

State of Oregon



Workforce System

Unified State Plan

Program Years 2016-2019

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Table of Contents

Section I. Oregon WIOA State Plan Type.....	7
Section II. Strategic Planning Elements	7
Overview of the Workforce Development System.....	7
Economic, Workforce, and Workforce Development Activities Analysis	8
Economic and Workforce Analysis.....	8
Oregon’s Expanding Recovery.....	9
Rural Areas of the State Finally Seeing Some Recovery	10
Continued Need for Trained Workers to Replace Retiring Workers	11
Workers with Barriers to Employment: Older Workers.....	12
Workers with Barriers to Employment: Long-term Unemployed.....	13
Workforce Skills Needed.....	14
Workers with Disabilities	16
Characteristics of the Population.....	19
Economic and Workforce Conditions in Rural Oregon	20
Occupations Key to Oregon’s Traded and High Growth Sectors	23
Workforce Development, Education and Training Activities Analysis	24
The State’s Workforce Development Activities.....	24
The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities.....	27
State Workforce Development Capacity	30
State Strategic Vision and Goals	30
Vision.....	30
Goals.....	31
Performance Goals	32
Assessment	32
State Strategies to achieve its Vision and Goals.....	34
Strategies the State will Implement	37
Section III. Operational Planning Elements	40
State Strategy Implementation.....	40
State Board Functions: Oregon Workforce Investment Board.....	41

Implementation of State Strategy	42
Core Program Activities	42
Core Program Activities to Implement the State’s Strategy.....	44
Alignment with Activities Outside the Plan	49
Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Individuals.....	51
Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Employers.....	52
Partner Engagement with Educational Institutions	54
Partner Engagement with Other Education and Training Providers	56
Leveraging Resources to Increase Educational Access.....	57
Improving Access to Postsecondary Credentials.....	58
Coordinating with Economic Development Strategies	60
Operating Systems and Policies.....	61
State Operating Systems	61
Labor Market Information	61
Data Collection and Reporting Systems	61
State Policies.....	62
State Program and State Board Overview	63
Assessment of Programs and One-Stop Program Partners	74
Assessment of Core Programs.....	74
Assessment of One-Stop Program Partner Programs	75
Previous Assessment Results.....	76
Distribution of Funds for Core Programs	77
Awarding multi-year grants or contracts	78
Vocational Rehabilitation services portion.....	79
Program Data	79
Data Alignment and Integration	79
Assessment of Participants’ Post-Program Success.	80
Use of Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage Record Data	81
Privacy Safeguards.	81
Priority of Service for Veterans.....	81
Addressing the Accessibility of the WSO Delivery System.....	82
Coordination with Unified State Plan Programs	84

Section V. Common Assurances	85
Section VI. Program Specific Requirements for Core Programs	85
Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities under Title I: General Requirements	85
Regions and Local Workforce Development Areas	85
Determining Local Areas.....	85
Designation on Recommendation of the State Board.....	86
Appeals Process	87
Statewide Activities.....	87
Governor’s Set Aside Funding.....	87
State Policies and Procedures to Provide Rapid Response.....	89
Rapid Response on Behalf of Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)	89
Adult and Dislocated Worker Program Requirements	90
Work-Based Training Models	90
Registered Apprenticeship.....	90
Training Provider Eligibility Procedure	90
Adult and Dislocated Worker Priority of Service	92
Youth Program Requirements	95
State’s Definition of “Alternative Education”	96
Definition of Not Attending School and Attending School	96
Basic Skills Deficient Definition.....	97
Wagner-Peyser Act Program (Employment Services)	97
Professional Development Activities for Employment Service Staff	97
Employment Services Staff Trained to Identify UI Eligibility Issues	98
Meaningful Assistance to UI Customers through WorkSource Oregon Centers	98
Reemployment Assistance to UI claimants	98
Wagner-Peyser Funds to Support UI Claimants.....	99
Coordination of Labor Exchange	100
Registration of UI Claimants.....	100
Administration of Work Test.....	100
Provision of Referrals.....	100
Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP)	101
Assessment of Need.....	101

Outreach Activities	102
Outreach by Wagner-Peyser and Other Agencies	103
State Strategy	104
Services Provided to Agricultural Employers	105
Other Requirements	105
Public Comment	106
Assessment of Previous AOP PY 14-15.....	106
Adult Basic Education and Literacy Programs.....	107
Aligning of Content Standards	107
Local Activities.....	108
Corrections Education and other Education of Institutionalized Individuals.....	109
Assessing Quality	112
Vocational Rehabilitation and Commission for the Blind.....	113
Appendix 1: Performance Goals for the Core Programs	114
Appendix 2: Core Program Assurances	117
Appendix 3: Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation Plan.....	118
Appendix 4: Oregon Commission for the Blind State Plan.....	172

Section I. Oregon WIOA State Plan Type

Provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) and associated regulations revised the requirements for State Plan submissions for a number of federally-funded, state administered programs related to the Workforce system. This document is the Unified State Plan submission for Oregon, to comply with those provisions.

The Oregon Unified State Plan includes the six core programs required by WIOA to be included in a Unified State Plan:

- Adult Program (Title I of WIOA)
- Dislocated Worker Program (Title I)
- Youth Program (Title I)
- Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program (Title II)
- Wagner-Peyser Act Program (Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by Title III)
- Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV)

Under Section 103 of WIOA, states have the discretion to include 11 programs and activities in a Combined Plan. Oregon has chosen not to include any of the additional programs.

Section II. Strategic Planning Elements

Overview of the Workforce Development System

The Oregon Workforce Development System helps state residents obtain and succeed in family wage jobs while meeting employers' needs for a skilled workforce. The system is intended to help all Oregonians reach their potential, regardless of disability, minority/ethnicity, or barriers to employment. The system has two primary customers:

- Job seekers/working learners, which includes the “emerging” workforce (youth 14-years old or older), “transitional” workforce (those transitioning from unemployment, dislocation or public assistance to employment), and current workforce (those currently employed).
- Businesses and employers who seek the best possible candidates for job openings, provide data for continual improvement of services and partner on solutions to workforce challenges.

When the term “workforce development system” is used in the Unified State Plan it refers to the group of state agencies that provide workforce services to Oregon individuals and businesses. There are several agencies that contribute oversight, resources, and programming to the workforce development system. At the State level, they include:

- Oregon Employment Department (OED)
- Oregon Commission for the Blind (OCB)
- Department of Human Services (DHS)
- Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC)

- Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI)

Each of these agencies oversee and/or provide investment in programs that are delivered locally through an additional layer of agencies and organizations, including:

- Local Workforce Development Boards (LWBs)
- Community Colleges
- Oregon Commission for the Blind (OCB)
- WorkSource Oregon Centers (WSO Centers)
- Department of Human Services (DHS)

Other state agencies and local organizations are key workforce system partners. These entities include the state Department of Education, Business Oregon, universities, local school districts, educational service districts, organized labor, local economic development organizations, human services organizations, community-based organizations, businesses, and business or trade associations.

Economic, Workforce, and Workforce Development Activities Analysis

After a slow initial recovery from the depths of the Great Recession, economic conditions in Oregon have finally improved. Job growth is strong, with 49,500 jobs added over the past 12 months. Oregon is adding jobs faster than the national average, which has reduced Oregon's unemployment rate from its recession high of 11.9 percent in spring 2009, when Oregon had the second highest unemployment rate in the nation, to 6.0 percent in October 2015. This unemployment rate is comparable to the unemployment rate seen in a typical economic expansion.

Economic and Workforce Analysis

Current forecasts indicate Oregon's economy will continue to see strong job growth over the next few years, before slowing slightly after 2018. The September 2015 Oregon Office of Economic Analysis' Economic and Revenue Forecast projects the state will add 54,500 jobs in 2016 and 56,800 jobs in 2017. The unemployment rate is forecasted to be 5.8 percent in 2016 and 5.4 percent in 2017.

Oregon's economy faces many of the same demographic challenges seen across the nation, including the aging workforce and baby boomer retirements, fewer young people participating in the labor force, and slower job growth in rural areas.

Oregon's labor force grew over the course of the recession and recovery due to population growth – a result of natural increase (births minus deaths) and net migration – partly due to an increase in the existing population that is looking for work. It is likely that some Oregonians entered the labor force by looking for work when their household's main work-related earnings were threatened or reduced by the weak economy or when their capital assets or income fell due to declining stock values and lower interest rates.

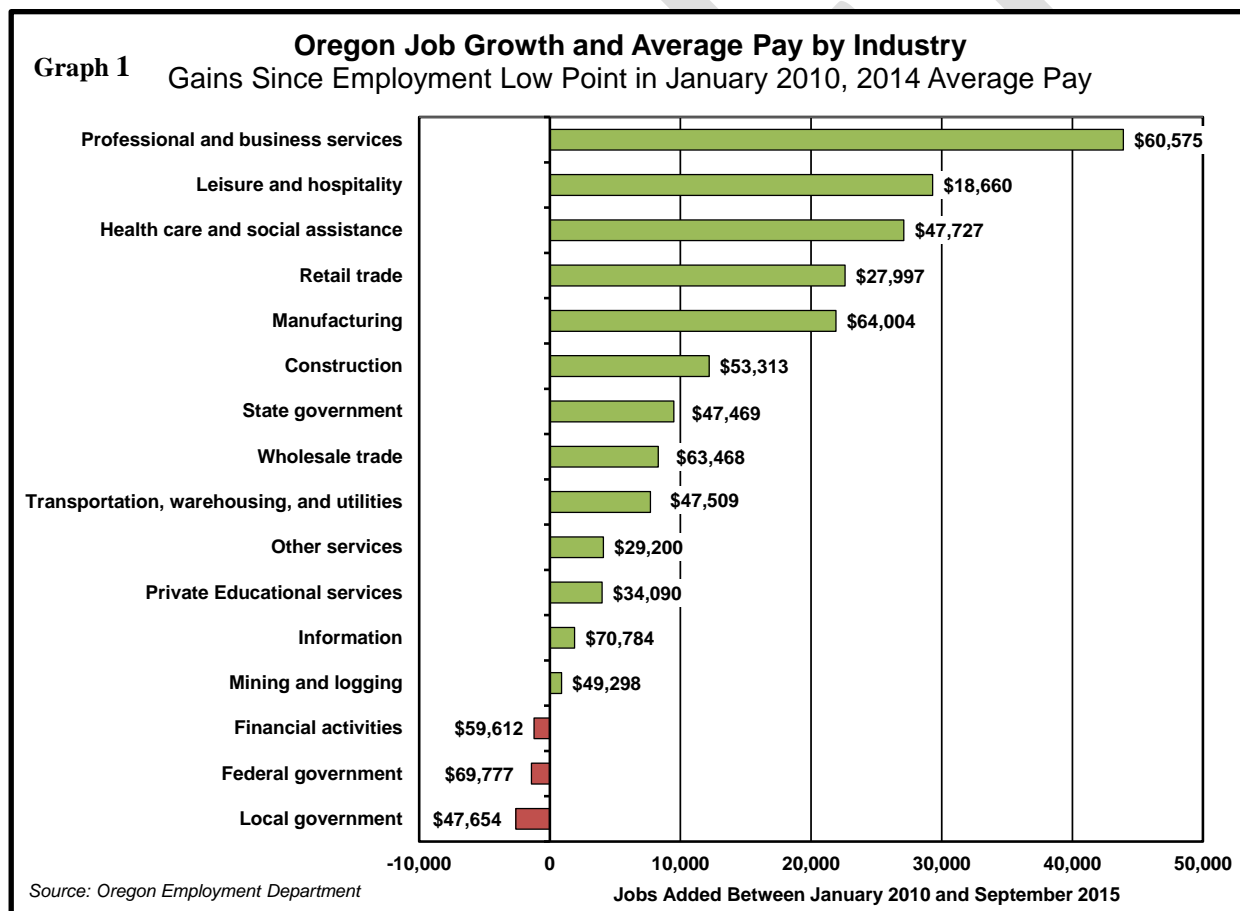
Oregon's labor force has since stabilized to around 1,950,000 people. This is largely due to a slower than average population growth during the past two decades. Population growth is expected to increase again when job growth improves enough to attract more workers from other states. Other likely factors slowing labor force growth are the increase in the number of people leaving the labor force as baby boom generation workers reach retirement age, the lower labor force participation rate among teenagers, and discouraged workers who are not currently looking for work.

