement to memorialize service delivery arrangements using cooperative agreements and contracts with entities outside of the Statewide workforce system.

D. COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

Describe:

1. DSU'S PLANS

The designated State unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of VR services, including pre-employment transition services, as well as procedures for the timely development and approval of individualized plans for employment for the students.

Oregon VR has third party cooperative agreements with over 120 school districts in the state to operate the Youth Transition Program (YTP). This constitutes more than 3/4ths of the high schools in Oregon. Performance benchmarks for YTP are in place within the cooperative agreements to ensure the timely development and approval of individualized plans for employment for the participating students.

VR actively works in coordination with state and local education agencies to assist eligible and potentially eligible students in pursuit of their employment goals and to facilitate their transition from school to employment, higher education or vocational training. This occurs on a regular and continuing basis as part of delivery of individualized vocational rehabilitation services to youth now including the provision of pre-employment transition services (Pre-Ets).

It necessarily includes development and approval of individualized plans for employment as early as possible during the transition planning process, but at the latest 90 days after the student is determined eligible for VR services (or in the event VR is subject to an Order of Selection and a waitlist for services is being utilized, before each eligible student able to be served leaves the school setting).

2. INFORMATION ON THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY WITH RESPECT TO:

A. CONSULTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO ASSIST
EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES IN PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION OF
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO POST-SCHOOL
ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING VR SERVICES;

Information on the formal interagency agreement with the State educational agency with respect to consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services;

The Oregon Department of Education and VR have executed an agreement and MOU to coordinate transition services leading to successful transition for students with disabilities from a free and appropriate public education to postsecondary career-related training and employment activities.

VR and the Oregon Department of Education additionally have developed another agreement to co-fund eight regional Transition Network Facilitators (TNFs) and three regional support staff who cover the entire state. The role of the TNFs is to coordinate transition services between every LEA and the local VR offices throughout the state. The TNFs are working with every LEA to ensure the provision of pre-employment transition services are available to all students with disabilities in need of such services.

VR Transition Staff

VR has a full-time YTP Coordinator. This position is responsible for leading and coordinating YTP and more generally VR's transition efforts as part of a larger Program transition team, including serving as VR's liaison to the Oregon Department of Education. This coordinator and other VR staff work closely with Oregon's community colleges and workforce programs on transition and related service coordination issues.

VR also has a full time PRE-ETS program coordinator. The person in this position is responsible for the development of Pre-Employment transition services, policy, procedures and data validation. additionally, this staff member is the administrator of contracts pertaining to the delivery of PRE

ETS services and sits on the State Advisory Council for Special Education and its Transition Advisory Committee.

The Department of Education has a secondary Transition Specialist and this position is a member of the State Rehabilitation Council, VR's policy-making partner. The YTP Coordinator, Department of Education Transition Specialist, and the University of Oregon YTP T/A Team, together comprise the cross-agency YTP administrative team.

In addition, VR and its YTP partners:

- Maintain a YTP website. The site (ytp.uoregon.edu) provides information on transition, YTP, special education and related services, research, training, and links. The intended audience is school and VR personnel, youth and adults with disabilities, parents and other supporters of such individuals, and the public at large. The website is also used to transmit and report on YTP performance data.
- Jointly sponsor and organize two statewide transition conferences, provide training on a regional basis throughout Oregon about transition, IDEA, modified diploma standards, and the VR process.
- Serve as liaison to the Oregon Association of Vocational and Special Needs Personnel's Board of Directors; and U of O and ODE representatives serve on the State Rehabilitation Council, VR's policy-making partner.

B. TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS;

YTP Transition Specialists, TNFs, and school transition staff members partner with local VR offices and VR Counselors to coordinate the development and implementation of individualized education programs. When a student is determined eligible for VR services, he or she works with a school transition specialist and a vocational rehabilitation counselor to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) that reflects the

interests, strengths, and abilities of the student, and which addresses the barriers to training or employment outcomes for the student. Should it be necessary for VR to reinstitute an Order of Selection, the scope of VR services and expected employment outcomes for all individuals served by VR, including YTP students, will be modified to comply with VR's Order of Selection.

C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, OF EACH AGENCY, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR DETERMINING STATE LEAD AGENCIES AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES;

Under YTP, VR is responsible for:

- Administering and coordinating YTP.
- Entering into YTP cooperative agreements (referred to as intergovernmental agreements in Oregon) with school districts that wish to participate in YTP and that are selected through a competitive process. The agreements provide districts with the funding needed for the staff that deliver a district's YTP activities, services, and supports.
- Working with school district staff at the VR field/school level to provide YTP activities and services and providing needed technical assistance and support.

All financial agreements for the sharing or blending of funds are handled by VR and ODE through Cooperative Agreements. For example, with VR's YTP program the participating school or districts provide VR with matching funds that are paid back the schools along with VR program funds when they provide the required services through the cooperative agreement. In this way VR can assure that the services paid for are an enhancement to the service the school district are required to provide.

The MOU between ODE and VR outlines and designates the lead representatives that will coordinate services between the two agencies including the Youth Transition Program (YTP) and other cooperative transition services and programs. Oregon VR administers the YTP in over two thirds of the school districts in Oregon. This program is funded through

third party cooperative agreements where LEAs provides one third of the funding for the total budget and VR provides two thirds of the funding. All other financial agreements for the sharing or blending of funds are handled by VR and ODE through Cooperative Agreements.

D. PROCEDURES FOR OUTREACH TO AND IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO NEED TRANSITION SERVICES.

VR and the Department of Education co-fund eight regional TNFs who cover the entire state. VR and ODE also have a data sharing agreement to identify potentially eligible students.

These eight regional TNFs work with every high school in the state to educate school staff, families, and other provider agencies to perform outreach and identification of students with disabilities in need of transition services.

Over 120 school districts in the state run the Youth Transition Program (YTP) which constitutes more than three-fourths of the high schools in Oregon.

VR has a Statewide Transition Coordinator that works with the Oregon Department of Education to develop trainings that help school's identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

VR counselors regularly attend functions (back to school nights, job clubs, vocational classes, etc.) at high schools to educate youth, families, and school staff about VR services. In many cases VR staff collaborate with districts to provide pre-employment transition services which leads to identification of students that can benefit from VR services.

E. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Describe the manner in which the designated State agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit VR service providers.

Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) continues to establish relationships with private non-profit and for-profit entities that are community rehabilitation providers, medical services providers, and providers of other services and supports that are required by VR clients to achieve the goals in their Individualized Plans for Employment. VR staff develop relationships in the community to meet the needs of their client and to provide choice of providers to their clients. Services provided by the community rehabilitation providers, contractors, and vendors include medical and psychological assessments and services, job development and employer services, job coaching and facilitation, accommodations and ergonomics, independent living services to support employment goals, follow up services, and other services especially for individuals with significant disabilities. The cooperative relationships vary from information and referral relationships to fee-for-service and pay for performance relationships. VR follows State of Oregon contractual processes when establishing contracts for services. VR works with and establishes relationships with non-profit organizations to fully utilize the benefits provided through the SSA TTW program. In January 2010, Oregon VR initiated a Ticket to Work shared payment agreement pilot with ten community mental health programs that provide evidence-based mental health supported employment services. These mental health agencies are governed by the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) who contracts with the Oregon Supported Employment Center for Excellence (OSECE) to provide annual programs and technical assistance. These agreements allow Oregon VR to be the Employment Network of record with SSA, partner with the mental health agency to provide dual services to an individual. Once the VR case is closed, the mental health agency continues to support the individual until the support is no longer needed. If the individual works and reaches the SSA TTW wage thresholds, Oregon VR receives TTW payments which in turn are split with the mental health agencies. This pilot evolved into a project that has strengthened the relationship between VR and these participating agencies

by providing additional TTW dollars for additional program funding. As of July 2019, we have nineteen agreements in place.

F. ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Describe the designated State agency's efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services and extended employment services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

VR works closely with other State agencies whose populations benefit from VR Supported Employment (SE) Services. VR, the Department of Education, and the Office of Developmental Disability Services work together with the State's Employment First program to ensure that individuals who experience Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities receive coordinated and sequenced services that meet their employment needs. This multi-agency collaboration operates under the guidance of Executive Order 15-01 and the Lane v. Brown Settlement, actively working to ensure that policies and services are aligned in a way that makes sense for transition age students as well as adults seeking services. The VR/ODDS Collaborative agreement was updated in September 2018 and continues to guide the close relationship of the two agencies. VR has a close relationship with OHA Behavioral health programs to ensure that individuals who access VR's services who are also working with Mental Health Programs across the state get access to quality Individualized Placement and Support (IPS) Services. VR continues our collaboration with the Oregon Supported Employment Center for Excellence (OSECE) who oversees the fidelity of the 37 programs that currently offer IPS services throughout the state. VR continues to work with OSECE to expand the availability of these services across the state. In addition to aligning policies and service sequences, VR is working with OHA Behavioral Health and ODDS to ensure that our certification requirements for service providers are in alignment. In 2018, VR amended the 2015 Job Placement Services contract. Joint certification and coordinated training continue to make it easier for providers of Job Placement and Support Services who are funded by VR to continue to provide employment support services to clients when hand-offs occur between agencies. VR currently has more than 200 providers under contract through our amended Job Placement Services Contract. In 2018, VR scheduled training for Job Placement Contractors,

on a monthly basis, using the materials developed in 2017 by VR in collaboration with OSECE and ODDS. VR continues to systematically identify areas of the state where capacity issues exist to assure that a training is available in those areas. Recruitment of providers in these areas continues to be a priority moving forward. The pilot that would measure the effectiveness of a rural transportation rate change was examined but found to not be feasible because of the extreme difference in distances in Eastern Oregon. A second pilot, ensuring that those VR clients with the most significant disabilities are assigned to the highest tier of job development has been designed and has been piloted in 2019. All aspects of this pilot will be monitored closely, including whether the higher rate of pay in that tier correlates with an increase of capacity in rural areas. VR and ODDS, with the Home Care Commission as the training entity, are increasing job coach capacity through use of Personal Care Attendants. Additionally, VR is working with several community colleges to explore the possibility of a career pathway program that will train future service providers in a curriculum jointly developed with these community colleges.

G. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

Describe how the designated State unit will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of:

1. VR SERVICES

VR knows that given the needs of our clients, a robust employer engagement model is required to be successful. VR continues to use Job Placement contractors to identify individual employment, assessment, and training opportunities for those who require those services to become employed. Additionally, VR strives to expand the base of employers who work with our clients who do not require individualized outreach to employers. By leveraging opportunities with other workforce partners, VR believes that it can increase employment opportunities for Oregonians with disabilities and begin to change perceptions associated with individuals with disabilities in the workforce.

VR will:

- partner with the local Employment Department Business Teams to coordinate employment services,
- partner with the local workforce development boards (LWDB) to coordinate employer engagement activities,
- provide information to VR staff regarding apprenticeship programs and processes.
- partner with local mental health providers in coordinating employment services
- continue to partner with Oregon Commission of the Blind on employment services,
- participate and coordinate local employer recruitment events and job fairs,
- contract with providers to provide local employer engagement events and activities for individuals with disabilities,
- contract with providers to and other providers
- provide training to contracted job placement and partner providers,
- establish local MOU's with federal business contractors.
- provide information to VR staff regarding 503 information, protocols and processes.
- provide local trainings and resources on disability awareness and accommodations,
- establish partnerships with local nonprofits that provide employment services,
- participate in in local area business events to enhance disability awareness,
- Promote and develop local area internships for individuals with disabilities.

Employer survey respondents were asked to rate the perceived helpfulness of a variety of potential services provided to employers by VR. The survey items with the highest perceived helpfulness reported by respondents to the business survey were:

- Providing workers with disabilities with the accommodations and supports they need to do the employer's work;
- If concerns arise, providing consultation with management, the workers, and co-workers to resolve the concerns;
- Placing qualified individuals in internships at the business with full reimbursement of the employer's expenses;
- Providing training consultation and resources related to the provision of reasonable accommodations; and
- Finding workers that meet the employer's workforce needs.

2. TRANSITION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, FOR STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

VR's Youth Transition Program Transition (YTP) is operating in over 120 school districts across the state to provide pre-employment transition services (PRE-ETS) which includes "work experience" and "career counseling."