As the economy continues to add jobs, some workers who left the labor force will return as their prospects for finding a job improve. These re-entrants will keep Oregon’s unemployment rate from falling much lower. The rate is expected to stabilize around 5.4 and 5.6 percent in 2017 and 2018.¹

Oregon’s Expanding Recovery

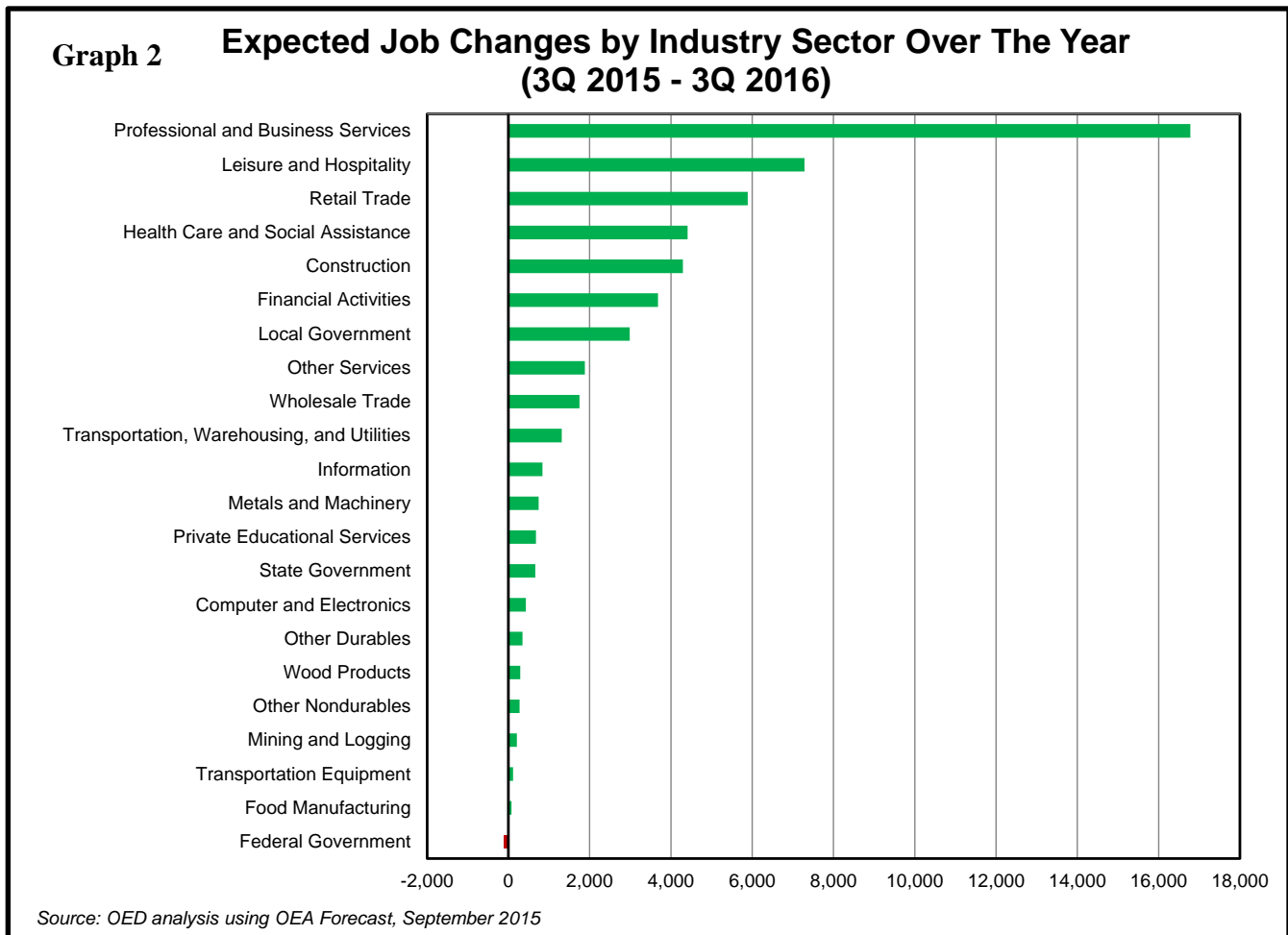
Job gains in a broad range of industries have helped to lower Oregon’s unemployment rate during the last couple of years. Early in the recovery period, some industries were still losing jobs and offsetting job gains in other industry sectors, which made for modest job gains overall. Recently, nearly all sectors have gained jobs or at least stopped losing jobs, which has led to stronger overall job growth.

Oregon’s job recovery began in January 2010 and since then the state has added 188,200 jobs through September 2015. Graph 1 shows the number of jobs by industry added during the recovery period and the average annual pay in those industries in 2014. The gains have been in industry sectors with high-, middle-, and low average pay. The only large private sector in Oregon that has not experienced job recovery is financial activities, which continued to cut jobs until 2012. Federal and local government saw large job losses due to budget cuts early in the recovery. Local government employment is recovering as budgets have recovered.



¹ All economic data was sourced from <https://www.qualityinfo.org/> and the Workforce & Economic Research Division of the Oregon Employment Department, unless otherwise noted.

Graph 2 shows the projected net job change from the third quarter of 2015 to the third quarter of 2016. Net job gains are expected across all major private industries. Professional and business services are expected to continue adding many jobs (+16,800), followed by leisure and hospitality (+7,300), retail trade (+5,900), health care (+4,400), and construction (+4,300).

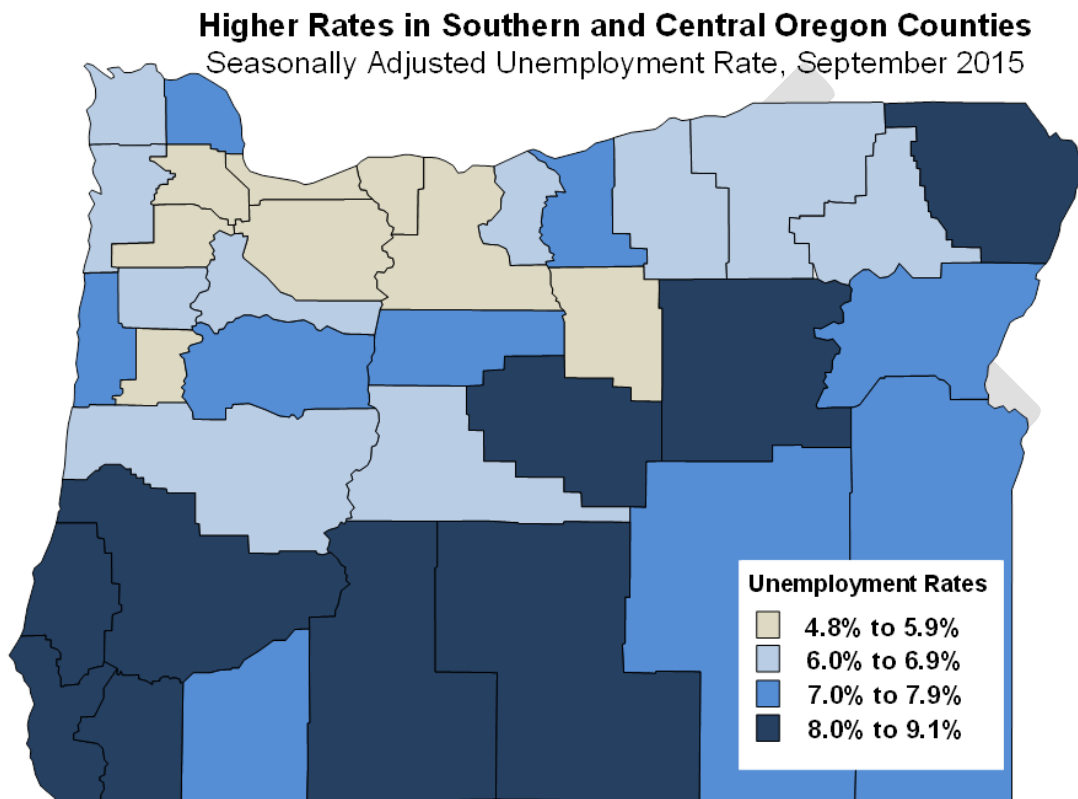


Rural Areas of the State Finally Seeing Some Recovery

The Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro area is Oregon’s largest metropolitan area and is split along the Oregon and Washington state border. Most of the metro area’s residents and jobs are located in Oregon. The Portland metro area has a labor force of more than 1.2 million people. Because Portland’s economic region crosses the state border, many workers in Oregon actually live in Washington. In 2013 there were about 71,000 people working in Oregon who lived in Washington. The Portland metro economy is doing better than the rest of the state as a whole, and its 5.6 percent unemployment rate was lower than the state’s in September 2015.

Unemployment rates tend to be higher in Oregon’s other metro areas. The unemployment rate in the Eugene metro area is 6.4 percent, Bend-Redmond is 6.6 percent, Salem is 6.7 percent, Medford is 7.4 percent, Albany is 7.5 percent, and Grants Pass is 8.5 percent. The exception is the Corvallis metro area, which is economically buoyed by Oregon State University. At 4.8 percent, Corvallis has the lowest unemployment rate in the state.

Many of Oregon’s rural counties are still struggling with high unemployment rates. Unemployment is especially high in the central and southern regions of the state. Curry County on the south coast has an unemployment rate of 9.0 percent, and Grant County in eastern Oregon has the highest rate at 9.1 percent. Overall, non-metro area unemployment was 7.3 percent in September 2015. <https://www.qualityinfo.org/ed-ffd>



Continued Need for Trained Workers to Replace Retiring Workers

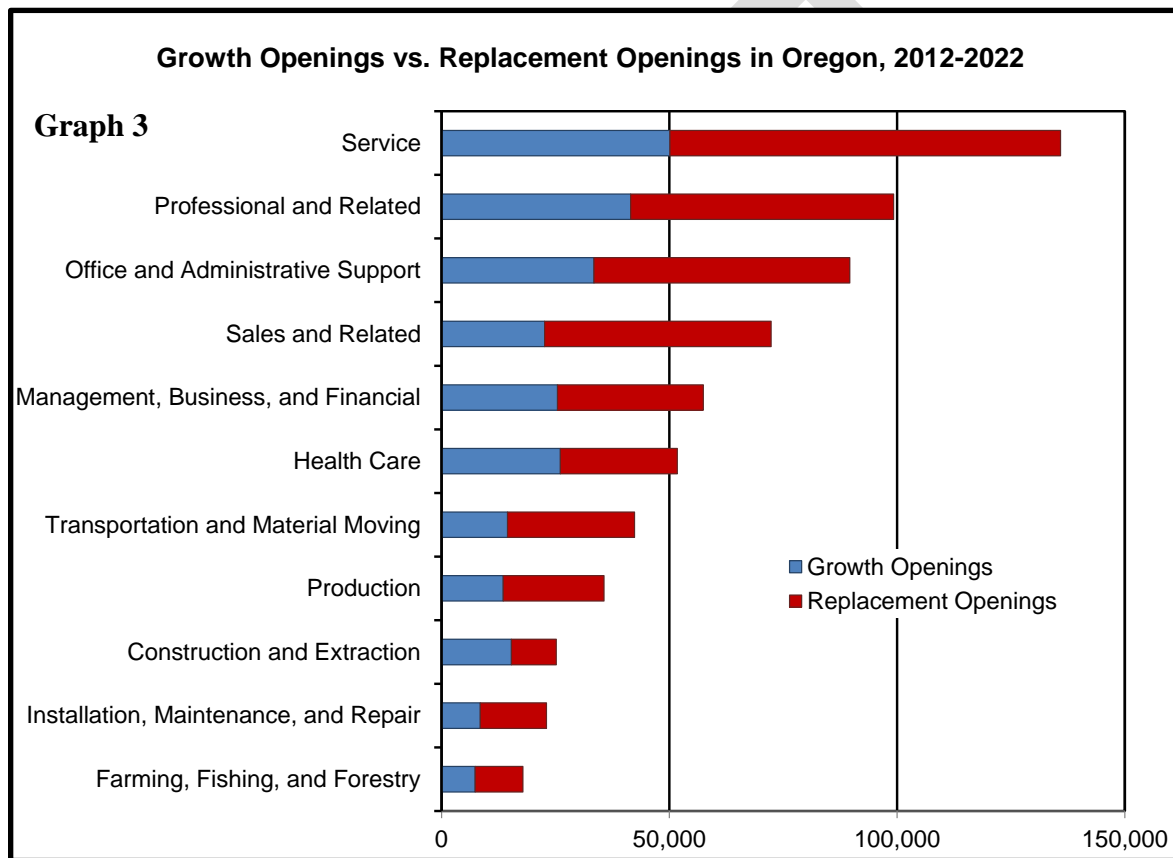
As workers progress in their careers, they may change occupations. These changes create an opening in the occupation they leave that can be filled by someone new to the occupation. This new worker may need training to fill that opening successfully. Additionally, when a worker reaches the end of their career, they leave the labor force, creating an opening that will likely require a trained worker to fill it.

The phrase “replacement openings” is used to describe the total number of occupational openings due to people changing occupations or leaving the labor force. “Growth openings” are the total number of occupational openings due to net job growth. More workers are needed to fill replacement openings than are needed to fill growth openings. Replacement openings can be numerous even in some occupational groups with little anticipated net job growth.

During the Great Recession, many workers were forced to delay retirement. Looming retirements mean there will be continued need for replacement workers. Projections by the Oregon Employment Department indicate

that Oregon will have approximately 261,000 job openings due to economic growth between 2012 and 2022. However, there are projected to be an additional 392,000 replacement job openings from workers permanently leaving their occupations, due mainly to retirements.