YTP Transition Specialists work directly with employers to:

1. Perform worksite assessments before student placement
2. Train students in workplace readiness
3. Provide screening and referral of appropriate youth o Identification of appropriate worksites and task

4. Provide counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive training opportunities to meet the desired qualification of employers

In the Portland Metro area VR staff are working with health providers Legacy and Providence Health to pilot training and streamlined hiring program for students with disabilities. Students placed in competitive integrated employment with these employers are supported with 12 months of follow along services to ensure stable employment.

VR Contractors are working with business and schools regarding employer engagement models to offer competitive, integrated employment and career exploration opportunities. These trainings include:

1. Pre– employment trainings with school staff to meet employer needs
2. Interest inventories with students, trainings on developing partnership agreements, trainings on job needs analysis, marketing school-based programs
3. Pre and post training evaluations for students involved in work experiences

H. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

Describe how the designated State unit will collaborate with the State agency responsible for administering each of the following programs to develop opportunities for competitive integrated employment, to the greatest extent practicable:

1. THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT;

In Oregon, the Oregon Health Authority is the agency that administers the State Medicaid Program. Through a series of Inter-Governmental Agreements and Memorandums of Understandings the Department of Human Services is established as the agency that operates the Medicaid programs and waivers. VR has not entered into separate agreements with OHA outside of our parent agencies agreements. VR does collaborate with the individual programs that administer the waivers.

2. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES; AND

VR and Oregon Department of Developmental Disability Services have focused their work since the 2016 Plan submission and 2018 updates to achieve the outcomes set forth in Executive order 13-04, which was updated in Executive Order 15-01. These Executive Orders emphasize with more clarity the State's Employment First Policy. Additionally, the State of Oregon has recently settled a lawsuit that calls for increased integrated employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. VR, ODDS, Department of Education and the I/DD service delivery system have a working relationship that shares information, leverages and braids funding, and encourages the joint case management of joint clients. Moving forward VR will continue to work with ODDS and I/DD service delivery system as well as the Department of Education to increase our collaboration to maximize funding, streamline processes, and meet the competitive and integrated employment goals of Developmentally Disabled clients.

VR, ODE and ODDS have:

Hired staff specialists who serve individuals with I/DD. These three groups of regional staff meet regularly; co-train other agency staff; and, co-develop tools and strategies to provide services that are consistent and reflect best practices

Have established collaborative training regarding consistency and quality in curricula used for VR, ODDS and ODE staff throughout Oregon; accomplished through: Agency conferences (VR In-Service, DD Case Management Conference, and ODE Regional Transition Conferences) used mixed groups of staff and cross training techniques to further collaborative training goals, VR, DD, and school transition (ODE) staff training on varied topics, presented regionally to groups consisting of staff from all three agencies o Staff are consistently co-trained by specialists from the three agencies

Ongoing and regularly scheduled meetings lead to collaborative actions by Office of Developmental Disabilities (ODDS), VR and Oregon Department of Education (ODE), Employment First Steering Committee meetings direct the overall work of the following collaborative meetings. This committee is co-led by VR and ODDS Administrators,

Policy and Innovation meetings are co-led by VR staff and DD Staff to facilitate these collaborative actions. The three agencies review and discuss all new or newly revised policy to assure alignment across agencies. Each agency sends policy transmittals to their regional and community staff when another of them adopts new or newly revised policy.

Education and Transition meetings discuss pertinent issues for students who have transition plans including those receiving Pre-Vocational Services; facilitating these collaborative actions: • A jointly held goal of seamless transition for: students with transition plans, students in transition programs, and post high school students

Examination of agency procedures, leading to: development of tools and strategies for use by field staff; and referral to the Policy Work Stream for potential policy revision or development. Training and Technical Assistance meetings address issues of staff and vendor training to facilitate.

Increased numbers of vendors shared across agencies.

Increased knowledge and skill (competency) of agency staff and vendors. Quality Assurance is a cross–agency group that evaluates collaborative outcomes providing a means to assess collaborative efforts.

3. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

A primary effort of VR and OHA Behavioral Health Programs has been development and expansion of evidence-based supported employment services by increasing the number of county mental health organizations providing such services and meeting fidelity standards. VR continues to partner with and utilize the Oregon Supported Employment Center for Excellence (OSECE) in developing and refining evidence-based supported employment services. As of the end of federal year 2019, 40 community mental health programs and 35 out of 36 counties are providing IPS services to Oregon citizens. With the inclusion into Oregon’s OARs, evidence-based supported employment services continue to expand across Oregon.

Additionally, VR collaborates and supports the Early Assessment and Support Alliance (EASA) which is an evidence-based practice effective in reducing the early onset of and the symptoms of severe mental illness. VR works with EASA in assisting young people with early onset psychiatric disabilities by helping them obtain and maintain employment.

While continuing to expand and support employment outcomes, the quality of those outcomes, and the skills of the employment service providers, VR is looking ahead to increasing the capacity of community rehabilitation programs and providers.

I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT; DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

Describe 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, including the following:

1. DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

A. QUALIFIED PERSONNEL NEEDS.

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

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

The Oregon Legislature has the sole authority to establish the type and number of state government positions, including VR positions. Over the last two biennium the legislature approved 14 new VRC positions to help

support statewide Employment First initiatives. The chart below indicates the type and number of positions allocated by the legislature for the State 2017-2019 biennium and the type and number of vacancies and projected vacancies over the next five years.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors

VR Program (01/01/2020) Total Positions:	296
Current Vacancies:	29
Projected Vacancies over the next 5 years:	55

VRC

Total Positions:	135
Current vacancies:	10
Projected Vacancies over 5 years:	31

VRS

Total Positions:	6
Current Vacancies:	1
Projected vacancies in the next 5 years:	3

Transition Network Facilitators:

Total Positions:	8
Current Vacancies:	0
Projected Vacancies in the next 5 years:	1

Pre ETS-Coordinators:

Total Positions:	6
Current Vacancies:	3
Projected Vacancies in the next 5 years:	0

Human Services Assistants/Office Assistants

Total Positions:	78
Current Vacancies:	9
Projected Vacancies over the next 5 years:	13

Branch Managers

Total Positions:	17
Current Vacancies:	2
Projected Vacancies over the next 5 years:	7

Regional Managers

Total Positions:	3
Current Vacancies:	1
Projected Vacancies over the next 5 years:	1

In the pool of 135 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRCs), VR has 6 VRC specialist positions. The counselors in these positions provide training, technical assistance, and caseload support to other field staff on a given area of focus, in addition to carrying a general caseload. The areas of focus include: autism, deaf and hard of hearing services, developmental disabilities, mental health, motivational interviewing, spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injury, and workers' compensation.

All VR field staff are provided with supervision necessary to ensure the delivery of quality VR services. In addition to direct supervisory practices, a minimum of 20 hours of training per VR employee per year has been established as a staff development performance benchmark. Managers meet annually with staff to address professional development needs for the upcoming year.

PY 2018: VR served:	17204
Staffing Ratio (VRC):	1:111

PY 2019: VR served:	16907
Staffing Ratio (VRC):	1:109

FFY 2020 (Projected):	18127
Staffing Ratio (Projected) (VRC):	1:117

The present and projected staffing level and configuration meet currently identified needs.

B. PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

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

- i. a list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program;**

Oregon has two institutions of higher education with CACREP-accredited graduate programs in Rehabilitation Counseling: Western Oregon University (WOU) and Portland State University (PSU).

Western Oregon University has two Rehabilitation Counseling degree options: The Master of Science in Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling for the Deaf (RCD) is one of only four deafness specialty programs in the United States) and has been in place continuously since 1973; and the Master of Science in Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling (RMHC), which was authorized by the Oregon University system in 1991. WOU's RCD program recently moved from being an on-campus program to an online/distance learning program. This change has already significantly decreased the number of available VR Counseling interns with skills and training to appropriately serve Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind Oregonians because students will be doing all their fieldwork in their local communities around the US.

Portland State University (PSU) offers a Master of Science in Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling. This is a three-year program, as opposed to the two-year curriculum at WOU and other regional university programs.

Western Washington University (WWU), located in Everett, Washington, offers a hybrid on-campus/online 2-year Master of Arts degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. Most of these students will seek internship and employment in Washington State, but Oregon VR is actively involved in recruiting interns and graduates from this program.

The University of Idaho offers a 2-year program of study leading to either a Master of Education or a Master of Science in Counseling and Human

Services, with an emphasis in Rehabilitation Counseling. This program is closing following graduation of its current students in May 2020.

Idaho State University (ISU) will open its 2-year Master of Counseling in Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling program in both Pocatello and Meridian, Idaho beginning August 2020. Oregon VR's Internship Coordinator has already been in contact with ISU faculty expressing interest in providing internship sites in Eastern and Central Oregon when and if they have students who are interested in completing their fieldwork experiences with Oregon VR. Oregon VR will also begin sharing recruitment announcements with ISU faculty once the program opens.

Graduates of all program options described here are eligible to seek national certification from the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) as Certified Rehabilitation Counselors and/or state licensure as Licensed Professional Counselors by the Oregon Board of Licensed Professional Counselors and Therapists.

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

Western Oregon University Current Enrollees: RMHC 20 RCD 12

Portland State University Current Enrollees: RC 41

Western Washington University Current Enrollees: RC 32

iii. the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of these 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.

Western Oregon University Graduates, 2019: RMHC 10, RCD 4

CRC/LPC upon graduation: 14

Portland State University Graduates, 2019: RC 7

CRC/LPC upon graduation: 7

University of Idaho, 2018

RC 20

Western Washington University, 2019

RC

2. PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL

Describe the development and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated State unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

VR continues to work closely with the graduate rehabilitation counseling programs at WOU, PSU and elsewhere in order to increase recruitment of qualified applicants to work in the field. Part of this work consists of reaching out and working with graduate programs to provide practicum and internship sites for students working their way through the program. In the 2018-19 academic year VR hosted nine interns. In the current 2019-20 academic year, Oregon VR received 28 applications for internships from students representing 7 graduate academic programs; 12 are currently placed in field offices around the state.

The VR Director's Stipend Program continued during this reporting period, providing financial support to 5 graduate interns during the 2018-19 academic year and is funding stipends for 12 interns during the current (2019-20) academic year. This program is designed to attract and support interns, as well as develop a rich and diverse pool of applicants for VRC positions in the Oregon VR program. Cooperative Agreements between VR and public universities (referred to as Interagency Agreements in Oregon) offering graduate degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling are developed and implemented prior to disbursement of stipend funds, which include a portion of the overhead costs for the Universities' staff administering the funds.

For the 2018–2019 school year, we expended a stipend cost of \$87,722 for five WOU students. During the current 2019-20 academic year we are

expending \$117,486 for six WOU students, \$103,761 for five PSU students and \$10,980 for one University of Idaho student in the program. VR staff members continue to serve on Rehabilitation Counselor Education Advisory Councils for programs in the region (WWU, PSU, and WOU). An increasing number of VR managers and VRCs are participating in the classes at the graduate level coursework and in the mock interviews conducted with students. The VR Internship Coordinator, VR managers and several VRCs have also been invited to and have participated in the selection process for incoming students at WOU and PSU for the past two years. VR managers engage local partners in their recruitment process and are encouraged to consider the demographics of their community and client base when making hiring decisions.

3. PERSONNEL STANDARDS

Describe the State agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards consistent with section 101(a)(7)(B) and 34 CFR 361.18(c) to ensure that designated State unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:

A. STANDARDS THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH ANY NATIONAL OR STATE APPROVED OR -RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATION LICENSING, REGISTRATION, OR OTHER COMPARABLE REQUIREMENTS THAT APPLY TO THE PROFESSION OR DISCIPLINE IN WHICH SUCH PERSONNEL ARE PROVIDING VR SERVICES;

VR continues to utilize an established set of standards to evaluate and select Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. These standards are based on a modified version of standards utilized by the Workers' Compensation Division (WCD). The State of Oregon's VRC classification is shared by WCD, the Oregon State Hospital, the Oregon Commission for the Blind, and VR. It requires that VRCs possess:

- A Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling; OR
- Be certified by either the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC), or the Certification of Disability Management Specialists Commission as a

Certified Disability Management Specialist D (CDMS), **and** six months full-time work experience providing vocational rehabilitation-related services; OR

- A Master's degree in psychology, counseling, or a field related to Vocational Rehabilitation (such as one that promotes the physical, psychosocial, or vocational well-being of individuals with disabilities) **and** 12 months full-time work experience providing vocational rehabilitation-related services, OR
- A Bachelor's degree in a related field, such as one that promotes the physical, psychosocial, or vocational well-being of individuals with disabilities, **and** three years of full-time work experience providing vocational rehabilitation-related services to individuals with disabilities. There is no direct experience substitute for a Bachelor's degree.

VR continues to have a goal that all employees classified as VRCs will hold a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or a closely related field. VR will continue to seek counseling staff with Master's degrees, but VRC candidates with an appropriate Bachelor's degrees and related work experience may be hired.

In the past few years, VR has broadened support to staff who have attained the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) credential through not only ensuring that all eligible training sessions are pre-approved for CRC CEUs, but by also paying for renewal fees and online training courses through CRCC's E-University. Additionally, staff who are eligible to apply to take the CRC Examination are supported by VR covering the cost of the testing fees, preparation materials and the University of Wisconsin-Stout CRC Preparation Course (an 8-week training that is completed online). Currently, there are 67 VR staff with CRC credentials; 50 of these are practicing VR Counselors, 9 are Branch or Regional Managers stationed in the field and the remaining 8 are former VR Counselors who are now working in the Administration Unit.

B. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B)(II) OF THE

**REHABILITATION ACT, TO ENSURE THAT THE PERSONNEL HAVE A
21ST
CENTURY UNDERSTANDING OF THE EVOLVING LABOR FORCE
AND THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.**

VR continues to expect that all staff participate in appropriate professional development activities. This includes keeping up with the most recent advances and best practices when working with individuals with specific disabilities, staying up to date with best practices overall, and maintaining an updated understanding of the evolving labor market in their area. Relationships are being developed with Regional Economists and Workforce Analysts who are employed by the Oregon Employment Departments Research Department to ensure that staff have the information and the cross training they need to understand the labor markets in their area. VR is establishing robust relationships with LWDBs so that VR, in partnership with them, has an understanding of their local sector strategies.

4. STAFF DEVELOPMENT.

Describe the State agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that, consistent with section 101(a)(7)(C) of the Rehabilitation Act, all personnel employed by the designated State unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:

A. SYSTEM OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT

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, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and

VR is committed to offering a comprehensive system of staff development and training. The goal is to ensure staff development for VR personnel in areas essential to the effective management of VR's program of VR services. Since the elimination of RSA's in-service training grants (including

the Basic and Quality Award Grants) in 2015, VR has continued to provide the training and development of personnel necessary to improve their ability to provide VR services leading to employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, especially those with the most significant disabilities.

In Fall 2019 a survey of all VR staff was conducted to determine training needs and interests. This survey has led to the implementation and creation of a week-long Comprehensive Counselor Training program as the first response to staff members' input. The results of this evaluation will lead to further development of an updated training system.

B. ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE

procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to designated State unit professionals and paraprofessionals.

VR will continue with our Job Development Orientation Training (JDOT) that is provided to our job placement contractors and The Job Placement Services Contract training for our staff. These training curricula focus on a skill-based job placement process that looks at placement from a business perspective. VR will also prioritize training focused on best practices for working with specific disability populations, vocational assessment, transition, motivational interviewing practice, rehabilitation technology, assistive technology, effective case management, and understanding the labor market. VR has multiple trainings presented throughout the year that cover each section listed. VR is committed to providing continuing education credits for each training provided, allowing for staff to maintain credentials and/or licensure easily and effectively.

VR will continue to coordinate training opportunities with other partners and partner staff. VR believes that joint trainings provide an opportunity to enhance the service delivery system, increase opportunities for better levels of partnership, and create common goals and understandings for all involved. VR is also looking internally for subject matter experts to provide

information to other staff. This is to increase and secure institutional knowledge from those veterans who have been in the field. VR wants to retain the strong bases of knowledge and expand upon them for the success of all participants and the program.

5. PERSONNEL TO ADDRESS INDIVIDUAL COMMUNICATION NEEDS

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

VR continues to hire and retain staff capable of communicating with diverse populations. Currently

VR has 17 staff who have passed mandatory proficiency evaluations and have demonstrated that they are bilingual in the following languages: Amharic, Farsi, Spanish, Russian, Bosnian and American Sign Language (ASL). Of these, 10 are ASL fluent or are native ASL signers. In specific geographic areas and for specific caseloads, VR engages in targeted recruiting for job applicants with specific language skills. VR staff who are not fluent in the native language of an applicant or a client have access to, and training in, the use of the eleven different contractors approved for onsite spoken language interpreting services and four onsite ASL interpreter coordination agencies; by CTS Language Link for telephone interpreting and by Voiance for on-demand video remote interpreting in both ASL and spoken languages.

In addition, the program has developed and utilizes outreach and application materials in alternate language formats, including Spanish, Vietnamese, Somali, and Russian. VR continues to contract and collaborate with the Easter Seals Connecting Communities Program in reaching out to and providing specialized job placements services to native Spanish-speaking individuals with disabilities. The focus of these services has been in Portland, Beaverton, Gresham, Clackamas, Salem, Woodburn and Eugene, which have large Latinx communities. VR continued to develop and utilize training materials in alternate formats, including new counselor training materials, to meet the accommodation needs of VRCs who are blind or Deaf. The training unit assists staff, contractors and

interns who need accommodations for training events with assistive listening devices and qualified interpreters.

6. COORDINATION OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

As appropriate, describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated State unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

VR, the Oregon Department of Education, and local school districts have robust relationships that include many opportunities for partnering, joint planning, and cross training. Under WIOA and the new requirement for Pre-Employment Transitions Services (Pre-ETS) this relationship continues to grow. This commitment was demonstrated in 2019 when VR provided the following opportunities:

1. The continuation of the series of professional development opportunity occurred. In the 2018 and 2019 VR and ODE conducted five and four regional trainings, respectfully, across the state for school staff, VR staff, community members and providers. These trainings covered services available through VR, IDEA services in Transition, and identifying VRCs for various educational districts
2. VR co-funds eight regional Transition Network Facilitators (TNF) whose role is to cross train VR and school staff in the implementation of IDEA, the Rehab Act, and the Executive Order 01-15.
3. VR co-funds four Pre-ETS Support Specialists/TNF whose role is to deliver Pre-ETS as well as work with school staff in the implementation of IDEA, the Rehab Act, and the Executive Order 01-15.
4. A quarterly meeting, Transition Technical Assistance Network, occurs with the Youth Transition Program (YTP) Coordinator, the Pre-ETS Program Coordinator, Pre-ETS Coordinators, Pre-ETS Support Specialists, TNFs along with Office of Developmental Disability Employment Specialists to discuss group plans occurring

- with students, educators, developmental disability services and VR.
- a. Regional Job Clubs were expanded around the state.
 - b. A Student Summit was piloted.
 - c. Reverse Job Fairs began development.
5. VR staff sit on the Department of Education's State Advisory Committee for Special Education (SACSE) to coordinate services, provide trainings, and policy guidance with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities in the State etc.
 6. VR staff sit on the Department of Education's Advisory Committee on Transition (ACT) in an advisory capacity on issues related to determining transition priorities for documents, web information and development and other issues that may arise. The ACT considers the services and postsecondary outcomes for students and informs the department on strategies and plans to improve transition for students beginning at age 14 and continuing through age 21. During 2019, the Planning My Way to Work booklet was updated by ACT.
 7. VR staff participate with the NTACT technical assistance with Oregon's state plan. This is a collaborative team including educational staff to assist with positive outcomes for students.
 8. VR has a contract with the University of Oregon to provide Technical Assistance to VR and school staff in the implementation of the Youth Transition Program (YTP). This contract funds five regional Technical Assistance Providers who coordinate services and develop best practices in collaboration between VR and schools including IDEA funded services.

J. STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

1. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE REHABILITATION NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING WITHIN THE STATE, PARTICULARLY THE VR SERVICES NEEDS OF THOSE:
 - A. WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

VR completed the 2017 Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment in September 2017. It updated the comprehensive statewide needs assessment concluded in 2013. The Program has initiated the process for the next Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment in November 2019. It will be completed in September 2020. This information will be utilized for the Programs 2020 State Plan update. The CSNA in process will not include the Oregon Commission for the Blind, they have developed and completed their own CSNA.

Federal Fiscal Year 2017, Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) staff, Statewide Independent Living Council staff, State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) members, Oregon Commission of the Blind (OCB) staff formed a committee that collaborated with and monitored the implementation of the contractor, Program Policy Institute (PPI) to develop a comprehensive assessment of the vocational rehabilitation needs of persons with disabilities residing in the state of Oregon. PPI administered the assessment, gathered and analyzed the results and provided OVR, the SRC and OCB with written and in-person reports on its findings. Separate comprehensive needs assessment reports were provided to Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation and Oregon Commission for the Blind. Efforts were made to incorporate WIOA expectations and expand the assessment to better report the needs of students with disabilities in transition.

The results and findings from the 2017 CSNA, are summarized below. The findings will be considered and addressed by OVR and SRC as they review, update and refine OVR's goals, priorities, strategies and activities.

Additional new information is included in this State Plan that came about since the completion of the 2017 CSNA.

The complete assessment and appendices of data for both Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation and Oregon Commission for the Blind reports can be found at:

<http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/EMPLOYMENT/VR/Pages/Data-Publications.aspx>.

The 2017 needs assessment was built around basic research questions:

1. What does the VR/OCB target population look like?
2. What are the primary barriers to employment for VR/OCB clients, and/or what are their service needs?
3. How can VR/OCB services best support client efforts to achieve positive employment outcomes?

The strategies employed four primary data-gathering approaches to conduct the needs assessment. These involved:

A review of extant data to assess the prevalence of disability, the employment status of people with disabilities, and the characteristics of Oregonians and VR/OCB clients with disabilities. National surveys, state-level data, OVR and OCB client data were reviewed. Additional background and context information was gathered from:

- Vocational rehabilitation needs assessments or reports from other states;
- Relevant national surveys and reports at the state and national levels relating to persons with disabilities and employment; and,
- Relevant articles in academic literature.

Key stakeholder interviews that offered the opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of the strengths and needs associated with vocational rehabilitation service delivery and outcomes according to OVR/OCB clients and people working in the field. A total of 32 key stakeholders interviewed included:

- People with disabilities,
- OVR/OCB staff;
- Partner agency staff, providers, and job developers
- Representatives of advocacy groups;
- Nonprofit partners; and
- Secondary and post-secondary education providers.

Focus Groups provided the opportunity to have meaningful conversations about vocational rehabilitation strengths and needs with four different categories of respondents:

- OVR/OCB staff;
- Agency partners, providers and employers;
- Current or former OVR/OCB clients; and,
- Students with disabilities in transition from high school.

Staff and partners agencies were asked to extend focus group invitations to individuals with disabilities who may be under or unserved by vocational rehabilitation program to elicit feedback from these individuals. Focus groups were conducted in five regions of the state to assure regional variation. Two additional focus groups were for Oregon students with disabilities in transition participating in summer work experience programs.

Electronic surveys collected data from OVR/OCB staff, community partners, participants and employers who hire people with disabilities. Considerable time was devoted to refining the instruments to be used for each of the surveys. Invitations to participate in the survey included email invitations to:

- All OVR and OCB staff
- Community partners from lists generated by members of the SRC, and OVR, OCB and the Oregon Statewide Independent Living Council staff.
- More than 10,000 unduplicated current participants and those served in the last year by OVR or OCB.

Employers identified as providing employment to persons with disabilities associated with OVR. More than 1,600 were invited to participate via

postcards with an electronic link to the survey. OCB provided email addresses for employers who hired persons with disabilities.

For the duration that surveys were accepted, OVR placed links for each group on the OVR public facing website for public participation. The survey allowed participation through screen reading technology.

A total of 1,203 surveys were completed. Thirteen individuals requested and completed the survey over the telephone. Of these surveys, 5% of the respondents identified as blind, 7% identified as having a most significant disability, 7% self-identified as youth (aged 16-21), and 15% self-identified as a minority ethnicity or race.