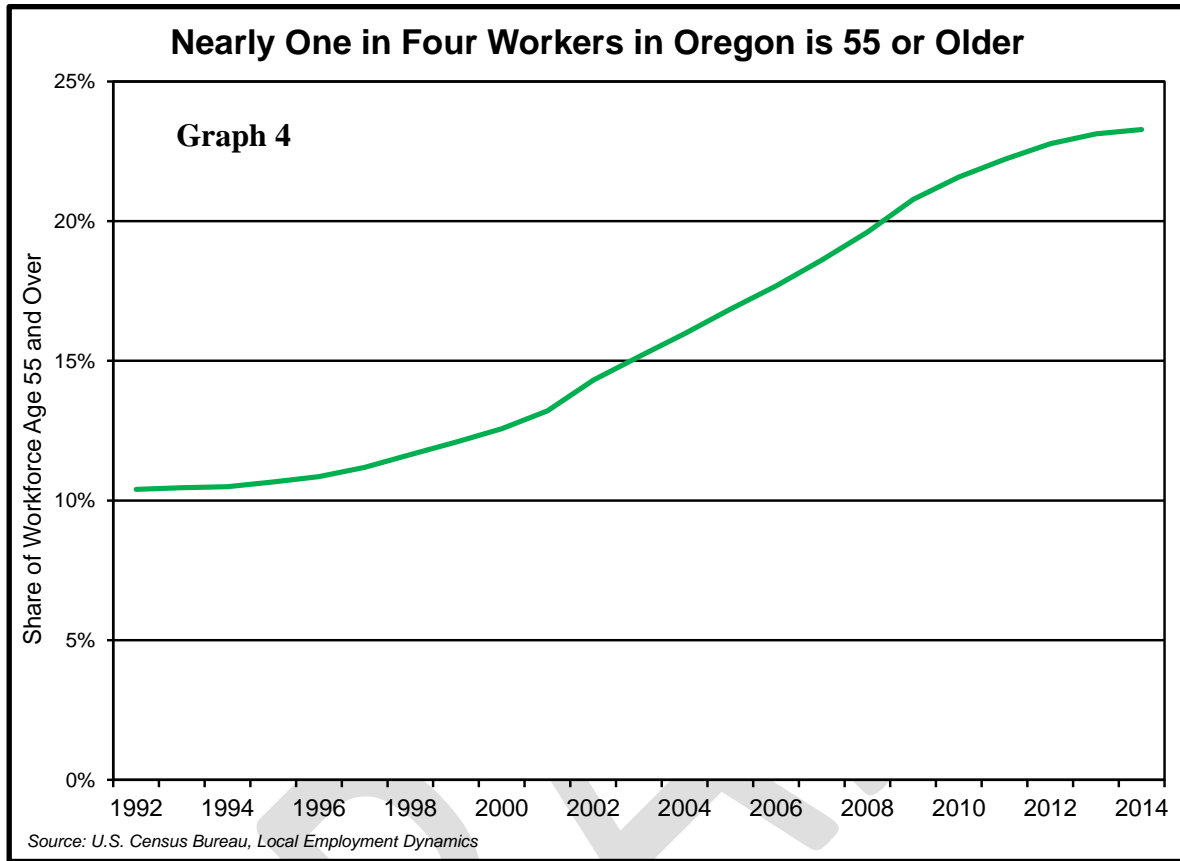
Graph 3 shows the projected growth and replacement job openings by broad occupational group. Service occupations will have the most openings through 2022, but of the 136,000 expected openings, 63 percent will be due to replacement needs. In fact, most job openings in nearly all occupational groups will be from replacements as more workers enter retirement. Only health care, construction, and extraction occupational groups are expected to have more openings due to growth than due to replacement openings. As the labor force continues to age, replacement openings are likely to become more numerous and the associated need for training is likely to grow.



Workers with Barriers to Employment: Older Workers

Graph 4 illustrates that baby boomers have changed the age structure of Oregon’s workforce dramatically. In 1994, the oldest baby boomers were just 48 years old and the overall workforce was much younger. Two decades ago, just over 10 percent of Oregon’s workforce was 55 years or older. In 2014, 23 percent of Oregon’s workforce was 55 years and over (Graph 4).

The number of workers in Oregon who were 55 years and over reached nearly 393,000 in 2014. Of those workers, 96,000 were age 65 years and older and working past the traditional age of retirement.



Older workers can be found in jobs in all industries. Some industries have a large concentration of older workers. In Oregon, the industries with a larger than average share of workers 55 years and older are mining (33%), utilities (32%), agriculture and forestry (30%), real estate (30%), educational services (29%), public administration (29%), transportation and warehousing (29%), other services (27%), health care (25%), and manufacturing (24%). These industries may have a more difficult time finding enough replacement workers as these older workers head toward retirement. At the same time, older workers looking to remain in the workforce may find job opportunities in these industry sectors if they have relevant experience.

Rural areas in Oregon also have a large concentration of older workers. In fact, the only counties with a smaller share of older workers than the statewide average are Washington County (20%), Multnomah County (22%), and Deschutes County (22%).

Workers with Barriers to Employment: Long-term Unemployed

In the early stages of the economic recovery, the number of long-term unemployed Oregonians spiked to 102,100--the highest number on record. Long-term unemployed are those who have been unemployed for at least six months. The longer an unemployed worker remains unemployed, the less likely they are to find a steady full-time job, and the more likely they are to leave the labor force. Research shows long-term unemployment can lead to a decline in workers' knowledge, skills, and abilities, making it harder for them to

qualify for available jobs. Other studies show that many employers discriminate against the long-term unemployed, making it less likely for an unemployed worker to secure an interview. These barriers to employment exist even in a strong economy.

The number of short-term unemployed Oregonians has returned to roughly the same number seen during the previous economic expansion. However, the average of more than 28,000 long-term unemployed Oregonians during the last 12 months is more than twice the average seen during the 12 months prior to the Great Recession. Over the past year, one out of four unemployed Oregonians were considered long-term unemployed.

Although the number of long-term unemployed Oregonians has fallen from its peak in 2010, it took five years of economic recovery to reduce long-term unemployment to its present level. It is unclear from the data whether most of this reduction has been from these individuals finding work, or if most of them have left the labor force altogether.

Workforce Skills Needed

A skilled workforce is a key component of Oregon’s economic strength. To remain competitive, Oregon businesses need an adequate supply of job-ready workers. Skills are essential at every level of the workforce. A more highly skilled workforce will be better able to adapt to the changing needs of businesses in an evolving economy.

For workers to be competitive in the job market, and for employers to maintain a productive workforce, workers need a variety of basic, entry-level skills. These include reading, writing, speaking, listening, arithmetic, and basic computer skills. Employers also need workers with “soft skills,” including good work habits, dependability, and a positive attitude. These basic skills can be the foundation for more complex skills demanded by higher paying occupations.

Table 1 shows the skills most commonly needed across Oregon’s economy. While this particular snapshot is based on all 2012 employment, the list is very similar for only high-demand occupations. Top skills associated with projected openings over the 2012-2022 are also quite similar, meaning this list is relevant for current and future workforce needs.

Top 20 Skills by 2012 Employment, O	Table 1
Process records and maintain forms and files	
Use basic mathematics	
Work as a team member	
Provide customer service	
Follow safety procedures	
Obtain information from clients, customers, patients or others	
Use computers to enter, access and retrieve data	
Maneuver heavy objects	
Prepare reports in timely manner	
Use correct grammar, punctuation and spelling	
Use algebra	
Apply health and sanitation standards	
Apply mathematical principles to accounting, bookkeeping or budgeting	
Understand, use, and communicate technical information	
Process and prepare business forms	
Make presentations	
Operate fax machines, copiers, printers, and other office machines	
Provide customer service using telephone	
Receive payments and make change	
Organize and work with detailed records	

Higher paying occupations tend to require a higher level of skill, on top of a worker’s basic skills. When looking at the skills most commonly associated with high-wage occupations, there are some key differences from the top skills listed here for all occupations.

High-wage occupations are more likely to require skills such as: using algebra; preparing reports in a timely manner; understanding, using and communicating technical information; making presentations; reading schematics and specifications; and applying active listening techniques. Less emphasis is placed on skills such as: providing customer service; following safety procedures; maneuvering heavy objects; applying health and sanitation standards; and operating fax machines, copiers, printers and other office machines. Information for job seekers and employers to conduct analysis and decision-making related to occupation, education and training choices (including resources on certificates, credentials and licenses) can be found at <http://www.qualityinfo.org>²

The knowledge and technology base for the vast majority of professional and technical occupations is changing rapidly. Significant trends such as big data, cyber vigilance and the “Internet of Things” are changing the way we work. These changes mean the information we gather, manage and analyze, regardless of industry, is a driving force for every enterprise. So too are the advances in engineering and science that result in new materials for manufacturing, smart grid systems for energy, advanced diagnostic and therapeutic devices for health care and bioscience, and smart mobile technologies. These innovations and others are generating the need for occupations such as cybersecurity specialists, business intelligence analysts, and mechatronics engineers.

In 2014, roughly 6 percent of all difficult-to-fill vacancies (or 1,300 vacancies) statewide were identified by businesses as difficult to fill due to a lack of soft skills. In 2015, this number increased by 31.4% to 1,708 as the table below illustrates:

Table 2

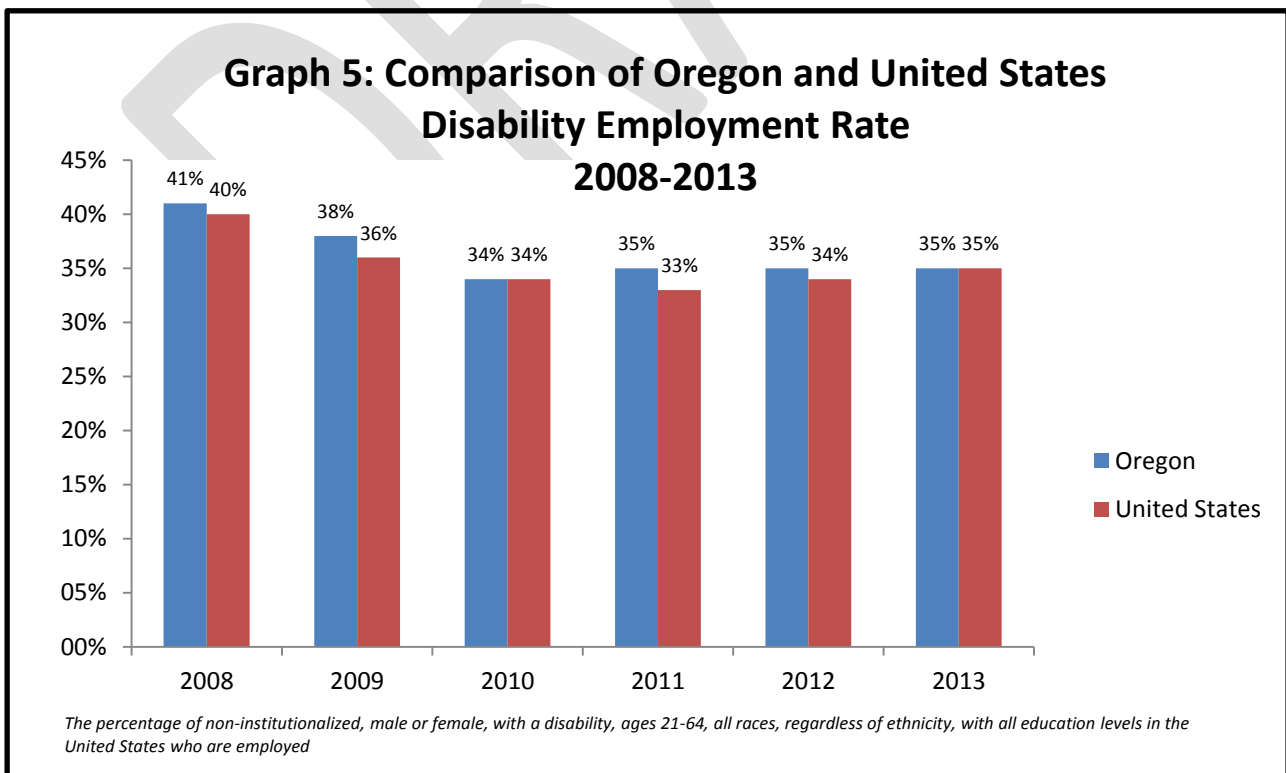
Difficult-to-Fill Job Vacancies in Oregon by Primary Reason, 2015	
Primary Reason for Difficulty	Vacancies
Lack of applicants	9,701
Lack of qualified candidates	5,315
Unfavorable working conditions	3,086
Lack of work experience	2,625
Other	1,863
Lack of soft skills	1,708
Lack of certification	763
Low wages	708
Lack of technical skills	682
Location	384
Lack of training	267
Right fit	26
(blank)	1,181
Grand Total	28,309

² <http://www.qualityinfo.org>

Anecdotal comments from employers citing a lack of soft skills:	
Attention to detail and customer service skills	
Can't find reliable workforce	
Drug screen comes back unsuccessful	
Good work history and background check needed	
Need proper attitude and desire	
Need to be over 21 and pass a drug test	
Require clean driving and criminal background check	
Requires judgment and service mentality	
Work ethic	
Work ethic is lacking	
Source: Oregon Employment Department, 2015 Annual Job Vacancy Survey	

Workers with Disabilities

Individuals with disabilities are routinely underrepresented in the workforce. This underrepresentation is due in part to skill gaps, institutional barriers, and societal acceptance of individuals with disabilities. Employer discrimination for the long-term unemployed is compounded by the fact that individuals with disabilities face other forms of discrimination in hiring practices. Graph 5 shows the employment rate for individuals with disabilities in the United States and in Oregon. Oregon mirrors the national average employment rate for individuals with disabilities.