The approach was designed to capture input from a variety of perspectives in order to acquire a sense of the multifaceted needs of persons with disabilities in the state while assisting both the OVR and OCB programs to comprehensively assess needs within the state for persons with disabilities and employment. Responses to the individual survey reflect the opinions of current and former clients of VR including individuals who had not yet developed a rehabilitation plan, individuals with active rehabilitation plans, and individuals whose cases had been closed. Efforts were made to gather information pertinent to un-served and under-served populations through inquiries with individuals who serve a broad range of persons with disabilities in the state (whether they are affiliated with VR or not). Likewise, the OVR and OCB staff members that participated in key stakeholder interviews, focus groups and electronic surveys serve individuals with disabilities representing a broad range of backgrounds and experiences and from businesses reflecting the opinions of employers representing a variety of industries

For this analysis, a finding that is significant at the 0.05 level means that the difference in the number of people reporting a need and/or receipt of services across subgroups is likely to be due to true underlying difference across subgroups, rather than chance, 95 percent of the time.

In ten out of 18 barrier categories, people with significant disabilities reported the barrier significantly more frequently compared to vocational

rehabilitation participants in general. People with significant disabilities were significantly more likely to experience the following barriers:

- Employer attitudes towards people with disabilities;
- Concern over loss of benefits;
- Limited relevant job skills;
- Lack of information regarding disability resources;
- Lack of long-term services and ongoing job coaching;
- Lack of transportation;
- Cultural/family attitudes towards employment for people with disabilities;
- Lack of assistive technology;
- Lack of physical accessibility; and
- Lack of personal care attendants.

Moreover, across key target populations, individuals with significant disabilities cited the greatest difference in barriers compared to the general vocational rehabilitation population for lack of assistive technology (24 percent difference). In addition, survey respondents with significant disabilities were significantly more likely to identify a need for the following services, compared to the rest of the participant respondents:

- Technical training;
- Academic education;
- Vocational tuition;
- Durable medical equipment;
- Orientation and mobility services;
- Speech to text support or ASL interpreting;
- Family and caregiver support;
- Medical care;
- Social security benefit planning; and
- Cognitive therapy.

Program staff and community partners noted that people with significant disabilities require more intensive services, such as more coaching, more repetition, and more time to feel comfortable in new environments. Stakeholder feedback suggests that these individuals may have mental

health, communication, and physical limitations, and are often relegated to more menial, less stimulating employment opportunities.

Yet the responsibility for providing needed services to people with significant disabilities is often unclear. Program staff and partners commented that there is a sense in the field that the job developers can do these activities, and indeed some job developers are performing daily living activities. However, others noted that they are not trained in personal care, and that these tasks are the responsibility of personal care assistants. Yet some personal care assistants may not be sure of their role in these tasks while a person is employed and may limit their services while the participant is on the job. Ambiguity around the delegation for these services can hinder access and delivery of services to these individuals.

Additionally, program staff and partners observed that individuals who work with participants with IDD typically need more specialized training. Program staff and partners had mixed feedback on the capacity to serve these individuals within the existing infrastructure. Some staff and partners lauded the offices who had IDD specialists on staff. Others felt that increased IDD training across all counselors and providers would better serve program participants since no one specialist can serve all individuals with IDD in any given region. Stakeholders cited that certain relationships, such as a partnership with the Oregon Office of Development Disabilities Services, can provide braided funding that supports longer-term services. In some cases, employers may be more willing to work with these individuals due to stable funding and assistance.

In addition to individuals with IDD, program staff and partners also noted the challenge in adequately serving individuals with brain injury, or those on the border of IDD diagnosis. These individuals often require the same intensive, long term services that those with IDD do, but they do not have access to the same long-term funding streams and supports.

Program staff and community partners also cited additional target populations of people with disabilities who face unique challenges of their own.

- Like individuals who experience blindness, individuals who experience deafness or hearing impairment face related challenges of a low-incidence disability with high assistive technology needs. Staff commented that certain resources, including a deaf vocational rehabilitation counselor in Washington, have been useful resources to vocational rehabilitation staff.
- Veterans also face unique challenges, though program staff observed that they have their own veterans' supported employment program, so interaction with traditional vocational rehabilitation services varies.
- Finally, individuals who experience Autism Spectrum Disorder can present unique challenges. Many individuals may perform too well on adaptive tests which makes them ineligible for services, however, sustained limited executive functioning and related cognitive issues make it difficult for these individuals to navigate without assistance.

B. WHO ARE MINORITIES;

In five out of 18 barrier categories, people with disabilities from racial or ethnic minority groups reported the barrier significantly more frequently compared to vocational rehabilitation participants in general. People with disabilities who were minority were more likely to experience the following barriers:

- Employer attitudes towards people with disabilities;
- Limited relevant job skills;
- Convictions for criminal offense or other legal issues; and
- Lack of affordable child care.

In addition, survey respondents with disabilities from minority groups were significantly more likely to identify a need for the following services, compared to the rest of the participant respondents:

- Family and caregiver support;
- Independent living skills training;
- Transition services from high school to adult services; and
- Transition services from institution to community.

Program staff and community providers remarked that the broader context of racial and ethnic equity impacts access and service delivery for individuals with disabilities from racial, ethnic, or cultural minority groups. One program staff member reflected that the systemic interaction of race and economy has implications for both services and job opportunities, which may not be as available in lower income, often minority neighborhoods. Program staff also described ongoing work, especially in the Portland region, to provide better outreach and accessibility to racially diverse participants and discussed ongoing agency efforts to ensure cultural awareness as a tenet of service delivery. They also noted visible welcoming material for the LGBTQ community.

To increase access and service provision for individuals from racial and cultural minority groups, program staff suggested enhanced efforts to recruit persons of color and diverse ethnicities and sexual orientations into education programs that prepare them to serve as vocational rehabilitation counselors.

Another program partner described an initiative aimed to increase multicultural, multilingual access to services. The Latino Connection, a partnership between vocational rehabilitation and Easter Seals, was designed to facilitate greater access and service provision. In this model, Latino Connection staff are paired with a vocational rehabilitation counselor. Latino Connection provides specialized instruction such as English for the workplace, cultural differences in the workplace, English as a Second Language, workplace readiness, and on-the-job skills. They also facilitate placement, particularly in Latino firms looking for Latino workers, or non-Latino firms interested in increasing their diversity.

Similar to working with youth in transition, many program stakeholders noted the need to educate families about service and employment opportunities for their family member with a disability. Program staff and partners indicated that many cultures may not have expectations that individuals with disabilities can work, so there is a persistent cultural barrier to seeking services and employment. Language barriers within these communities may also exacerbate access issues, especially during the

multi-step enrollment process. Program staff noted limited availability to adequately serve non-English speakers, and described efforts to work with partner organizations, such as the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization to increase outreach and access.

C. WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM;

According to our monthly rolling reports, our data tells us that all population groups are being served proportionally.

Program staff and community partner survey respondents were asked to identify which individuals they consider to be primarily unserved or underserved populations. People who live in rural areas of the state, people who have criminal convictions, and people with a mental health condition were three responses identified by the greatest share of both program staff and partners. More than half (56 percent) of community respondents also felt that people with substance use disorder are likely to be under or unserved.

Program staff and community partners were also asked to identify strategies to serve under and unserved populations. Increased staff was the strategy identified by the greatest share of program staff (63 percent), and increased transportation options was identified by the greatest share of community partners (63 percent). More interactions with the community and providing more job skills development training were identified as strategies to serve unserved populations by the majority of both program staff and community partners. Almost half of all staff (48 percent) and 57 percent of community partners felt that staff training to work on specialty caseloads would help serve under and unserved participants. More than half of community partner respondents also cited improving interagency collaboration and public awareness campaign key strategies for serving under or unserved populations.

Underserved and Unserved Youth with Disabilities

Despite the many strengths of Oregon’s youth transition work, some youth are underserved or fall through the cracks. A quarter (25 percent, or 18) of vocational rehabilitation staff and a third (33 percent, or 31) of vocational rehabilitation community partners felt that people between the ages of 16 to 21 are underserved by vocational rehabilitation services. Interviewees discussed varying reasons for this. Some students don’t choose to participate in transition services while in school, do not have a YTP program available to them, or do not have a disability focused on by their school’s transition services. If those students take a break between school and connecting to vocational rehabilitation services, they have often lost and need to be re-taught the structures, routines and soft skills obtained through school attendance. Sometimes the gap between graduation and vocational rehabilitation participation is not a student’s choice, but rather the result of high vocational rehabilitation caseloads causing backlogs. Stakeholders suggest increased collaboration with programs serving out of school youth to improve outcomes for this population.

Additionally, some staff expressed a desire to be involved with students earlier in their school careers, and to have more communication including increased involvement at individualized education program (IEP) meetings.

Interviewees and focus group participants discussed limited connection between contracted job developers and students in transition seeking employment. Some stakeholders discussed this as an educator’s or a youth transition program counselor’s responsibility. Participating contractors were looking for guidance in how to formally provide services to this population.

D. WHO HAVE BEEN SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND

Analysis across data sources revealed consensus around service system infrastructure strengths and opportunities for improvement. The findings and recommendations articulated throughout the report are based on stakeholder feedback and suggestions.

Feedback on Contracted Vendor Relationships

- **Contracts.** Stakeholders discussed limitations to existing job developer contracts and suggested exploring an alternate contracting approach or pay structure to increase capacity.
- **Capacity.** There are waiting lists for job developers and job coaches because of limited contracted vendor resources in some areas, and/or underuse of existing resources. Stakeholders recommended implementing an approach to improve vocational rehabilitation counselor knowledge of job developer capacity/availability.
- **Training.** Contractor training was generally viewed as ineffective to job development or job coaching. Stakeholders suggested implementing effective training based on the best practices of other states. In response to what we have heard from the staff, stakeholders and contractors, the Job Development Contract has evolved to reflect the input from these parties. Amendments are being developed for the future contract renewal, a Job Development Contract training for VR Staff has been created and implemented and adjustment to Tier Rates have been completed. Feedback on Employer Relationships

Employer Perceptions of Barriers to Employment.

- Stakeholders felt employer concerns about liability, potential lawsuits for discrimination, accommodation costs, and slow system responsiveness were barriers to employment.
- Employers also remarked on barriers related to qualified applicants, employer/co-worker perceptions, training, and communication.
- Stakeholders recommended increased collaboration between Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation and employers to facilitate dialog around these issues.
- **Outreach and Education.** Limited vocational rehabilitation counselor and job developer capacity has hindered relationship-building with employers. Counselors and job developers do not have sufficient opportunity to network with local businesses to understand their needs and develop an understanding among employers of the value of people with disabilities in the workplace and community. Increasing outreach and education efforts could benefit participants and employers.

- Employers that work with Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation generally felt positive about their experiences. Almost 90 percent of surveyed employers said they had a satisfactory or very satisfactory experience. Employer survey respondents were asked whether they actively recruited or employed people with disabilities in the last year. In general, businesses were more likely to hire than to recruit people with disabilities (76 percent of respondents employed a person with a disability in the last year; 40 percent actively recruited). When analyzed by size, large businesses were the most likely to actively recruit people with disabilities. Half or greater of all business sizes represented by survey respondents had employed a person with a disability in the last year, with the largest percentages represented by businesses with 51 to 250 employees (94 percent) and businesses larger than 1,000 employees (88 percent). (Percentages are calculated based on the number of businesses in each size category.)
- Staff, partners, and participants suggested that increased presentations to regional employers and peer to peer presentations by employers who have hired people with disabilities and by the employees with disabilities themselves could help normalize hiring people with disabilities. Participants also recommended creating a safe space for employers or the public to ask questions as an opportunity to increase conversations and lead to more awareness and acceptance.
- Stakeholders additionally discussed how Oregon government agencies could better serve as model employers. Government is one of the largest employers in the state. Several community partners and Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation staff recommended more proactive attempts by government to increase employment of people with disabilities within the system, as well as development of a policy task force or business advisory board to help develop infrastructure around employer outreach and engagement.

Feedback on Community Partner Relationships

- Communication. Stakeholders felt communication with community partners was lacking.

- Primary partnerships. Participants most commonly work with mental health, IDD, education, and aging and disability providers (in addition to WorkSource).
- Individual Placement and Support. The Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model used with people with mental illness is cited as a best practice, which has supported effective partnership between vocational rehabilitation and mental health providers.
- Employment First. The Employment First initiative has facilitated increased collaboration between vocational rehabilitation, the education system, and IDD providers to support people with IDD in finding employment.
- IDD system collaboration challenges. Collaboration with IDD system partners has improved, but stakeholder proposed opportunities to address ongoing challenges, including reconciling Employment First and individual choice, sheltered workshop closures and limited employment pathway options, discovery requirements, and contract differences.

Feedback on WorkSource Relationships

- The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act has required additional collaboration with the broader Oregon workforce system. Local leadership teams, including vocational rehabilitation, are working on how to connect more people to workforce services throughout the health and human services infrastructure. Vocational rehabilitation is getting additional referrals as a result of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act collaboration.
- Referrals. Many vocational rehabilitation participants are referred to WorkSource, primarily for job preparation workshops/services and job search/referral assistance.
- Additional WorkSource services discussed for referral included iMatchSkills, job club, on the job training, training with Rescare Academy, trainoregon.org, targeted job leads, and unemployment insurance. Job preparation workshops or services and job search or referral activities are the most commonly referred to and seen as the most helpful. Labor market information and research received mixed reviews of usefulness, and other services were rated more poorly.

- **Accessibility.** WorkSource services are perceived as less accessible to people with disabilities and accommodations are seen as lacking. Stakeholders suggested training for WorkSource on accessibility and that WorkSource ensure systems, resources, and technology are accessible for people with disabilities. (More specific information can be found on pages 124-125 of the CSNA.)
- **Participant survey respondents** had mixed reviews of WorkSource Oregon. Half who have used WorkSource (226) found their services somewhat helpful. Almost a quarter (103, or 23 percent) found them not at all helpful, and just over a quarter (127 or 28 percent) found them very helpful.
- **Collaboration.** Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation and WorkSource are working to make the relationship more collaborative, viewing individuals using both agencies' services as shared participants, rather than referring and dropping participants across agency silo borders.

Feedback on Education Relationships

- The Oregon Department of Education is another central partner in Employment First partnerships. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act is also creating changes in transition service delivery for students with disabilities through pre-employment transition services. A subsequent section discusses the youth transition service system in depth.
- Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation works closely with Oregon's community colleges on transition and service coordination issues. Additionally, community colleges help to train vocational rehabilitation service providers (job developers and coaches). Vocational rehabilitation is also working with community colleges as a part of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act to increase opportunities for people with disabilities to gain skills and credentials. Participant focus group attendees discussed taking classes and participating in clubs and business development centers at local community colleges, and how well their vocational rehabilitation counselors worked with the colleges to support their participation.

A new MOU is in place as of 11/7/2019 with Oregon VR, OCB and Oregon Department of Education

Feedback on Self-Sufficiency Office

- Oregon's Self-Sufficiency Offices connect individuals to food benefits (Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash benefits, child care assistance, and refugee services. People with disabilities can also access food and nutrition services through their local Seniors and People with Disabilities Program, which is often an Aging and People with Disabilities program.
- Almost ten percent of participant survey respondents said they work with Self-Sufficiency programs, and a third of staff surveyed felt this partnership needed to be strengthened. Program stakeholders noted the importance of partnerships that can address participants' basic underlying needs, such as food and shelter. Interviewees and focus group participants did not discuss Self-Sufficiency partnerships at length, with one counselor referring to participants not needing to bring paperwork with them if they have a file with Self-Sufficiency, suggesting some level of data sharing.

Feedback on Other Infrastructure Programs

- Oregon Commission for the Blind, which shares job developers with vocational rehabilitation in eastern Oregon and collaborates on some participant cases.
- Tribal vocational rehabilitation programs, which are grant funded and serve federally recognized Native Americans. Participants can work with state or one of the five specialized tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs.
- Benefits Counselors provide benefits planning to participants, so they understand the rules about Social Security benefits and employment.
- Transportation providers, including public and private options and are leveraged by participants as a vital supportive service.
- Access Technologies, Inc., provides assistive technology assessments, risk assessments, and assistive technology trainings for vocational rehabilitation participants.

- Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization is an organization through which vocational rehabilitation conducts outreach to refugees and immigrants.
- Hospitals provide physical capacity evaluations and other medical information to vocational rehabilitation.

E. WHO ARE YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING, AS APPROPRIATE, THEIR NEED FOR PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES OR OTHER TRANSITION SERVICES.

Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation primarily serves working age adults (18 to 64). Almost 20 percent (18.5 percent or 3,042) of vocational rehabilitation's 2016 participants were 21 or younger. This is primarily comprised of youth ages 18 to 21 (2,596 or 16 percent of the caseload). Less than three percent of vocational rehabilitation's caseload is youth ages 14 to 17.

Almost 15,000 students with disabilities ages 16 to 21 receive special education services through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in Oregon public schools. If one assumes that discrete students are receiving special education and 504 plan accommodations, a total of 20,648 students with disabilities (14,799 in special education plus 5,849 with 504 plans) may be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services.

Youth participants responding to the CSNA survey generally felt they received needed pre-employment transition services, with at least half of participants reporting a pre-ETS need also reporting service receipt. Job exploration counseling, in particular, was reported as both a high need and well-received service.

Youth in transition were significantly less likely to report a barrier to employment in four barrier categories. In no barrier category did youth and transition report a barrier significantly more frequently than the rest of the vocational rehabilitation participant survey respondents. Youth in transition were significantly less likely to experience the following barriers:

- Employer attitudes towards people with disabilities;
- Limited relevant job skills;

- Cultural/family attitudes towards employment for people with disabilities; and
- Convictions for criminal offenses or other legal issues.

Despite reportedly fewer barriers to employment, youth in transition survey respondents were significantly more likely to identify several service needs, compared to the rest of the participant respondents. This may in part reflect youth in transition's age and limited established resources and supports compared to older participants:

- Self-employment supports;
- Orientation and mobility services;
- Speech to text support or ASL interpreting;
- Family and caregiver support;
- Group and peer support;
- Housing;
- Independent living skills training;
- Medical care;
- Social security benefit planning;
- Transition services from high school to adult services;
- Transition services from institution to community;
- Transportation; and
- Behavioral supports.

To best serve students with disabilities transitioning from high school, program stakeholders noted that educating the family is as important as educating the student. Stakeholders indicated that some families may view their child's trajectory from a deficit-based framework and may not expect their child to ever be able work. One program partner noted that society has not historically asked children with disabilities to plan for future or vocational engagement, and this may be reflected in teacher and parent expectations. Stakeholder input suggests that families can use greater education to develop appropriate program and outcome expectations and learn how to best support their child as they transition from high school.

Program stakeholders also observed a great need for soft skills and job readiness training for youth. Program staff and partners recognized schools with Youth Transition Programs (YTP) as better preparing students

with disabilities for employment and vocational rehabilitation services, particularly in terms of vocational awareness, soft skill development, work experiences, and transition competency. YTP services are provided by a collaborative team including a transition specialist, a vocational rehabilitation counselor, special educator, administrator, youth, and their families. Participating students receive pre-employment transition supports to address individualized transition needs generally during the last two years of high schools and continuing into the early transition years after leaving high school. More details on the YTP program is included below.

Despite positive feedback on YTP services, some eligible students are not served by YTP: some schools do not have YTP programs; some students or parents choose to not participate; and some schools identify students too late in the year to participate based on vocational rehabilitation capacity to serve the students. Even in regions with YTP, stakeholders remarked that the quality of the program varies across school districts.

Additionally, students who drop out of school cannot take advantage of YTP programs. Program stakeholders noted a need to identify youth with disabilities who have dropped out of school and can't be reached by existing transition services. Identifying these youths before they cycle into the vocational rehabilitation system as adults can support improved vocational outcomes and system navigation skills.

Additional services for youth in transition include access to transition network facilitators, pre-employment transition coordinators, and a variety of collaborations with partners to provide work experience, summer academies, benefits planning, self-advocacy skills, and mental health services. The growing infrastructure for youth in transition is described in more details in the subsequent chapter.

Despite a growing service network for youth in transition, program stakeholders also note that they may place undue expectations on youth in transition that are not commensurate with analogous expectations for youth without disabilities.

Additionally, the limited vocational rehabilitation time frame affects progress. Some staff expressed a desire to be involved with students earlier in their school careers, and to have more communication including

increased involvement at individualized education program (IEP) meetings. Finally, program staff and partners discussed the limited or nonexistent connection between contracted job developers and students in transition seeking employment. Some stakeholders discussed this as an educator's or a youth transition program counselor's responsibility. Participating contractors were looking for guidance in how to formally provide services to this population.

2. IDENTIFY THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE; AND

Participant survey respondents were asked to indicate which vocational rehabilitation partners they receive services from. Almost half did not work with listed community partners. The most commonly identified partner was WorkSource Oregon, following by community mental health programs, Developmental Disability Services, and Aging and People with Disabilities services.

Surveyed vocational rehabilitation staff were asked to select up to three community partners with whom Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation has the strongest relationships as well as three whose relationship needs improvement. The figure below shows responses ordered by perception of partnership strength, highest to lowest. The three partnerships seen as strongest are 1) vocational rehabilitation contracted vendors; 2) developmental disabilities services; and 3) community mental health programs. Staff noted a wide array of partnerships needing improvement, with local businesses and employers, self-sufficiency, employment department, and parole and probation department topping the list.

Community partners observed an increasing emphasis by Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation on working as part of a broader team, including individuals with disabilities, families, schools, employers, and other service providers. Stakeholders particularly noted increasing teamwork and associated positive outcomes around youth transition, Employment First, and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act initiatives.

Staff and partner survey respondents were also asked why the vocational needs of people with disabilities were unmet by service providers. The most common responses by staff were a deficit of providers, lacking provider skillsets for specific disabilities, too few provider staff, and a burdensome vocational rehabilitation contracting process. Community partners agreed with these as the top four reasons but thought not enough providers available in the area and lacking skillsets less important than did vocational rehabilitation staff.

Addressing confounding service needs requires strong relationships with referral organizations, and clear communication between vocational rehabilitation counselors and clients regarding the appropriate resource to address different needs. Nearly 70 percent of staff and 90 percent of partners felt that some or most/all individuals needed referrals to community partners. Sixty (60) percent of individuals identified this need. Half of vocational rehabilitation staff felt that this service was received by some or most/all of the individuals who need it, compared to nearly 80 percent of program partners. Just over half (52 percent) of participants who reported this need indicated receipt.

Increasing connections with community partners and supporting the ability of partners to serve people with disabilities may create more capacity in the broader service system. These partner agencies may assist people with disabilities to receive services addressing stability and self-sufficiency needs outside of, in addition to, Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation. Issues around information sharing and accessibility would need to be addressed to make these partnerships effective.

3. INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES FOR TRANSITION CAREER SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH SUCH SERVICES ARE COORDINATED WITH TRANSITION SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT.

Youth Transition Program (YTP)

Oregon's Youth Transition Program (YTP), was established in 1990 and is jointly implemented by Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation, Oregon Department of Education, the University of Oregon, and local school districts. YTP exists in 115 school districts and over 150 schools throughout Oregon. YTP's goals are to improve post-school transition outcomes for youth with disabilities as well as to increase Oregon schools' capacity to collaboratively provide transition services and supports. Schools are funded every two years through a competitive grant process and use performance-based contracts linked to key milestones in the vocational rehabilitation system – application to vocational rehabilitation, development of an individual plan for employment, and engagement in employment, training, or a combination of the two upon exiting YTP. All YTP participants who receive core services must be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services and become vocational rehabilitation participants.

Participating students receive pre-employment transition supports to address individualized transition needs generally during the last two years of high school and continuing into the early transition years after leaving high school. Core services include:

- Individualized planning focused on post-school goals and self-determination and help to coordinate school plans with relevant community agencies.
- Instruction in academic, vocational, independent living, and personal social skills and help to stay in and complete high school.
- Career development services including goal setting, career exploration, job search skills, and self-advocacy.
- Paid employment including connections to local employers, on the job assessments, placement, and training.
- Support services such as individualized mentoring and support or referrals for additional specific interventions.
- Follow up support for one year after leaving the program to assist in maintaining positive outcomes in employment or postsecondary settings.