The labor force participation rate (LFPR) of individuals with a disability is much lower than for the overall population. In 2014, just 43.4 percent of Oregonians ages 18 to 64 years with disabilities were employed or unemployed and actively looking for work. These figures include veterans with disabilities. This rate is much lower than the 80.6 percent labor force participation rate of Oregonians without a disability.

Participation rates vary by type of disability. Oregonians with a hearing difficulty are most likely to be engaged in the labor force (57.2%), followed by individuals with a vision difficulty (48.0%), individuals with a cognitive difficulty (34.2%), individuals with an ambulatory difficulty (32.0%), individuals with an independent living difficulty (22.4%), and those with a self-care difficulty (21.9%). These figures include veterans with disabilities.

Employment Status of Populations in Oregon, 2014

The table below contains estimates of the employment status of population groups within Oregon, including population groups with traditional barriers to employment. The population column provides the estimated number of Oregonians in each group for the given age.

The labor force column includes everyone who is employed or unemployed (without a job and actively seeking work). The labor force participation rate is the share of population that is in the labor force. A high labor force participation rate is an indicator of a population that is more engaged in the workforce.

The employed column provides the number of people with a job in each group. The employment to population ratio is the share of the population with a job. A high labor force participation rate is an indicator of a population's success with finding employment.

The unemployed column provides the number of people in each group that are without a job and actively seeking work. The unemployment rate is the share of the labor force that is unemployed. A high unemployment rate is an indicator that job seekers in the population are having difficulty finding work.

Employment Status of Populations in Oregon, 2014							
	Population	In labor force	Labor Force Participation Rate	Employed	Employment to Population Ratio	Unemployed	Unemployment rate
Population 16 years and over	3,210,388	1,974,389	61.5%	1,817,080	56.6%	154,002	7.8%
16 to 19 years	197,652	76,294	38.6%	57,912	29.3%	18,463	24.2%
20 to 24 years	265,779	199,334	75.0%	174,883	65.8%	24,119	12.1%
25 to 44 years	1,062,615	867,094	81.6%	802,274	75.5%	63,298	7.3%
45 to 54 years	507,808	403,200	79.4%	375,778	74.0%	27,418	6.8%
55 to 64 years	542,308	335,689	61.9%	318,335	58.7%	17,120	5.1%
65 to 74 years	376,017	80,844	21.5%	77,083	20.5%	3,881	4.8%
75 years and over	258,209	12,394	4.8%	12,136	4.7%	322	2.6%
White	2,770,527	1,690,021	61.0%	1,562,577	56.4%	125,062	7.4%
Black or African American	54,170	33,423	61.7%	28,114	51.9%	5,314	15.9%
American Indian and Alaska Native	36,024	22,119	61.4%	19,489	54.1%	2,632	11.9%
Asian	131,302	81,539	62.1%	77,337	58.9%	3,995	4.9%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	N			N		N	
Some other race	98,503	72,498	73.6%	64,716	65.7%	7,757	10.7%
Two or more races	109,213	68,040	62.3%	59,958	54.9%	8,097	11.9%
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	329,949	237,563	72.0%	212,157	64.3%	24,707	10.4%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	2,566,871	1,545,256	60.2%	1,432,314	55.8%	111,258	7.2%
Male (20 to 64)	1,185,585	953,210	80.4%	879,704	74.2%	70,538	7.4%
Female	1,192,925	851,748	71.4%	790,909	66.3%	60,474	7.1%
With own children under 6 years	170,408	110,765	65.0%	101,222	59.4%	9,415	8.5%
Veterans (18 to 64)	139,242	95,935	68.9%	88,266	63.4%	7,669	8.0%
Nonveterans	2,334,997	1,760,821	75.4%	1,623,824	69.5%	136,997	7.8%
Male, in poverty (16 and over)	218,125	113,821	52.2%	84,991	39.0%	28,830	25.3%
Female, in poverty	261,829	114,887	43.9%	85,370	32.6%	29,517	25.7%
Male, not in poverty	1,321,046	922,068	69.8%	868,082	65.7%	53,986	5.9%
Female, not in poverty	1,347,196	811,020	60.2%	771,344	57.3%	39,676	4.9%
Below poverty level (20 to 64)	383,961	211,563	55.1%	158,960	41.4%	52,044	24.6%
Disability, Total: (18 to 64)	316,222	137,212	43.4%	114,997	36.4%	22,215	16.2%
With a hearing difficulty	67,446	38,552	57.2%	34,388	51.0%	4,164	10.8%
With a vision difficulty	56,331	27,027	48.0%	23,559	41.8%	3,468	12.8%
With a cognitive difficulty	145,487	49,709	34.2%	39,798	27.4%	9,911	19.9%
With an ambulatory difficulty	147,028	47,088	32.0%	38,440	26.1%	8,648	18.4%
With a self-care difficulty	51,918	11,352	21.9%	9,847	19.0%	1,505	13.3%
With an independent living difficulty	111,837	25,050	22.4%	18,455	16.5%	6,595	26.3%
No disability	2,133,405	1,719,545	80.6%	1,597,093	74.9%	122,451	7.1%
Disability, in poverty (20 to 64)	94,622	26,826	28.4%	15,875	16.8%	10,951	40.8%
No disability, in poverty	289,339	184,737	63.8%	143,200	49.5%	41,048	22.2%
Disability, not in poverty	213,561	106,808	50.0%	96,411	45.1%	10,397	9.7%
No disability, not in poverty	1,748,422	1,481,787	84.7%	1,411,160	80.7%	68,224	4.6%
N = Not available							

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2014

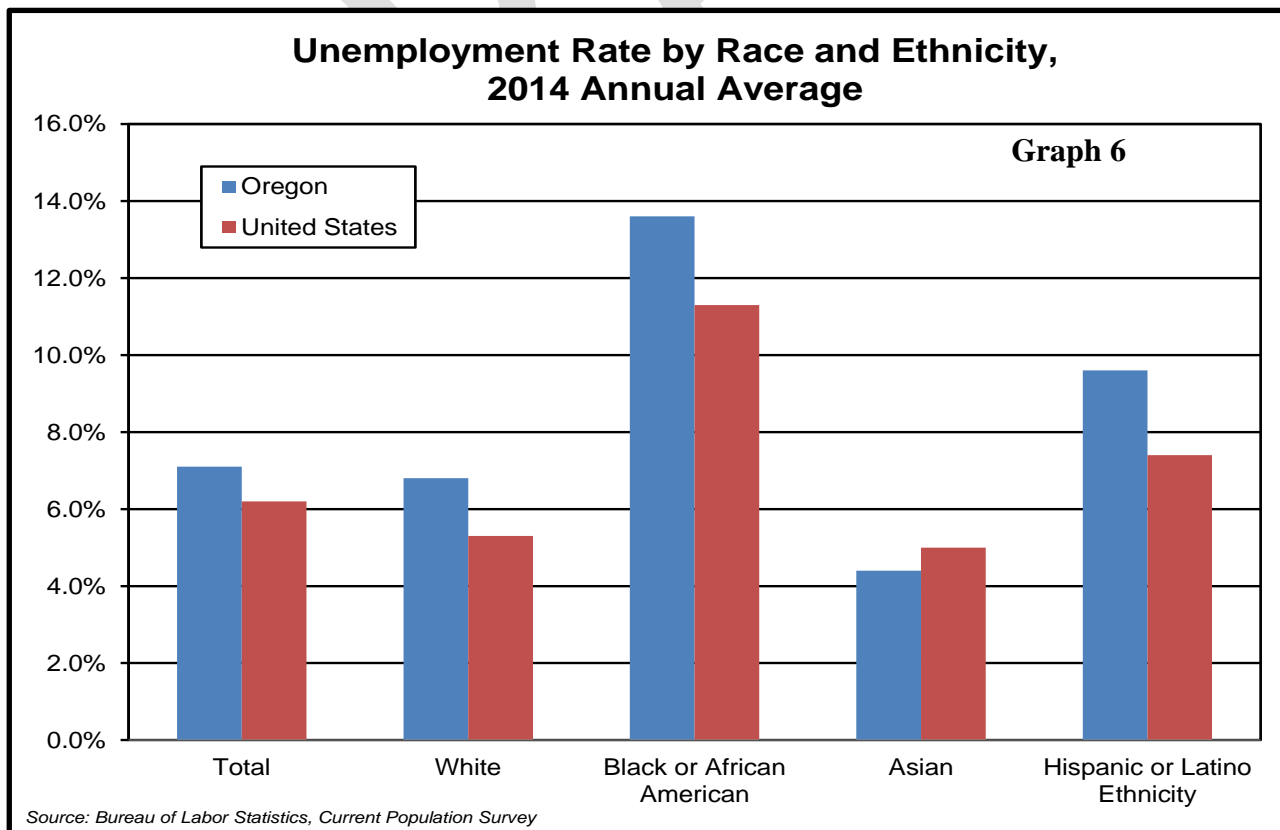
Young people typically face more barriers to employment than adults do, and young people with a disability are less likely to be engaged in the labor force than their peers with no disability. National figures show the labor force participation rate of teenagers 16 to 19 years with a disability is 23.5 percent, compared with 34.4 percent for teenagers with no disability. Young adults ages 20 to 24 years with a disability are also less likely to be engaged in the labor force. Their labor force participation rate is just 43.9 percent, which is much lower than the 71.9 percent participation rate of young adults with no disability (Source: Persons With A Disability: Labor Force Characteristics – 2014).

Characteristics of the Population

Oregon’s population has become more racially diverse over the last two decades. By 2010, nearly 84 percent of the population was white, 4 percent was Asian, and 2 percent was black or African American. The remainder of the population was American Indian, Native Hawaiian, another race, or two or more races.

Oregon’s population has also grown more ethnically diverse, as seen in the growth of the Hispanic population over the last two decades. By 2010 it had grown to almost 12 percent. More than 16 percent of the United States’ population was Hispanic in 2010, indicating that Oregon still has a small Hispanic population relative to the national average. Nevertheless, Oregon’s Hispanic population grew at a faster rate (63%) than the national average (43%) from 2000 to 2010.

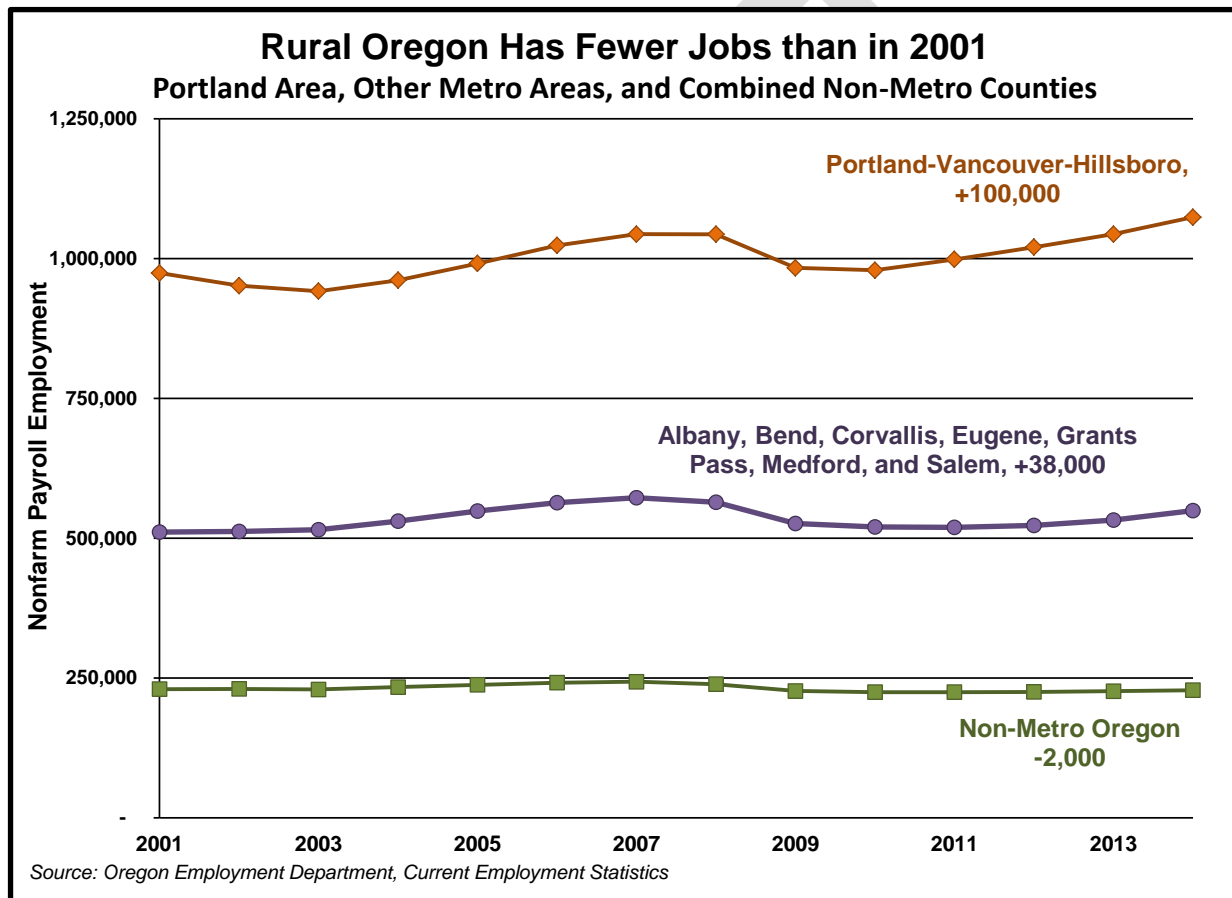
Graph 6 shows the 2014 unemployment rates by race and ethnicity. In Oregon, at 13.6 percent, unemployment among Blacks or African Americans was higher than the total population, which was 7.1 percent. The unemployment rate among people of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity was also higher than the state’s total population at 9.6 percent.