YTP Outcomes, Federal Year 2016-2018

	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Number of Youth Served	1,188	1,851	1,851
Individualized Employment Plans Developed	1,051	1,088	1,041
Percent Exiting School Employed and/or Enrolled in Postsecondary School	80%	80%	75%
Percent Exiting School with Jobs	66%	62%	63%
Average Hours of Work per Week on Exit	25	26	28
Average Wage (\$ per hour) on Exit	\$14.00	\$10.00	\$11.00
% with Jobs 12 Months After Completing YTP	64%	68%	63%
Average Hours of Work per Week 12 Months Post Exit	30	29	29
Average Wage (\$ per hour) 12 Months Post Exit	\$11.00	\$11.00	\$12.00
% in Postsecondary Training or Education	16%	15%	18%
Average Hours of Work per Week Enrolled 12 Months Post Exit	26	23	23

Source: Oregon State Rehabilitation Council, Annual Reports

Transition Network Facilitators (TNF)

Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation and the Oregon Department of Education operate a cooperative agreement to blend funding for nine regional transition network facilitators as a part of the settlement of the Lane v. Brown lawsuit and the resulting Governor's Executive Order (No. 15-01) to improve Oregon's systems providing employment services for students with disabilities. Transition network facilitators collaborate with vocational rehabilitation and schools as well as local businesses/employers and

others to implement Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and Employment First goals of improving transition outcomes for youth. Transition network facilitators are working to create an equitable, sustainable, simplified system, aligned across agencies that reduces redundancies.

Interviewees spoke of their role as helping to support students, teachers, families and districts by providing support and information about life after school for people with disabilities. Facilitators connect students to IDD, Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation, Social Security, and other services that can help to create a seamless transition from school to adulthood. Facilitators work more at a systems level than on an individual level. However, facilitators spoke about doing more with schools that do not have Youth Transition Program grants or specialists.

Five percent (26 of 396) of vocational rehabilitation participant survey respondents have worked with a Transition Network Facilitator. This small percentage makes sense because this is a relatively new role in Oregon, and one that works more with programs than with individual students.

Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation is making additional investments in pre-employment transition services through the following partnerships:

- Silver Falls Come LEAD (Leadership Empowerment Advocacy Development). Students with disabilities participate in leadership academies, focused on job exploration, work-based learning experiences, postsecondary education counseling, workplace readiness training, and self-advocacy instruction.
- AntFarm. Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation partners with AntFarm to provide work experiences in gardening and farming.
- Worksystems, Inc. Students receive work experiences in Washington and Multnomah counties with public and private employers.
- Motivational Enhancement Group Intervention interviewing. Students gain self-advocacy skills, build self-determination and self-efficacy through a 12-session group intervention that utilizes a collaborative, goal-orientated style of communication.

- Benefits planning. YTP students are referred by schools to Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation's Work Incentives Network to help make informed financial decisions about benefits and employment.
- Project Access. Five Lane County high schools, Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation, and the University of Oregon have been working on Project Access to see if students benefit from transition activities starting earlier in school.

Other Transition Programs

- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Youth Transition. PepNet networking meets monthly with representatives from Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation, Education, Western Oregon University, parents, and regional ESD programs and service providers to facilitate responses to the transition needs of deaf and hard of hearing youth statewide. Teachers can attend transition training and networking events to learn how to create their own local model.
- Early Assessment and Support Alliance. Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation collaborates with the Early Assessment and Support Alliance, a statewide effort to provide systematic early psychosis interventions at mental health centers to assist young people with psychiatric disabilities in obtaining or maintaining employment. Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation worked with Addictions and Mental Health and Portland State University to create a center of excellence providing ongoing technical assistance to statewide Early Assessment and Support Alliance programs. Vocational rehabilitation funded four county pilot sites to identify a best practices model to engage youth experiencing a first psychotic episode in accessing vocational rehabilitation and local workforce programs.
- Seamless Transition Project. A few organizations are piloting a seamless transition project targeting youth. Similar to Project SEARCH from Cincinnati Community Health, it is a series of rotating internships provided by host businesses to prepare youth with disabilities for employment.
- Summer Assessment Academy. This eight-week summer program for students in transition helps them to identify jobs in the community

they are interested in and get paid work experience. Students also participate in a job club and work with an individual counselor.

Feedback on Students in Transition Service System

- Youth Transition Program. The Youth Transition Program has been in place since 1990 and is seen by many as a national best practice, particularly for its success in engaging schools with vocational rehabilitation services.
- Pre-Employment Transition Services. Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation is working with schools to implement pre-employment transition services as defined by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Youth Transition Programs are a primary mechanism used to provide these services.
- Transition Network Facilitators. Transition Network Facilitators support collaboration and transition goals associated with Employment First and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act initiatives, as a part of the Lane v. Brown settlement agreement.
- Underserved Youth. Despite progress and success, some youth continue to fall through the cracks. Some do not connect to transition activities or have a break between high school and vocational rehabilitation, which weakens their soft skills built through school participation.

In summary, the comprehensive statewide needs assessment is the result of a cooperative effort between Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation, the Oregon Commission for the Blind, and the State Rehabilitation Council. These efforts solicited information concerning the needs of persons with disabilities from persons with disabilities, service providers, OVR and OCB staff, and businesses for the purpose of providing OVR, OCB and the SRC with information to address structure and resource demands. The needs assessment effort is based upon the contributions of more than 1,000 individuals representing diverse stakeholder groups. Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation, the Oregon Commission for the Blind, and the State Rehabilitation Council will use this information in a strategic manner that results in provision of vocational rehabilitation services designed to address

the current and future needs of individuals with disabilities who seek employment.

K. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

Describe:

1. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE STATE WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES;

According to the 2018 American Community Survey, among the 2,551,993 individuals between the age of 18 and 64 living in Oregon, a total of 295,114 experience disabilities.

2. THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL RECEIVE SERVICES UNDER:

A. THE VR PROGRAM;

It is projected that Oregon VR Program will serve 18,127 in FFY 2020.

B. THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM; AND

Oregon VR's Title VI, Supported Employment Funds are \$300,000 for FFY 2020. At a current cost per case of approximately \$2,504 we will be able provide services to approximately 104 Supported Employment clients using these funds. The number of individuals receiving Supported Employment Services is much larger than this number and is supplemented with Title I funds.

Of the 18,127 clients projected to receive services in FFY 2020, it is projected that 3184 will be receiving Supported Employment services.

C. EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION;

Oregon VR Program is not under an Order of Selection.

3. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR VR SERVICES, BUT ARE NOT RECEIVING SUCH SERVICES DUE TO AN ORDER OF SELECTION; AND

Oregon VR Program is not under an Order of Selection

4. THE COST OF SERVICES FOR THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS ESTIMATED TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES. IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION, IDENTIFY THE COST OF SERVICES FOR EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY.

It is projected the Oregon VR Program will spend \$28,000,000 on eligible individuals.

L. STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

The designated State unit must:

1. IDENTIFY IF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES WERE JOINTLY DEVELOPED

Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the State VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the State has a Council, and jointly agreed to any revisions.

VR and the State Rehabilitation Council have had opportunities over the last year to work together on several aspects of the VR program, policies, procedures, and service delivery. Additionally, VR and SRC worked to jointly develop our State's goals, priorities and strategies looking forward.

The

SRC approved the final draft of the VR portion of Section 6 of the 2020 Combined State Plan.

2. IDENTIFY THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IN CARRYING OUT THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS.

When the Oregon VR program created its portion of the initial Unified State Plan (2016, updated in 2018) as a result of the implementation of the WIOA, significant activity took place with Workforce Partners, Stakeholders and Staff to identify the goals identified below. The Program will continue to work towards these goals but will now be aligning our activities with the "Imperatives" identified by the State Workforce Board, (known in Oregon as the Workforce Talent Development Board). The Goals and Priorities and the strategies below continue to be the VR Program goals. Strategies are influenced and informed by the WTDB "Imperatives". In addition to working toward the goals and strategies set forth for the entire Oregon Workforce System in the earlier sections of the Combined Plan, listed below are the VR program specific goals, priorities, and strategies.

VR Goals/Priorities/Strategies:

1. Increase quality employment outcomes for all Oregonians with disabilities

WTDB Imperative #1, “Create a culture of equitable prosperity”, calls for the increased participation of all groups and an increase in upward mobility within the Workforce of Oregon. The VR Program is the mechanism to assist Oregonians with Disabilities participate in the Workforce system to achieve these objectives.

- a. Support and accelerate the customer experience to be empowering, effective, and efficient
 - i. Promote earlier engagement with Workforce partners for VR clients in the application process
 - ii. Streamline referral and data collection from common referral agencies
 - iii. Work with VR staff to streamline the Individual Plan for Employment process in order to get clients into plan more quickly
 - iv. Use data to determine success rate of specific services and focus on their duplication
- b. Continue implementation of inclusive and dynamic statewide student and youth programs that meet the community needs.
 - i. Develop a meaningful presence in all high school districts in Oregon
 - ii. Train staff on participation in Individual Education Plans
 - iii. Continue partnership with Families and Community Together (FACT) to educate students and their families about transition

- iv. Expand partnership with the Oregon Department of Education Transition Network Facilitators, including expansion of joint training opportunities
 - v. Work to support youth who are not in school through strategic partnerships with other lead workforce agencies
 - vi. Develop and implement summer activities for high school-aged students and youth; these opportunities will include work opportunities and post-secondary education exploration activities.
 - vii. Develop and implement year-round postsecondary education opportunities for youth and students.
- c. Expand and improve VR services to Oregonians who have been underserved and underrepresented in the VR program
- i. Establish quarterly review of caseloads to ensure equitable access and outcomes
 - ii. Establish local plans for community outreach when underserved or underrepresented populations are identified
 - iii. Partner with agencies that provide culturally specific service
 - iv. Continue working with Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs to ensure access to joint case management and culturally appropriate services
- d. Work with State and local partners to increase access to employment including supported employment services for individuals.
- i. Continue to meet the expectations outlined in Executive Order 15-01 and the Lane v. Brown settlement that

address the need for competitive and integrated employment, including supported employment, opportunities for the commonly underrepresented I/DD population in the workforce.

- ii. Plan for, and implement a process to identify, track, and inform clients currently working in subminimum wage environments about opportunities to work in competitive and integrated employment.
- e. Increase programmatic consistencies to ensure quality employment outcomes
 - i. Align rules, policies, and procedure with the new WIOA requirements and statewide workforce system
 - ii. Create and implement a new service quality review process
 - iii. Use data from the review process to inform training needs
- f. Increase the knowledge about and usage of assistive technology (AT)
 - i. Expand training for staff on availability of AT and its uses
 - ii. Work with Access Technologies Inc. to establish a communication plan to keep staff up-to-date on new technologies
 - iii. Explore how to support FACT's training on AT to transition aged students and their families
 - iv. Encourage VR staff attending IEP's to explore the use of AT at an earlier age for students

2. Increase capacity and resources to provide enhanced levels of service to Oregonians with Disabilities

WTDB Imperative #2 calls for an “increase in the understanding and utilization of the system”. The VR Program is committed to increasing user and stakeholder awareness of the services available through the system and is in alignment with this imperative.

WTDB Imperative #4 calls for an alignment of the resources in the system to achieve the outcomes for all clients who utilize the workforce system. The VR Program addresses the needs of underserved population of Oregonians with Disabilities and is consistently looking for opportunities to align, or braid funding and other resources for the benefit of the consumer.

- a. Assist the workforce system with increasing its capacity and capability to serve Oregonians with Disabilities
 - i. Convene cross agency workgroup to address the needs of underserved populations in the workforce system as a whole
 - ii. Provide training to workforce partners on working with individuals with disabilities
 - iii. Work with other agencies who work with clients with barriers to employment to address common access issues in the workforce system
 - iv. Work with local workforce boards to ensure that programmatic access issues are identified and addressed
- b. Restructure the VR service delivery model to comply with state contracting requirements and be outcome driven
 - i. Continue transition to newly structured pay-for-performance Job Placement Services Contract which includes a third track for individuals with the most significantly disabilities. These individuals require addition services that are were not funded appropriately in our traditional supported employment track.

- ii. Create contracts with clear minimum qualifications, scope of work, and cost structure for all personal services to ensure high quality and consistent services statewide
- c. Expand the availability of Vendor and Partner services that meet the needs of Oregonians with disabilities, including those requiring supported employment services
 - i. Develop a community college-based Career Pathway to develop job placement professionals and job coaches in the community
 - ii. Identify areas of limited service availability, including supported employment services, and develop and implement recruitment and solicitation plans
 - iii. Work with providers of sheltered and subminimum wage employment to transition to the integration of their clients into competitive and integrated employment in their respective communities.

3. Improve the performance of the VR program with respect to the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA

The VR Program has restructured its Training unit and curriculum to teach the WIOA Common Performance Measures, the mechanisms to identify, track and record and to understand the implication of these measures on the outcomes for Oregonians with Disabilities and their employment success. These measures are also the underpinnings for the Programs DHS required Performance management system and process are either in place or are being developed to regularly review the Common Performance Measures and to adjust the trajectory of the Programs activities as trends are identified.