Economic and Workforce Conditions in Rural Oregon

It took rural areas of Oregon much longer than it took the Portland Metropolitan area to begin adding jobs following the Great Recession. The number of jobs is now growing again in nearly all rural counties, and the growth rate in some rural counties has been faster over the last year than the statewide job growth rate. Other areas of rural Oregon are not doing as well. Job growth in these areas of rural Oregon is hampered by changes in the economy and an aging population. These are long-term slow-growth trends that were made worse by the recession and make it hard for these areas to share in the recovery.

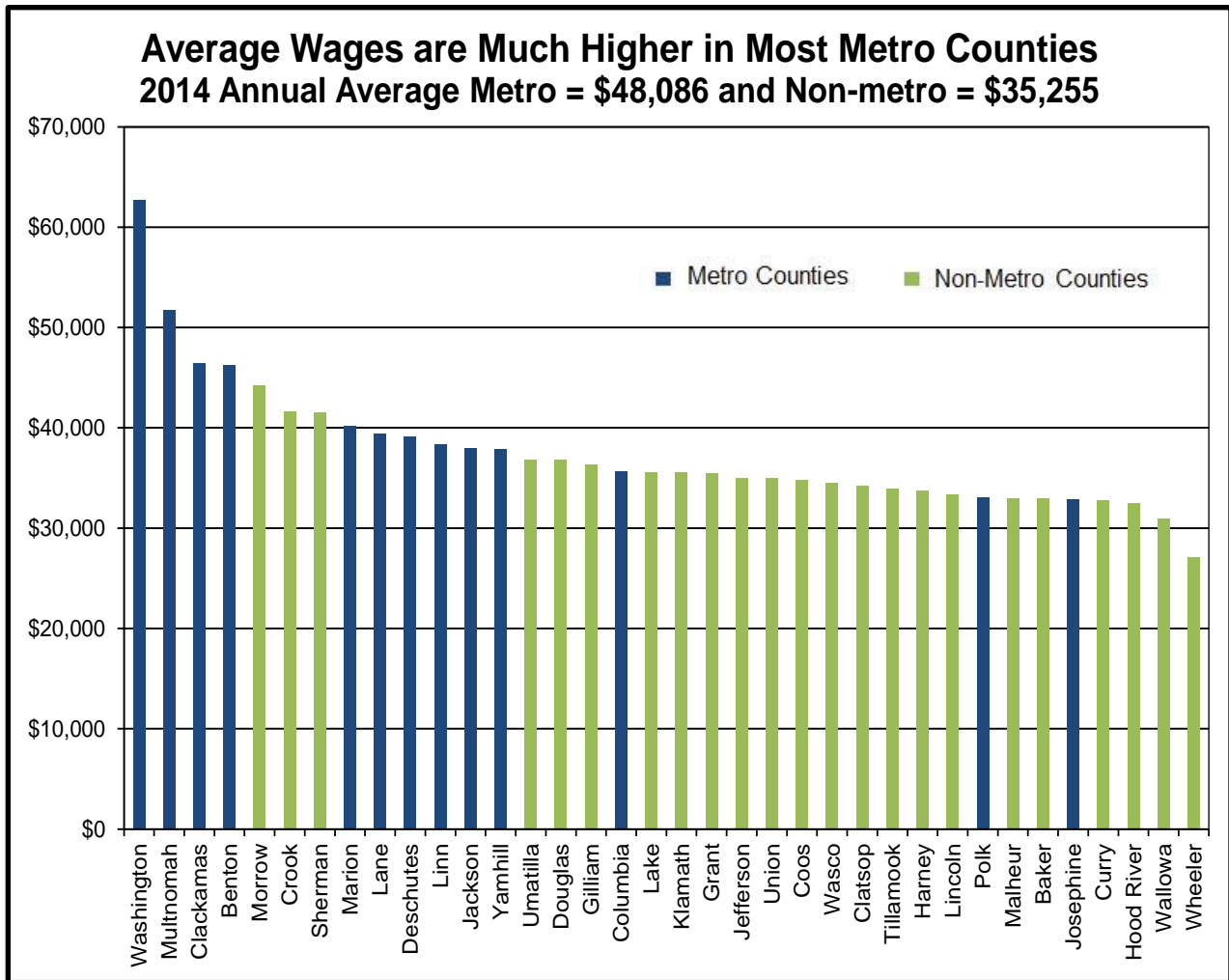
Since 2001, Oregon's non-metro counties, taken as a whole, have lost a net 2,000 jobs. Rural Oregon's job losses contrast with the long-term job growth of urban Oregon, where 100,000 jobs were added in the Portland metro area and a combined 38,000 jobs were added across the other metro areas over the same period.



There tends to be fewer jobs per person living in rural Oregon than there are in urban areas, and a smaller share of the population in rural counties is involved in the labor force. The labor force participation rate is the share of the population age 16 years and older that is employed or unemployed. Over the last 15 years, labor force participation rates have been falling in Oregon and the U.S. as a larger share of the population reaches retirement age and fewer young people enter the labor force.

Average wages in rural Oregon are lower than in urban areas of the state. The combined average annual payroll in non-metro counties was just \$35,255, compared with \$48,086 in metro areas in 2014. Just three non-metro

counties, Morrow, Crook, and Sherman, have average wages that are similar to metro areas. However, the average wages in these three counties are high due to very high wages for relatively few jobs. This increased the overall average without directly raising the wages of other workers. For example, the information sectors of Crook and Morrow counties include jobs at internet data centers, and the high wages paid in that industry raise the overall county average above wages in other rural counties.

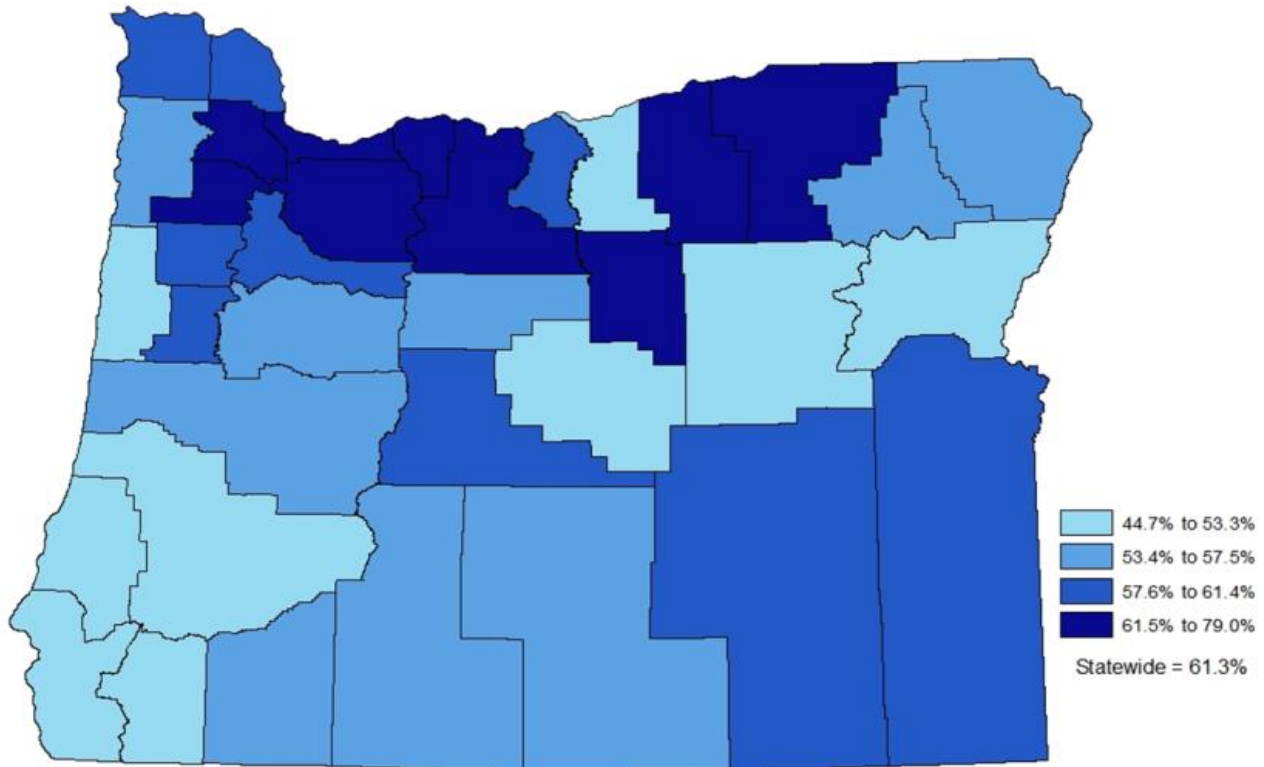


*Older people are included in the calculation of the labor force participation rate. A county with a higher percentage of the population at retirement age will tend to have a lower labor force participation rate.

These trends are particularly strong in many of Oregon’s rural areas. Curry County has the lowest labor force participation rate in the state at 44.7 percent in 2014. That means fewer than half of the county’s population age 16 and over was working or actively looking for a job. Some rural counties have higher labor force participation rates. Four of the five rural counties that had participation rates higher than the statewide rate of 61.3 percent

were located along the Columbia River. These were Hood River (79.0%), Wasco (67.8%), Morrow (65.5%), and Umatilla (63.7%) counties.

Labor Force Participation Rates by County, 2014



Occupations Key to Oregon’s Traded and High Growth Sectors

The 2015 Oregon Talent Plan was created using primary and secondary data sources from industry, government, and academic sources to identify the ten top occupational clusters in three categories for the technology, advanced manufacturing, energy, healthcare and biosciences industry sectors. The Oregon Talent Council (OTC) initial plan focuses on five industry sectors³ and occupations it believes will provide a strong return on public investment. These occupations are classified as professional and technical in nature, pay at or above the state average wage, require some form of post-secondary training, have a demonstrated demand through 2022, and are identified by industry as high demand, hard-to-fill or mission critical.

The plan assessments resulted in the identification of the ten top occupational clusters in three categories.

High-growth, high-demand occupations	Mission critical occupations	Emerging occupations
<i>Significant new and replacement jobs with foreseeable demand, high growth rates, and hard-to-fill vacancies that cut across industries and/or regions</i>	<i>Strong employment and above average projected growth; identified by industry as essential for core operations and often hard-to-fill</i>	<i>Relatively new and/or growing rapidly in support of multiple industries; ability to position the state as a leader in these skills</i>
<p>Systems and data specialists who design, connect, and manage big data systems.</p> <p>Data and business intelligence analysts who analyze big data to enhance operations, predict market demand, mitigate risk, and control quality and standardization.</p> <p>Industrial machinists, millwrights and operators of highly computerized and/or automated processes requiring precision, quality control and strong diagnostic skills.</p> <p>Rehabilitation therapists and assistants (physical, occupational, respiratory, etc.) employed in hospitals, clinical and long-term care systems.</p>	<p>Technologically skilled mechanics and maintenance technicians who maintain and repair highly technical machines and equipment across industries including manufacturing, energy, healthcare, and others.</p> <p>Mental and behavioral counselors who are a growing part of integrated health systems and who support the ability of residents to have productive lives, especially in rural areas.</p> <p>Interdisciplinary engineers who can integrate mechanics, electronics, and computer systems that comprise smart machines and connected devices.</p> <p>Primary health care practitioners including specialty nurses who are at the heart of new coordinated patient care health models, and are significantly in demand in rural areas.</p>	<p>Cyber and information security specialists who can develop, monitor and mitigate security risks for data and information systems.</p> <p>Advanced materials engineers & scientists enabling the development of products and devices that are smaller, tougher, lighter, more flexible, less expensive, and more energy efficient.</p>

³ [Initial industries include technology, advanced manufacturing, energy, healthcare and biosciences.](#)

Oregon has extensive and immediate talent needs, and time is not on our side. With limited funds, the OTC investments need to respond to market demands in the near term. The number of vacancies for priority occupations and the high percentage requiring experience means that incumbent worker training for professional and technical talent is a critical component along with longer-term education programs. To target companies that are adding new talent to their payroll, OTC needs to reach smaller firms that are the job creation engines of the state. While these smaller companies may each have a limited number of openings, their combined numbers and potential growth rates should compel the Oregon Talent Council to find ways to better serve them. Closely engaging industry associations and business groups will help aggregate demand to more effectively serve an array of company sizes.