- a. Increase staff knowledge of the labor market

- i. Encourage branch level engagement with regional economists and workforce analysts to educate staff on local labor market issues
 - ii. Work with Local Workforce Development Boards to engage with local sector strategies and pursue high wage, high demand work opportunities.
- b. Expand opportunities for skill gain and credentialing
- i. Identify and access local skill upgrading opportunities within the Local Workforce Areas (LWA)
 - ii. Partner with community college Disability Service Offices (DSO) to increase access to existing credentialing programs
 - iii. Work with employers to establish on-the-job training opportunities
 - iv. Provide opportunities for skill upgrading for individuals who face barriers to work and career advancement based on disability
- c. Expand opportunities for clients to learn about and enter higher wage, high demand jobs
- i. Use labor market information to create work-based learning opportunities at local business who have high wage, high demand jobs
 - ii. Inform clients about training opportunities to prepare them for jobs that are above entry level
 - iii. Encourage clients to access VR services who face disability related barriers to advancement.
- d. Create an employer engagement model that creates opportunities for work-based learning opportunities

- i. Identify and develop best practices for providing Business Relation Services.
 - ii. Create and train local VR employer engagement teams
 - iii. Work with partners on joint engagement opportunities
 - iv. Continue our collaboration with OFCCP (Office of Federal Contract and Compliance Programs) to support Business in meeting their goals established by 503 Hiring Targets.
 - v. Utilize the SRC Business Committee to enhance engagement with employers
- e. Expand the use of Benefits Planning to assist Oregonians with Disabilities
- i. Create online benefits training and information to address basic benefit concerns
 - ii. Work with partner agencies to create additional funding opportunities for expanding capacity
 - iii. Continue to partner with the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance program operated by Disability Rights Oregon

3. ENSURE THAT THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES ARE BASED ON AN ANALYSIS OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

These goals and priorities are a result of a review of available and existing information, input from the SRC and planning meetings held by the Oregon VR program.

A. THE MOST RECENT COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT, INCLUDING ANY UPDATES;

The most recent comprehensive needs assessment was completed in 2017 by the Program and Policy Institute. Recommendations and observations from this report are part of the planning process for this current State Plan.

As we are also in the process of contracting for and implementing our next CSNA, (due for completion September 2020) preliminary information has come available even though the Assessment is not complete. That information is being analyzed regarding the impact it has on this current iteration of the VR Portion of the Oregon Combined State Plan.

B. THE STATE'S PERFORMANCE UNDER THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES OF SECTION 116 OF WIOA; AND

Priorities, Goals and Strategies were crafted with an eye towards the needs of the Agency and the performance measures as defined by Section 116 of WIOA as well as a review of prior years' data regarding the metrics identified by Sec 116.

C. OTHER AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON THE OPERATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE VR PROGRAM, INCLUDING ANY REPORTS RECEIVED FROM THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL AND FINDING AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MONITORING ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED UNDER SECTION 107.

As stated in that earlier attachment, the Programs last comprehensive needs assessment was part of the discussion of what the goals, priorities, and strategies should accomplish. Additionally, VR considered the feedback received from multiple SRC surveys, including surveys with providers and staff. VR also considered Department of Human Services internal audit recommendations. As VR looks to the future, the program understands that with tightening budgets and increased demands we must expand our services in a way that is both equitable and innovative in order to be successful. That understanding was very important to establishing this state plan.

M. ORDER OF SELECTION

Describe:

1. WHETHER THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL IMPLEMENT AND ORDER OF SELECTION. IF SO, DESCRIBE:

A. THE ORDER TO BE FOLLOWED IN SELECTING ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS TO BE PROVIDED VR SERVICES.

The Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation Program has provided services to all eligible Oregonians since July 2010. Projections do not indicate that Oregon VR will need to invoke an Order of Selection at this time or in the next Biennium.

If circumstances change, and the Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation must consider invoking an Order of Selection, the program has a process with which to address the issues of returning to an Order of Selection status, including discussions with the State Rehabilitation Council regarding process, the determination of Priority Groups and timeframes.

B. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER.

Oregon VR is not in an Order of Selection at this time.

C. THE SERVICE AND OUTCOME GOALS.

Oregon VR is not in an Order of Selection at this time.

D. THE TIME WITHIN WHICH THESE GOALS MAY BE ACHIEVED FOR INDIVIDUALS IN EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY WITHIN THE ORDER.

Oregon VR is not in an Order of Selection at this time.

E. HOW INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES ARE SELECTED FOR SERVICES BEFORE ALL OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES; AND

Oregon VR is not in an Order of Selection at this time.

2. IF THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT HAS ELECTED TO SERVE
ELIGIBLE
INDIVIDUALS, REGARDLESS OF ANY ESTABLISHED ORDER OF
SELECTION, WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT
TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT.

Oregon VR is not in an Order of Selection at this time.

N. GOALS AND PLANS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS

1. Specify the State's goals and priorities for funds received under section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services.

VR's goal for all funds used for Supported Employment Services is to help individuals whose disabilities and functional limitations have traditionally meant that they would not be able to successfully enter the labor market and be successful in employment. VR does not prioritize one disability group over another. VR works to leverage these funds with other partners and providers who have a vested interest in the success of the populations we serve. Oregon VR strives to expand our supported employment efforts and increase our outcomes.

The funds are used to provide Supported Employment Services to those adult and transitional age youth with the most significant disabilities. At least 50% of these funds are targeted towards youth with the most significant disabilities who need them to transition to employment.

Supported Employment Services, occurring after placement, include job development, job coaching and any extended supports needed. For individuals with a primary disability of intellectual and/or development disability, clients will receive extended services after closure from the Office of Developmental Disabilities. For clients with Mental Health disabilities who receive services from OHA Mental Health programs, extended services are provided by the fidelity based IPS program once the client exits from the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

2. Describe the activities to be conducted, with funds reserved pursuant to section 603(d), for youth with the most significant disabilities, including:

A. the provision of extended services for a period not to exceed 4 years; and

For youth with significant disabilities, VR may provide up to 4 years of extended support services, in specific instances and based on individual need. This service must be provided on a year-by-year basis to better assess the individual needs of the Participating Youth and ensure informed choice.”

B. how the State will leverage other public and private funds to increase resources for extended services and expanded supported employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities.

Services are coordinated from the outset of involvement to ensure that the clients receive appropriately sequenced services in order to achieve the best possible employment outcomes. Oregon VR's Title VI, Supported Employment Funds are \$300,000 for FFY 2019. At a current cost per case of approximately \$3,155 we will be able provide services to approximately 104 clients using these funds. The number of individuals getting Supported Employment Services is much larger than this number and is supported through the use of Title I funds.

O. STATE'S STRATEGIES

Describe the required strategies and how the agency will use these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome any barriers to accessing the VR and the Supported Employment programs (See sections 101(a)(15)(D) and (18)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act and section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)):

1. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO EXPAND AND IMPROVE SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

The VR program and the SRC created a series of goals, priorities, and strategies that are found earlier in this plan. The strategies identified below come from that portion of the plan and address the specific questions of this attachment. They do not represent all of the strategies that the program has identified as ways to achieve our goals and priorities.

The methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities: (1) Promote earlier engagement with Workforce partners for VR clients. (2) Streamline the referral process to and from Workforce and other partners, while continuing to improve data collection from common referral agencies (3) Work with VR staff to streamline the development and completion of Individual Plans for Employment in order to get clients into plan more quickly4.) Continue the implementation of training regarding the expectations and goals identified in the WIOA for new and developing VR staff in order that the significance of the Common Performance measures is understood in the context of successful client outcome.

2. HOW A BROAD RANGE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES AND DEVICES WILL BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AT EACH STAGE OF THE REHABILITATION PROCESS AND ON A STATEWIDE BASIS.

(1) Provide training for management staff on the availability and the process to obtain AT.2) Work with Access Technologies Inc. to establish a communication plan to keep staff up-to-date on new technologies (3) Work with Workforce partners in order to assist them in recognizing when

interventions regarding the provision of AT is appropriate; and assist hem as necessary to do so.(4) Encourage VR staff attending IEP's to evaluate the use of AT with students.

3. THE OUTREACH PROCEDURES THAT WILL BE USED TO IDENTIFY AND SERVE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES, INCLUDING THOSE WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, AS WELL AS THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM.

DHS has established the Office of Equity and Multicultural Services (OEMS). There is now a representative from OEMS embedded in each of the 5 DHS Programs. The VR program looks forward to working with OEMS and our OEMS representative to assess and identify any areas that need improvement in this regard and implement activities to see that Oregonians with the most significant disabilities who are minorities or have been underserved have an equitable opportunity to receive the VR services they need to become successful in the workplace.

- (1) Complete regular review of caseload data to ensure that there is equitable access to VR services and to ensure comparable representation of based on demographics of the community
- (2) in partnership with OEMS, establish local plans for community outreach when underserved or underrepresented populations are identified within the community.
- (3) Partner with agencies that provide culturally specific employment services to increase opportunities to access service and increase employment outcomes.
- (4) Continue working with Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (121) programs to ensure successful joint case management and culturally appropriate services to Tribal members.
- (5) Develop relationships with workforce partners to promote awareness cultural and disability needs in the service delivery model.

4. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO IMPROVE AND EXPAND VR SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE COORDINATION OF SERVICES DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF SUCH STUDENTS FROM SCHOOL TO POSTSECONDARY LIFE (INCLUDING THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PREEMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES).

- (1) Develop a meaningful presence in all high school districts in Oregon
- (2) Train staff on participation in Individual Education Plans
- (3) Expand partnership with the Oregon Department of Education Transition Network Facilitators, including expansion of joint training opportunities
- (4) Work to support youth who are not in school through strategic partnerships with other lead workforce agencies
- (5) Develop and implement summer activities for high school– aged students and youth; these opportunities will include work opportunities and post–secondary education exploration activities.
- (6) Develop and implement year–round postsecondary education opportunities for youth and students.

5. IF APPLICABLE, PLANS FOR ESTABLISHING, DEVELOPING, OR IMPROVING COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE.

VR partners and purchases many rehabilitation services from community programs. VR has been working with CRPs who are transitioning from a sheltered and subminimum wage model to a more inclusive focus on competitive, integrated employment opportunities. This assistance and guidance allow us to ensure that there is capacity within the system to provide needed services to the clients we work with and to meet the

various mandates of the State and WIOA regulations regarding competitive, integrated employment (CIE) outcomes for all our clients.

Additionally, the VR Program continues to identify areas of the State that have insufficient capacity and continues the work to rectify this lack of capacity

6. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE STATE WITH RESPECT TO THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA.

1. Increase staff knowledge of the labor market
 - a. Encourage branch level engagement with regional economists and workforce analysts to educate staff on local labor market issues
 - b. Work with Local Workforce Development Boards to engage with local sector strategies and pursue high wage, high demand work opportunities.
2. Expand opportunities for skill gain and credentialing
 - a. Identify and access local skill upgrading opportunities within the Local Workforce Areas (LWA)
 - b. Partner with community college Disability Service Offices (DSO) to increase access to existing credentialing programs
 - c. Work with employers to establish on-the-job training opportunities
 - d. Provide opportunities for skill upgrading for individuals who face barriers to work and career advancement based on disability
3. Expand opportunities for clients to learn about and enter higher wage, high demand jobs

- a. Use labor market information to create work–based learning opportunities at local business who have high wage, high demand jobs
 - b. Inform clients about training opportunities to prepare them for jobs that are above entry level
 - c. Encourage clients to access VR services who face disability related barriers to advancement.
4. Create an expansive employer engagement model that creates opportunities for work–based learning opportunities
- a. Develop a common employer engagement plan, language, and focus that can be used statewide
 - b. Implement a progressive employment model
 - c. Create and train local VR employer engagement teams
 - d. Work with partners on joint engagement opportunities
 - e. Engage with employers the need to meet the 503 federal hiring targets
 - f. Utilize the SRC Business Committee to enhance engagement with employers
5. Expand the use of Benefits Planning to assist Oregonians with Disabilities
- a. Create online benefits training and information to address basic benefit concerns
 - b. Work with partner agencies to create additional funding opportunities for expanding capacity
 - c. Continue to partner with the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance program operated by Disability Rights Oregon

The Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation Program has been and continues to be an active participant in the implementation of the WIOA. The VR program Administration has taken an active leadership role in the process of developing the protocols and policies that will govern the inter-Title, inter-program and inter-agency negotiations, collaboration and implementation of agreements that will govern the delivery of Workforce activities for years to come. The Deputy Director of Vocational Rehabilitation sits on the Workforce Systems Executive Team (one of 5) in order to facilitate the development and direction of work teams consisting of various agency participants in order to clarify, define and affect delivery of coordinated workforce services. These services are being defined as more than just a “referral” process but an understanding that we are working together to deliver the most efficient and nonduplicative services a consumer requires. This is especially important in the area of service delivery to Oregonians with Disabilities. Vocational Rehabilitation is leading the way in working with our partners to know what to do, when to do it and when to come to VR for more specific interventions for Oregonians with Disabilities who are accessing employment services through the developing Unified workforce delivery system that is evolving in Oregon.