Oregon's economic future is only as strong as our talent. Making the significant changes required to optimize our strengths today and maximize our opportunities tomorrow requires the combined commitment of statewide partners, united in their determination to achieve success. Collaborative efforts among business, public and private higher education institutions, state agencies and workforce organizations can create laser-focused initiatives that produce dynamic results in the short term, and achieve strategic goals for the long term.

Workforce Development, Education and Training Activities Analysis

The State's Workforce Development Activities

The Workforce system provides services focused in broad categories:

- Enhancing the job skills of Oregon's workforce.
- Assisting Oregon's employers find skilled workers.
- Assisting job seekers enhance their work search skills and assist in finding employment.
- Providing workforce economic and labor information for decision-making.

Oregon conducts analysis of its workforce activities on an ongoing basis, including education and training activities, depending on the issues and decisions at hand. Under the previous state board strategic plan, and in an effort to align, integrate and right size Oregon's workforce system, the state contracted a comprehensive organizational review in 2013 that included an evaluation of customer service and other components of Oregon's system. This review can be found here: [Workforce System Organizational Review in 2013⁴](#).

Shared Vision, System Outcomes and Measures

This 2013 Organizational Review (OR) identified a lack of shared vision to create a system-wide, integrated perspective with all programs working to achieve the same outcomes. Additional analysis by a joint taskforce of the Oregon Workforce Investment Board (OWIB) and Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) confirmed this conclusion and recommended that the education and workforce systems in Oregon adopt common outcomes. OWIB and HECC both adopted the recommendation to adopt skill gain/credential rate, entered employment, employment retention, earnings from employment, and wage gain. Continued implementation of WIOA and its common measures will facilitate further progress in this area.

⁴ [Workforce System Organizational Review in 2013](#)

Governance and Accountability Structures

The review concluded that Oregon’s workforce system could benefit from improved governance, communication and coordination among the system’s agencies and partners. Oregon began work to redefine, repurpose, and strengthen its state and local workforce boards to better address community, business and worker needs. This work has been further supported by the enhanced state and local board roles and functions contained in WIOA.

Service Delivery

This 2013 Organizational Review also identified a need for sharing best practices and implementing continuous improvement in order to have effective and efficient functionality of the system throughout the state. This general assessment also concluded that the system needs to better reflect the needs of those it serves. Much work has been done to realign local workforce areas and to align state program boundaries to better serve customers. This groundwork lays an important foundation for the implementation of WIOA.

Support for Service Delivery

The 2013 Organizational Review also concluded that integrating data across information systems is key to local service delivery and is critical for maximizing accountability and transparency. The state remains committed to exploring ways to better link information systems and offer “no wrong door” access to all customers.

Oregon continues to evaluate the impacts of the workforce system. As we transition from WIA to WIOA, we are discussing how evaluation efforts and activities might be affected. While these are “works in progress”, Oregon continues to track, analyze and present data, including trends over time.

Data from Oregon’s system-wide performance measures continues to be available for the employment related indicators, basic skills attainment, and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) caseload management. Oregon’s cross-system outcomes accountability system, Performance Reporting Information System (PRISM), gathers demographic data on customers served by nearly all workforce partners, ensuring analysis and evaluation can occur based on customer cohorts (e.g., racial/ethnic minority status, age group, or educational attainment level). Many results are available at a statewide level, by agency/partner program, and/or by local area – or by combinations. These system-wide performance data are available at www.prism.state.or.us⁵.

Information and data is updated regularly, and this, combined with the ability to filter results and compare trends over time, gives program managers, stakeholders, and even the general public the ability to view, analyze, and evaluate various performance-related measures across Oregon’s workforce system.

Oregon also created interagency and cross-program structures to better coordinate and communicate within the workforce system. The OWIB and HECC adopted recommendations from a joint task force to adopt mechanisms to develop and align policy between post-secondary education and workforce, including joint meetings and summits focused on policy, implementation strategies, and investments. These structures will continue under WIOA for the core programs and partner programs.

Enhancing the Job Skills of Oregon’s Workforce

An “Analysis of Oregon’s Local Workforce Development Boards: Benefit-cost Analysis of WIA Title I Programs / Economic Impact Analysis of WIB Operations” is another example of an analysis of the workforce programs. The report examined Oregon’s local workforce development boards (LWBs) and the benefits generated by their WIA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs. The report also measured the

⁵ www.prism.state.or.us

economic benefits generated by the operations of the local LWBs in the state. This report can be found at <http://wioa.weebly.com/state-and-local-planning.html>⁶

Title II assessments and analysis focused primarily on enrollment and measurable skill gains, such as GED completions. Over the past two years, Title II enrollment in Oregon has decreased from 16,204 in 2013-2014 to 13,882 in 2014-2015. There is no waiting list. The number of hours participants received services was nearly identical during the two-year time period --a little over 1.6 million hours in both 2013-2014 and 2014-2015. On average, Title II students received services for over 100 hours a year. The percentage of pre- and post-tests were also similar between 2013-2014 and 2014-2015; approximately 57% of enrolled participants completed pre- and post-tests. In 2013-2014, Title II outcomes measures totaled, 710 GED completers, 2,578 participant transitions to postsecondary education, and 1,699 participants entered employment.

Assisting Oregon's Employers to Find Skilled Workers

An analysis of Title III (Wagner-Peyser) business services provided by the Oregon Employment Department shows that employer and customer outcomes have improved. New processes lower the number of candidates an employer considers for each new hire, saving the employer time and money. Local staff is focusing on small and medium size employers, as well as those in growth industries.

Assisting Job Seekers to Enhance Their Work Search Skills and Assist in Finding Employment

An Oregon Employment Department analysis shows that Oregon's approach to the delivery of reemployment services saves an average of 1.1 weeks of unemployment benefits across all claimants. Reemployment services saved Oregon's UI trust fund \$41.8 million in PY 2013, and \$37.5 million in PY 2014. The total number of claimants dropped by 14% from PY 2013 to PY 2014, which explains the decrease in savings.

An analysis of Oregon's one-stop offices was used to implement a set of service delivery and performance standards. An assessment was used that looked at the ability of all partners in the one-stop system to meet the new standards. The WorkSource Oregon Operational Standards Self-Assessment Report was used to determine a strategy for implementing the operating standards statewide. The partners at WorkSource Oregon (the one-stop centers) have developed statewide operational standards for the centers. This system recognizes that the workforce areas are starting at different places and performance is not anticipated to meet all standards across the state. However, the measurements will help determine how well we are striving toward full implementation of the standards by region. For the full report and to better understand how the standards may result in job seekers enhancing their skills and finding employment, see [WorkSource Oregon Operational Standards Self-Assessment Report \(April 2015\)](#).⁷

Providing Workforce Economic and Labor Information for Decision-Making

The Performance Reporting Information System (PRISM) was established to collect, analyze, and report on workforce development services, customers receiving these services, and employment outcomes after receiving services. PRISM measures how effective Oregon's workforce agencies are at helping people find and keep jobs and improve wages.

⁶ <http://wioa.weebly.com/state-and-local-planning.html>

⁷ <http://wsostandards.weebly.com/wso-operational-standards-self-assessment-report-april-2015.html>.

The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities.

Oregon's workforce redesign effort created four new workforce boards and reorganized several others⁸, requiring that local areas hire new staff, develop incorporation documents, and consider partnerships. The Analysis of Oregon's Local Workforce Development Boards⁹ illustrates the level of change and it is significant. While the time pressure to implement WIOA is helping to drive that change, there is a growing, common understanding that the change will be iterative and not conform tightly to the federal timetable. This substantial level of change creates, in the short term, an increased level of risk and potential weakness to the workforce system.

The level of support from political, education, and business leaders for workforce programs has been consistently strong, including a significant amount of state funding. There is a healthy partnership at the state-level between the core programs, with strengthening interest from our non-core partners to collaborate, leverage resources and improve outcomes across all programs. For example, Oregon's 17 community colleges are locally governed entities that have consistently made the decision to fund workforce development programs at a high level. Professional staff work tirelessly to remove barriers and maximize resources to improve services to the customer, both the employer and the worker.

As described in the Overview of the Workforce System, Oregon's workforce development system includes more than state agencies and local delivery at WSO centers. One of the greatest assets of Oregon's workforce system is a culture of strong communication and partnership between programs, including between the core programs included in this plan and the mandatory partners and services in the WorkSource Oregon centers such as TANF and SNAP. Processes, where feasible, have been built to increase cooperation and integrate services, including intake and eligibility determination. For example, Trade Act, Unemployment Insurance, and Dislocated Worker staff coordinate and cooperate in service provision.

One-stop partners across all workforce areas developed statewide operational standards¹⁰ for their offices that apply to all WorkSource staff, not to any particular funding or program. Not only do the standards provide service consistency, they also demonstrate active collaboration between programs across workforce areas. Similarly, state funding for the Labor Management Information (LMI) function has allowed Oregon to build and maintain a robust suite of labor market information and services¹¹, including local area analysis, information sharing, outreach and strong partnerships with workforce partners. LMI will inform sector strategies, career planning, training decisions, business engagement and placement services.

Enhancing the Training and Job Skills of Oregon's Workforce

In PY 2012, Oregon's local WIBs served 189,787 WIA Title I participants – 36,952 participants in the Adult Program, 149,819 participants in the Dislocated Worker Program, and 3,016 participants in the Youth Program. Performance measures for PY 2012 show that, of those who were placed into jobs between April 1, 2011 and March 30, 2012, a total of 15,370 adult participants and 80,654 dislocated workers retained employment for three consecutive quarters after they exited the program. Participants who retained employment after exiting the Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs were projected to generate a total of \$165.1 million in added taxable

⁸ <http://oregonlocalplanning.weebly.com/>.

⁹ <http://oregonlocalplanning.weebly.com/>.

¹⁰ <http://wsostandards.weebly.com/read-the-worksource-oregon-operational-standards-here.html>.

¹¹ <https://www.qualityinfo.org/>.

earnings over the next ten-year period (in present value terms). This change equates to a total of \$2.77 in added taxable earnings for every dollar spent to fund the programs.

Performance measures for PY 2012 also show that 911 youth participants were placed in employment or education between October 1, 2011 and September 30, 2012. These youth are projected to generate \$10 million in added taxable earnings over the next ten-year period (in present value terms), or \$0.90 for every dollar spent to fund the program. Overall, the combined economic value of the WIA Title I programs administered by Oregon's local WIBs is \$175 million, equal to the added taxable earnings that will accrue to participants of the Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs over the next ten years. The benefit-cost ratio yields \$2.48 in added taxable earnings for every dollar spent.

One specific area with a potential for improvement is increasing the percentage of Title I funds spent on individual occupation training. The Oregon Workforce Investment Board recently adopted a requirement that every local workforce board invest a minimum of 25 percent of its funds in occupational training. As this is a new requirement and the state has four new local boards, the state board will continue to monitor implementation over the period of the state plan to assess success and identify additional ways to increase the funding for training. Improving this area while redesigning the workforce regions and implementing WIOA may be difficult, but it remains an objective.

Strengths of Oregon's local Title II programs stem from strong connections with community college postsecondary education and training programs. Currently, local Title II programs are housed within the 17 independent community colleges. Integration with the community colleges allows adult education and literacy providers to extensively leverage resources such as facilities, services, and matching funds. Local Title II providers are required to provide a match and the office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD), as the eligible agency, is required to uphold maintenance of effort in support of adult education and literacy programming in Oregon. In addition to the significant financial contribution made by the current local, Title II provider, the co-location of adult education and literacy programs on community college campuses facilitates strong connections to academic bridge programs and post-secondary programs, including career and technical education and industry recognized certifications.

Overall, the development and expansion of credit-bearing Career Pathways certificates across the 17 community colleges has been a key strategy for enhancing the training and job skills of Oregon's workforce. Currently, the community colleges offer more than 400 Career Pathway certificate programs. These certificates are defined in Oregon statute as being 15 – 44 credit certificates that are completely contained within an Associate of Applied Science degree or one-year certificate. This means a working learner can continue to make progress toward a higher level credential without losing time or money having to take classes that are required in the higher level credential but different from those in the Career Pathway certificate.

Service Delivery

Oregon is undergoing a systemic, structural transformation that will improve the way customers receive employment and training services at local WorkSource Oregon (WSO) Centers. These changes will also improve the way businesses receive services from WSO Centers. Oregon has been operating within a partnership framework for many years. The partners recently developed service delivery standards¹² that will be used to guide Oregon's one-stop system. The standards reflect the common vision on delivery of workforce services.