The message that the Workforce system must align and integrate is being delivered to the 9 Local Workforce Development Boards with VR representation on every Local board as well as VR representation on the Oregon Workforce Investment Board (OWIB). VR’s goal is to see that the development of Local service delivery systems reflect the intent of the WIOA, that Oregonians with Disabilities can access workforce services either when the impediment mitigation has occurred or with the understanding that cases requiring VR assistance to overcome disability based impediments that are a true barrier to work will be provided with services utilizing the expertise for the programs in partnership as is necessary to achieve the consumers goal (arrived at through an informed choice and career exploration/Labor Market Research goal identification process).

7. STRATEGIES FOR ASSISTING OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM IN ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

Since the passage and implementation of the WIOA, Oregon VR has been an active participant in the evolution of Oregon's Workforce system. Strategies regarding the development of the Workforces system overall but more specifically for the benefit of Oregonians with the most significant disabilities are:

1. Convene cross agency workgroup to address the needs of underserved populations in the workforce system.
2. Provide training to workforce partners on working with individuals with disabilities
3. Collaborate and coordinate with other agencies who work with Oregonians with barriers to employment to address common access issues to the workforce system
4. Participate with local workforce boards to ensure that programmatic access issues are identified and addressed

8. HOW THE AGENCY'S STRATEGIES WILL BE USED TO:

A. ACHIEVE GOALS AND PRIORITIES BY THE STATE, CONSISTENT WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT;

The goals and priorities of the VR program are informed by the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. While this iteration of the VR portion of the State plan is still based on information from the 2017 CSNA, we are in the process of completing our next CSNA. New information and any changes what will be required based on the outcome of the next CSNA (to be completed Sept 2020) will be identified and addressed in the 2022 update of the VR portion of the State plan.

B. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES; AND

The second of three primary goals of the Oregon VR Program is the continued development of capacity to meet field and client needs. The Program plans to review and analyze the possibility of utilizing CFR 361.5 (b)(16). As activities are identified regarding the utilization of the Programs

Innovation and Opportunity funds, they will be reported on in the 2022 updates.

**C. OVERCOME IDENTIFIED BARRIERS RELATING TO EQUITABLE
ACCESS TO
AND PARTICIPATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE
STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM AND THE STATE SUPPORTED
EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM.**

As the identified Strategies are implemented, we should see access and participation issues decrease as overall program improvements are implemented.

P. EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS

Describe:

1. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE VR PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE APPROVED VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS.

The VR Programs Goals that were established in the 2016- 2019 Unified State Plan were as follows:

a.) Increase quality employment outcomes for all Oregonians with disabilities.

In 2017 the Program served 16661 clients with 5297 entering plan resulting in 2958 (62.3%) exiting successfully

In 2018 the Program served 17,204 clients with 5131 entering Plan resulting in 2745 (60.2%) exiting successfully

In 2019 the Program served 16,907 clients with 5188 entering plan resulting in 2925 (57%) exiting successfully

While there was a slight decrease in the number of clients, more clients entered plan and there were more successful exits although the percentage shows a slight decrease.

b.) Increase capacity and resources to provide enhanced levels of service to Oregonians with Disabilities.

The VR Program has increased the number of Job Placement Contractors from 164 to 215 from PY2015 to PY2018. The Program has (indicated elsewhere) increased its participation with the school system in Oregon regarding Transition Programs for youth and we have also created a Pre ETS delivery system.

c.) Improve the performance of the VR program with respect to the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA.

The following is the representation of the Programs performance in these areas by PY:

2 nd quarter Retention	2016 57.5%	2017 58.7%	2018 59.8%
4 th quarter retention	2016 55.1%	2017 55.4%	2018 56.3%
Measurable skills gain	2016 22%	2017 29%	2018 24%
Credential attainment	2016 22%	2017 32%	2018 36%
Weekly Wages	2016 \$320.92	2017 \$325.97	2018 \$355.21

Statistical modelling assists us in projecting the following trends in these categories for PY19 and PY20:

2 nd qtr. Retention	2019 63.0%	2020 65.9%
4 th qtr. Retention	2019 59.3%	2020 62.1%
Measurable Skills Gain	2019 34%	2020 39%
Credential Attainment	2019 39%	2020 43%

B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES.

Oregon is a diverse state with one large metro area and a lot of rural jurisdictions. The primary reason that we are challenged in any of our goals is the lack of capacity in the Rural areas where VR services are being provided. We have been able to meet prior goals and expectations but as

we move forward with the implementation of State and Federal legislative requirements and expectations, we will be challenged in some places to meet those expectations. In VI-VR-o.5 we address plans to increase capacity and to work with an evolving provider system to meet current expectations. Prior goals were around meeting RSA requirements and for the most part we have been successful in this area. New goals take into account VR Leadership changes, implementation of new State and Federal legislation and requirements, and new expectations from our umbrella organization, the Department of Human Services. Impediments to achieving these new goals will clearly be in the ability to develop the capacity and the relationships in various parts of the State to meet these goals. Additional challenges are staff turnover, lack of staff at an administrative level and the changing caseload demographics. This will require new and additional policy development. The program will then need to bring this new information and procedures to the field.

2. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SUPPLEMENT FOR THE MOST RECENT PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS.

VR was able to use previously established partnerships with our Supported Employment partners to achieve the Programs Supported Employment goals.

Strategies included:

- Person—centered planning
- Community—based assessment
- Job development and job placement
- On—site training for worker and/or co—workers
- Long—term support development
- Other services and goods
- Post—employment service

In addition to these strategies being utilized, the environment in Oregon that has resulted from the Governors Executive Order, the Lane V Brown Settlement Agreement and the WIOA expectations established regarding Competitive, Integrated Employment has resulted in a significant increase in the number of Supported Employment clients receiving SE services and entering the workforce:

PY 2016 Clients in Supported Employment	537
PY 2017 Clients in Supported Employment	595
PY2018 Clients in Supported Employment	634
PY 2019 (projected)Clients in Supported Employment	685
PY 2020 (projected) Clients in Supported Employment	734

During the same periods of time, the Supported Employment Clients entering CIE is:

PY 2016	295
PY 2017	261
PY 2018	191

This includes all clients with descriptors in the case management system that indicate Supported Employment services and includes Developmental Disability, Intellectual Disability, Mental Health and Traumatic Brain Injury.

B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES.

Factors which impede even better outcomes for the Programs Supported Employment Clients are readily identified in (p) (1) (B). The issues are resolving as strategies continue to be implemented and mature. The relationships at the States Administrative level between the Office of Developmental Disabilities and Behavioral Health have continued to improve and mature. This is reflected in the local areas as Branch offices and individual counselors create and maintain effective working relations with their counterparts in the other agencies addressing Supported Employment. There are still issues regarding skill level and turnover which has a deleterious effect but those situations as they occur are being dealt with more effectively. Oregon has begun to see a melding of the General VR Program, and the DD and MH systems resulting in better, quality outcomes for these clients.

3.THE VR PROGRAM'S PERFORMANCE ON THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA.

Please see: (p)(1)(A)

4. HOW THE FUNDS RESERVED FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION (I&E) ACTIVITIES WERE UTILIZED.

VR utilizes a portion of our funds every year to provide innovative activities that allows us to expand our services. In the past year we have focused our innovation on funding Training Network Facilitator positions to help us expand our relationships with Special Education programs across the state. VR continues to use these funds to expand our work with Easter Seal's Latino Connection to ensure that we continue to provide equitable services to the Latino Population.

The Program plans to review and analyze the possibility of utilizing establishment grants to expand the capacity of CRPs. As this develops, we anticipate further explanation in the 2022 updates.

Q. QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES.

Include the following:

1. THE QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES.

Oregon VRs Supported Employment Program provides opportunities for individuals of ages with the most significant disabilities to achieve competitive integrated employment with ongoing support provided by a variety of partners. These same individuals are those for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred. VR provides a continuum of SE services in partnership with other human services agencies and programs that persons with the most significant disabilities need to develop, maintain and advance in competitive employment. VR continues to work closely with other state programs, local governmental units, community-based organizations and groups to develop, refine and expand the availability of SE services throughout Oregon.

VR currently has over 192 contracts in place to provide job placement statewide. These contracts give VR the ability to pay for placement services in three Tiers based on the significance of the functional limitations that the client experiences. Tiers two and three focus on clients who require Supported Employment services in order to be successful in the labor market; with Tier 3 designed for those with the most extreme barriers to employment and/or a need for customized employment. Oregon initiated a pilot project in Fall 2019 designed to increase the number of VR Participants who appropriately receive Tier 3 services and increase the number of job developers who choose to serve this population of job seekers. To facilitate the pilot, the VR job developer's required training was revised, and a version was created and launched for VR staff who manage the job develop contracts. Simultaneously staff training and technical assistance to raise staff skill and knowledge in working with those with the

most significant functional limitations is being coordinated by Oregon VR with assistance from Y-TAC staff.

Historically, VR has partnered with OHA Behavioral Health Programs in promoting Individualized Placement and Support (IPS), an evidence-based SE model. Quality of these programs is assessed through compliance with a scale, which measures the 'fidelity' or the degree to which a program is being implemented in accordance the evidence-based fidelity model developed after extensive research from Dartmouth College. Some of the measures used in the IPS fidelity scales are the kinds of employment outcomes participants are obtaining; the degree of collaboration with vocational rehabilitation; availability of rapid job search and evidence of consumer choice. VR maintains quality SE outcomes through ongoing collaboration with mental health providers on the local level and OHA Mental Health Programs central office staff.

Supported employment is integrated into the array of services and programs available to Oregonians with disabilities, including Oregon's mental health and developmental disability service systems.

Success in Supported Employment requires a partnership among the responsible state and community programs, other service providers, consumers and families, advocacy organizations, employers and others. Long-term success continues to depend on the availability of funding for follow-along Supported Employment services.

- Work is performed in an integrated setting
- The individual is receiving a wage and benefits commensurate with non-disabled workers doing the same work.
- The individual is receiving opportunities for advancement commensurate with non-disabled workers doing the same work
- The ongoing support needs and sources of support have been identified and secured
- Supported employment services provided to clients are 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

- Clients and employer are satisfied with placements.

VR utilizes Title VI, Part B and Title I funds for the time-limited services necessary for an individual to stabilize in a community-based job. Services that may be part of a Supported Employment IPE include:

- Person centered planning
- Community-based assessment
- Job development
- Job placement
- On-site training for worker and/or coworkers
- Long-term support development
- Other services and goods
- Post-employment services

The specific type, level and location of ongoing supports provided to an individual are based upon his or her needs and those of the employer. Ongoing support may be provided by a variety of public and/or private sector resources including:

- OHA Behavioral Health Programs and community mental health programs
- DDS community supports
- County developmental disability case managers and developmental disability service brokerages
- Social Security work incentives

- Employer–provided reasonable accommodations
- Natural supports
- Family or community sponsorship

2. THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES.

Generally, VR will not exceed its 24–month in–plan status with a Supported Employment case. This 24–month time–line can be extended for exceptional circumstances, if the counselor and client jointly agree to the extension. Job coaching and/or on–the–job training supports are usually structured into a much shorter time frame, with long–term extended services being built into the plan as quickly as possible to ensure ongoing success when VR involvement ends.

For youth with significant disabilities, VR may provide up to 4 years of extended support services, in specific instances and based on individual need. This service must be provided on a year-by-year basis to better assess the individual needs of the Participating Youth and ensure informed choice.