¹² <http://wsostandards.weebly.com/read-the-worksource-oregon-operational-standards-here.html>.

Business services are continually evolving and improving. At the start of 2013, the Oregon Employment Department began offering enhanced business services. Employers select this option when they want a deeper partnership with their business services staff member. An on-site visit is conducted to better understand the business culture and the business objectives, which allows staff to refer candidates to the employer with an increased level of success. The employer then has a smaller, more highly-qualified applicant pool, which saves them time and money. The service has improved the value and impact of business services by lowering an employer's recruitment and turnover costs. National and state level studies show that when the right person is hired, the employer saves roughly 50 percent of the new hire's salary because of lower turnover and training costs. In PY 2013, WorkSource Oregon directly placed 833 workers into the 721 enhanced job listings we received. Using a very conservative net savings to the employer of \$6,000 per hire, the service saved Oregon businesses \$5 million in recruitment and turnover costs. The numbers improved in PY 2014, resulting in \$5.7 million in employer savings from the 955 workers placed against 1,004 enhanced job listings. Interest in the service continues, with 319 workers placed into 319 enhanced job listings in the first quarter of PY 2015.

Support for Service Delivery

Oregon has a strong bricks and mortar presence. Roughly 30 percent of facilities are owned by the state, which have lower operational costs when compared to leasing. The use of non-federal funds provides additional flexibility in locating offices relative to community needs, particularly important given Oregon's rural expanse. Local elected officials across rural communities depend on public workforce services to support their economic and education objectives. On the other hand, many offices need to be upgraded to improve customer flow, and in some instances, moved or expanded to allow more partner staff to co-locate.

The strength of our data systems help to deliver consistent services and resources across the state. While the state's current data systems ensure the delivery of program specific services, integrating these systems remains a significant and expensive challenge.

A significant shortcoming of the workforce system is often uncoordinated and unconnected information technology (IT) infrastructure, with several major components that are neglected, out of date and inflexible. While the current data systems ensure the delivery of program specific services, integrating these systems remains a significant and expensive challenge. There is limited ability to feasibly share data and/or participant information between core programs and partners. Even with tentative plans to move forward with some new IT systems, IT remains a significant concern. With the high cost and risk of new IT systems, IT issues are often a barrier to improving and integrating the workforce system. However, there are currently key partners working together with the goal of increased interconnectivity of these systems in a more efficient manner to increase the effectiveness of the workforce system through increased sharing of data to inform better data-driven decision making.

Providing Workforce Economic and Labor Information for Decision-Making

The Oregon Employment Department's Workforce and Economic Research Division provides accurate, reliable, and timely information about Oregon's state and local labor markets. The goal is to provide quality information that helps our customers make informed choices. Workforce development policy makers are a key Research customer group, particularly serving the labor market information needs of state and local workforce development boards. With the advent and now widespread use of the internet, the more "traditional" aspects of labor market information are largely made available on-line; allowing staff more time to focus on custom analysis and answering challenging questions about the labor market.

State Workforce Development Capacity

Adult Basic Education services in Oregon serve less than 10 percent of the adult Oregonians who lack a high school diploma or GED. While there are no waiting lists for Adult Basic Education services with current Title II providers, that does not mean that the full population of individuals needing services are pursuing them. Title II funds about 15 percent of Adult Basic Education services in the state, the remaining 85 percent of services are funded through community college general funds. Community colleges are independently governed entities that allocate general funds based on local needs and priorities. Community colleges are under no obligation to fund Adult Basic Education at any particular level. The level of support is exceptionally high across Oregon's 17 community colleges. If this were to change, services funded solely under Title II would reach a much smaller number of Oregonians.

Community colleges offer a variety of workforce development services that are important to the overall capacity of the state workforce development efforts. The 17 community colleges in Oregon receive funding from a variety of sources but one primary source is state general funds. During the 2015-17 biennium, this funding accounted for a \$550 million investment in education and workforce related services across the state.

Capacity issues are often localized, either by geography or program. Rural workforce board areas have the highest unemployment rates but the least amount of resources as well as geographic issues such as widely spread facilities. Programs such as Title I or Wagner-Peyser, which meet general community needs, often lack the capacity to provide the specialized services needed by certain groups or programs (i.e. Vocational Rehabilitation).

Oregon's labor exchange program has demonstrated sufficient capacity to provide service. Non-federal funding plays a major role in meeting Oregon's labor exchange needs, which in turn ensures the integrity of Oregon's UI trust fund and the delivery of enhanced services to the business community. The addition of state money has reduced the duration of Unemployment Insurance claims, which saved employers tens of millions in tax dollars and helped ensure Oregon's Unemployment Insurance trust fund remained solvent during the Great Recession. State funding also increases the capacity to meet the service needs of employers, helping to improve their bottom-line by lowering recruitment, turnover, and training costs. In PY 2014, over 340,000 individuals were active in the labor exchange system, and 173,000 were not UI claimants. This means that virtually half of our job seeker customers chose to seek services through the public labor exchange. More businesses are choosing our enhanced service option, as validated by the hundreds of success stories from businesses sharing that the service more than meets their needs and expectations. Our ability to maintain these services is contingent upon receiving state funds in the future.

State Strategic Vision and Goals

Vision

The strategic vision for the state's economy and overarching goals for the state's workforce system: *A strong state economy and prosperous communities are fueled by skilled workers, quality jobs and thriving businesses.*

A robust economy with ample mid- to high-income jobs is a baseline for a state-wide high quality of life, which includes healthcare, food security, and quality housing. The vision seeks to focus on Oregon's long-term economic prosperity and resiliency through people-based strategies designed to lift up Oregon workers, innovators and entrepreneurs.

To achieve this vision, the Oregon Workforce Investment Board (OWIB) developed guiding principles¹³ to identify core or foundational values for the workforce development system. These principles will be used as a lens for evaluating the goals, strategies and actions of the system:

- Customers of the workforce system include both businesses and individuals (job seekers, working learners and youth).
- Data, including customer input, drives continuous improvement and accountability of the system.
- The state supports local decision-making to achieve the OWIB’s vision and goals.
- Strategies are business-led, demand-driven and benefit all customers.
- Customers have access to a simple, flexible and streamlined system.
- System agencies and organizations are agile and nimble to respond to customer needs.
- The system promotes equity and strives to reach equitable outcomes, including but not limited to addressing the unique needs of families in poverty, communities of color, and rural communities.
- Collaboration within the workforce system and with other policy areas occurs between state agencies, through sector strategies, and at the local and regional level.
- Investments and decisions are results driven, not program-driven, to optimize long-term results for clients served, build a strong economy and achieve the state’s goals.
- The system adopts tools and promising practices from other states or communities rather than creating new ones, whenever appropriate.
- The workforce system targets investments to high-wage, high-demand occupations in sectors where the opportunities are the greatest.

Goals

Consistent with the state’s vision, the OWIB will target workforce resources to high-wage, high-demand occupations in sectors where opportunities are the greatest. This includes innovations, enhancements, and expansion of existing programs such as career pathways, career and technical education, work-based and experiential learning, career readiness, career-related learning experiences, adult basic education, youth employment, industry-recognized credentials, and apprenticeship.

To meet this goal, Oregon’s workforce system must provide services and partner with educational programs to ensure that: 1) all Oregonians can meet basic workplace skills requirements and are ready to work, and 2) Oregon’s workers have the transferable, technical skills that make them competitive for high-wage, high-demand jobs. This must be true for all groups of workers and potential workers, whether they are coming directly out of high school, a trade or technical school, an apprenticeship program, a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funded training program, a public assistance program, a community college, a four-year university, or are already working.

The Oregon Workforce Investment Board has identified 4 strategic goals to give direction for the state’s workforce system.

Goal 1: Create a customer-centric workforce system that is easy to access, highly effective, and simple to understand.

¹³ [Oregon Workforce Investment Board \(OWIB\) developed guiding principles](#)

The State of Oregon has cultivated a strong workforce system which provides a solid foundation for further collaboration to promote improved customer service and increased effectiveness. Creating a streamlined, collaborative workforce system is the number one goal within this strategic plan because it directly affects the success of all other goals the OWIB pursues. If the system is not aligned, easy to navigate, and focused on the customer, all other efforts to improve our services will be less effective. An aligned, simple-to-use customer-focused system is also critical to making the system accessible for all Oregonians, especially for those with barriers to employment.

Goal 2: Provide business and industry customized workforce solutions to prepare and deliver qualified and viable candidates.

The second goal focuses on the business side of the workforce system's customer base. Businesses need an available workforce that is trained not only in the occupational skills required to do the job, but also in the employability skills necessary for candidates to be viable in the job market.

Goal 3: Invest in Oregonians to build in-demand skills, match training and job seekers to opportunities, and accelerate career momentum.

The third goal focuses on the jobseeker side of the customer base, including actively reaching out, engaging, and empowering individuals with barriers to employment. In order to increase the opportunity for employment, jobseekers must be informed about opportunities and prepared with in-demand skills, or those that are currently needed by business and employers locally. Matching training opportunities to the needs of local employers will allow the workforce system to present jobseekers with more opportunities, and employers with more viable candidates to choose from. Focusing on demanded occupational skills can also allow jobseekers to get a first step toward a larger career pathway and to accelerate the process of advancement.

Goal 4: Create and develop talent by providing young people with information and experiences that engage their interests, spur further career development, and connect to Oregon employers.

During the stakeholder input activities throughout the strategic planning process, there was an overwhelming theme identifying youth as an important target population for the strategic plan. Recognizing that the current youth population is tomorrow's workforce, this goal focuses on providing opportunities, in partnership with business and education, for young people to experience and understand the local economy to inform their future careers.

Performance Goals

Please refer to Appendix 1.

Assessment

Oregon will assess its workforce system effectiveness through a variety of methodologies and assessments.

The Oregon Workforce Investment Board (OWIB) has adopted seven system performance measures, which are closely aligned to the WIOA performance measures. The OWIB will review a dashboard of the following measures on a quarterly basis to identify statewide policy and program recommendations:

- Entered employment
- Employment retention
- Earnings from employment

- Wage gain
- Skill gain
- Business satisfaction
- Job seeker satisfaction

These state-level outcome measures will be tracked statewide and by local workforce development areas as frequently as feasible. This tracking will help identify areas where policy or process adjustments may be needed. It will also identify the local areas that have achieved better results whose policy and processes may be shared and emulated elsewhere.

Local workforce boards may opt to track and analyze additional performance indicators and goals to track their own performance. These measures would be based on each area's specific economic and workforce conditions and the goals of the area. Although there may be significant overlap, it will be up to each local area to determine which performance indicators are relevant for the region, consistent with OWIB strategies, to meet the vision and goals laid out by OWIB.

The OWIB, in partnership with state agencies and the local boards, will continue development of additional measures to assess the statewide implementation of the goals and strategies. These measures will be developed through the OWIB Performance Reporting Committee and project specific work groups, which will involve members from the state board, representatives of state workforce agencies, and representatives from local workforce development boards.

This work requires state agencies and local workforce boards to continue the shift from a compliance- and program-specific orientation to a highly-integrated, outcomes-based system that makes value-added investments based on community needs. This work will also require greater responsibility, accountability, and autonomy for decision making at the local level.

Effectiveness of local service delivery through WorkSource Oregon will occur through the continued implementation and comprehensive use of the WorkSource Oregon Operational Standards. The workforce system will continuously evaluate its programs, services and processes in light of how these support the greater system goals, and add value to the experiences of customers, businesses and job seekers. For additional information, see [“Year ONE Performance Checklist”](#)¹⁴.

The workforce system will continuously evaluate its programs, services and processes in light of how these support the greater system goals, and add value to the experiences of customers, businesses and jobseekers.

These indicators may be either outcome-related or process measurements. For example, the partners at the one-stop centers in Oregon have initiated a process and developed statewide operational standards for the centers. There will be a measurement system for the standards. This system recognizes that the workforce areas are starting at different places and performance is not anticipated to meet all standards across the state. However, the measurements will help determine how we are moving toward full implementation of the standards by region (See the [WorkSource Oregon Operational Standards Self-Assessment Report \(April 2015\)](#)¹⁵.)

¹⁴ [“Year ONE Performance Checklist”](#)

¹⁵ [WorkSource Oregon Operational Standards Self-Assessment Report \(April 2015\)](#)

State Strategies to achieve its Vision and Goals

The Oregon Workforce Investment Board has identified strategies to implement its strategic goals and to give further direction for the state's workforce system. These strategies are intended to be implemented at both the state (board and agency) and local (local workforce development board and community partner) levels. The entities responsible for implementation of strategies are not identified and additional work will be done at the state and local level to identify responsible parties and mechanisms for implementation.

Oregon's strategic vision for the state workforce system builds upon similar reforms in two other Oregon systems: education and economic-community development. Both of these previous efforts have put greater decision making into the hands of local organizations, while at the same time clarifying available investments and increasing accountability. The success of these reforms rests on well-defined outcomes with the highest flexibility possible on how to achieve them. The recommended system reforms will reduce fragmentation and provide greater flexibility to local communities in determining how to achieve goals and outcomes.

The following strategies, especially those under Goals 1 and 3, focus efforts on improving services for all customers, specifically individuals with barriers to employment. In order to increase the opportunity for employment, the system must be easier to access and use and provide jobseekers with the opportunities and preparation to develop in-demand skills needed by business and industry. Implicit in each of these strategies will be activities implemented by the workforce development system at the state and local level, including through the WSO Standards.

Goal 1: Create a customer-centric workforce system that is easy to access, highly effective, and simple to understand.

Strategies

1.1 Create a framework for effective partnering within the workforce system.

A framework for partnering will put processes in place for state agencies, local boards and other workforce organizations to work together and better understand each other's services. This process will help to underline current policies that both help and hinder collaboration and will inform future policymaking decisions to support integration.

1.2 Align and leverage resources (data, funding, capacity, etc.) to collectively impact common outcomes and reward collaboration.

Achieving more effective partnering will allow state and local workforce organizations to leverage resources, whether those resources are in the form of data, funds, or staff. As resources become scarcer, partnering will help to stretch them further to impact the outcomes of all participating organizations.

1.3 Build accountability mechanisms focused on results.

Policies, processes, and funding decisions are only effective if they are followed or used properly. A theme of this strategic plan is to increase accountability to these things to focus on results. The OWIB will lead efforts to design and enforce mechanisms for accountability to ensure that investments are used wisely and programs are serving customers effectively, and to address shortfalls to make improvements.

1.4 Build a solution-driven (vs. program-driven) culture.

A solution-driven culture is one that starts plans with an end goal in mind. It focuses on the customer and seeks to understand their needs before deciding how to provide programs that will help to meet them. The workforce system has a lot of programs in place and is governed by federal law that could make it easy to turn to a program-driven culture, simply following the letter of the law and not thinking outside the box to meet the unique needs of the customer. The goal of this strategy is to ensure that does not happen and state agencies and local boards continue to hear from their customers and adapt programs to meet their needs.

1.5 Market coordinated system services and unite communications and information sharing among workforce, economic development and education.

A system with uncoordinated services is very difficult for a customer to navigate. If the system markets services in a coordinated way, customers can come to one place and understand how to get the services they need without needing to understand the ins and outs of how it will happen. This is true for all services within the workforce system, but also for collaborating with economic development and education. For many customers, services from more than one or all three of these areas will be needed to reach a successful outcome. A system is best coordinated and most effective when all partners understand each other's services and communication paths are clear and well utilized for a seamless customer experience.

Goal 2: Provide business and industry customized workforce solutions to prepare and deliver qualified and viable candidates.

Strategies

2.1 Create a sustainable framework for locally-driven sector partnerships to understand, anticipate, and respond to the needs of business and industry.

Business-led sector partnerships present a great opportunity to convene industry representatives and partner agencies and organizations to work to understand the collective needs of businesses in an industry. These conversations about common needs can identify common solutions that may be targeted to impact businesses on a wider industry basis, such as training programs for candidates, incumbent worker training, or various operational support programs. While these partnerships occur locally, the OWIB will create a framework to provide guidance or a road map to successful sector partnerships based on current efforts and best practices.

2.2 Foster positive perceptions in business and industry about the workforce system.

In order to maximize utilization of the services available to businesses, the workforce system needs to be seen as a trusted partner for meeting workforce needs. Greater utilization requires two different kinds of awareness – first, that businesses know the services exist, and second, they can see that they are effective. To increase awareness and visibility, local boards must be active in the community with other partners and at the table for any collaborative efforts. If progress is made toward Goal 1, increased accountability and collaboration and a focus on positive solutions will increase the effectiveness of the services that are available. This commitment to effective services and achieving results is a critical step to ensuring positive perceptions among business and industry. Boards should communicate success stories of businesses that have received benefits from workforce services.

2.3 Actively communicate the coordinated services of economic development, workforce and education services to business and industry.

Workforce development, economic development, and education and training providers all offer tools to serve businesses. To effectively provide these services, all of these organizations must be coordinated to ensure a seamless experience for business customers. When a business needs assistance, they do not need to know all of the work it takes behind the scenes from different organizations to make it happen. If communication is coordinated, the business will be able to have a clear message on what is available and how to get services. The OWIB will create a framework for this at the state level by ensuring coordination and collaboration with other state level boards and agencies providing workforce, economic development, and education services.

Goal 3: Invest in Oregonians to build in-demand skills, match training and job seekers to opportunities, and accelerate career momentum.

Strategies

3.1 Actively reach out and engage customers, especially target populations, in education, training, employment, and entrepreneurial opportunities.

To maximize the number of individuals taking advantage of the services offered, the workforce system should be proactive about engaging customers who are not already aware of the options available. Workforce and partner staff should also be fully informed on the full menu of services provided by all partners to be able to offer guidance and additional information to current customers.

3.2 Empower Oregonians with the access, knowledge, tools, and resources to launch and accelerate career momentum, including information on local in-demand skills and careers.*

Instead of prioritizing customer choice or job placement over the needs of businesses and the available individual career paths, the workforce system should combine these efforts by helping individuals understand their options within the local economy and opportunities for advancement. This allows individuals to think beyond just getting a job and focus on taking a step toward a sustainable, lifelong career.

**In-demand skills are those that are currently needed by local businesses and employers.*

3.3 Increase resources for occupational skill development and hold local workforce boards to a minimum investment in occupational training, which shall be established by the state board in local plan guidance.

Funds should be prioritized for occupational training that gives people the tools that they really need to work in local businesses. By establishing a minimum requirement for funds spent on occupational training, the OWIB is promoting accountability to ensure that the workforce system is truly supporting services that benefit both jobseekers and local businesses. This minimum threshold will be revisited each year of this strategic plan to adjust to the environment of the workforce system.

3.4 Rethink and restructure training and skill development to include innovative and effective work-based learning and apprenticeship models and to accelerate training.

Effective training often must go beyond classroom training to address all types of learners and provide hands-on experiences. Work-based learning and other innovative strategies that can help individuals understand more clearly what it is like to work in a certain industry or company are important to both improve learning outcomes and to help individuals with career exploration.

Goal 4: Create and develop talent by providing young people with information and experiences that engage their interests, spur further career development, and connect to Oregon employers.

Strategies

4.1 Create pipeline plans, as part of Oregon's sector strategy approach, to connect in-school and out-of-school youth to opportunities in local sector partnerships.

While some activities of sector partnerships will focus on meeting the immediate needs of the industry, to ensure that the future workforce is also prepared, sectors must take into account the youth population. As new and existing sector partnerships are being launched or expanded throughout the state, a plan is needed to ensure a focus is kept on the emerging and future workforce and that young people are informed about and connected to the strong industries in their communities.

4.2 Pursue additional resources to support local initiatives in both rural and urban communities.

As federal and state resources become scarce, it is important to make sure that a strong menu of youth services isn't lost. The OWIB will support local areas in pursuing additional resources for maintaining current initiatives and implementing new and innovative programs that engage and provide work experiences for youth.

4.3 Provide technical assistance and/or incentives to support adoption and expansion of work-based learning, apprenticeships, and internships.

While the OWIB does not directly provide services to businesses or individuals, it will be a resource for technical assistance, making connections between local areas, and sharing best practices related to various work-based learning initiatives. When possible and if funds are available, it will prioritize incentives for programs that provide these experiences for youth.

4.4 Build partnerships to increase exposure to job and career opportunities and better connect school to work.

Partnerships with businesses and schools are essential to ensuring young people are exposed to local career options and are able to see real-world applications of what they are learning in school. The OWIB will work to make these connections at the state level and to share best practices from across the state and country on how to make these partnerships successful and address any of the obstacles that typically exist when trying to provide youth work experiences.

Strategies the State will Implement

Strategies 1.1 and 4.1 described in the section above and adopted by the OWIB, specifically include industry or sector partnerships as a way to achieve the state's goals. In addition to these, Oregon is utilizing industry sector partnerships and strategies as a foundational approach to the way the workforce system works with employers, jobseekers, and students to improve employment opportunities and overall business competitiveness. Oregon is doing this through collaborative partnerships at the state and local levels and technical assistance that supports capacity building in all of the state's local workforce areas.

At a high level, the state's strategy consists of providing consistency to the industry or sector partnerships process, regional data and program information, and inter-regional connections as outlined in Oregon's

Approach for Sector Strategies¹⁶. Local regions have identified their target sectors and are noted in their local plans¹⁷.

All of the strategies under Goal 3 involve the use of career pathways to connect individuals to education, training and career momentum. Under WIOA, career pathways are a critical element of academic programming for Title II, Adult Education and Family Literacy Programs, one of the six core programs of the Act. Title II providers have both programmatic and performance based outcomes related to career pathways.

Oregon has long been a leader in a community college-based initiative focused on building Career Pathway credit bearing certificates at the colleges. A strong coalition of colleges have worked together to build a Pathways Alliance which has supported the implementation and continuous improvement of Career Pathways within the colleges. These Career Pathways certificates are developed in collaboration with employer representatives and are approved at the state level based on local labor market information and other criteria.

As Local Workforce Boards work to expand career pathway options for unemployed and underemployed Oregonians, a variety of approaches may be utilized, depending on local needs and resources. These options are represented on the graphic that summarizes what career pathways mean in Oregon, and the variety of options that may be included in a career pathways strategy.

Oregon has adopted the following working definition of Career Pathways: Career pathways are sequences of high-quality education, training, and services connected to industry skill needs. Career pathways have multiple entry and exit points that allow individuals to achieve education and employment goals over time.



¹⁶ Oregon Sector Strategy Approach

¹⁷ <http://oregonlocalplanning.weebly.com/>

Career Pathways may include: apprenticeships, on the job training, industry recognized credentials, non-credit training and certificates, credit certificates and degrees. Part of this effort will be to move towards a wider inclusion of career pathways in our Title II, Adult Basic Education, and English language acquisition classes, as well as building new career pathways through apprenticeship programs.

All programs will be designed to expedite transitions from unemployment to employment, from underemployment to better employment, or, as in the case of displaced workers, from one industry to the next. Each LWB will be addressing targeted populations as they build career pathways. Outreach to these targeted populations will be expanded. LWBs will align their career pathways to their sectors, working with industry to establish trainings that are aligned with business needs. Business will benefit by having a pipeline of workers into their industries that are well trained and work ready.

Strategies the State Will Use to Align the Core Programs

Companies in Oregon cannot grow or be competitive without the right talent. The alignment of worker skills with business needs means a worker quickly moves from a company liability into a productive asset. Yet, without the right combination of skills, it takes longer for workers to come up to speed. This time lag represents real costs; companies grow more slowly, worker wages stagnate, and workers look for other opportunities.

Talent is the driver of economic growth; industry, education, workforce and government must work together to create more robust and agile education and training models for both incumbent workers and new graduates. As stated earlier and highlighted in WorkSource Oregon Operational Standards¹⁸, the State of Oregon's workforce system provides a solid foundation for collaboration to promote improved customer service and increased effectiveness. Creating a streamlined, collaborative workforce system directly affects the success of all other workforce development goals. If the system is not aligned, easy to navigate, and focused on the customer, all other efforts to improve our services will be less effective. Additional work is needed to better integrate data systems to deliver improved customer service, but integrating these systems will be an expensive and time-consuming endeavor.

Strengthening the framework for partnering by developing and implementing processes will make it easier for state agencies, local boards and other workforce organizations to work together and better understand each other's services. This process will help to underline current policies that both help and hinder collaboration and will inform future policymaking decisions to support integration. More effective partnering includes state and local workforce organizations leveraging resources, whether those resources are in the form of data, funds, or staff. As resources become scarcer, partnering will help to stretch them further to impact the outcomes of all participating organizations. Financial, institutional, political and other barriers to effective partnering will be reviewed and revised to minimize their effect on partnerships.

Executive leadership from Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC), Oregon Employment Department (OED), and the Department of Human Services (DHS) Self Sufficiency Programs (SSP) are sponsoring a series of Local Area Alignment Meetings in conjunction with the local boards. These meetings bring together local program leaders with the goal of establishing a common vision, goal, communication and leadership plans that will allow them to implement integrated services that are

¹⁸ [WorkSource Oregon Operational Standards](#)

tailored to local needs and situations. An independent facilitator leads the multiday meeting with the local leadership and state leadership present at the same time. This combination of individuals allows the state leadership to demonstrate commitment to the integration efforts and help remove real and perceived barriers to local operational planning and integration. State leadership benefits from hearing local ideas and best practices that can be duplicated around the state and also helps state leadership understand the local needs. By early spring, all areas of the state will have had this meeting and will be expected to have established local leadership teams with project plans in place to move their local plans forward.

The OWIB, the state workforce board, has also established goals and strategies to develop a solutions-driven culture with services that are easy to access and coordinated with education and economic development. Encouraging a solutions-driven culture means focusing on the customer and seeking to understand their needs before deciding how to provide programs. It is the OWIB's goal to ensure that state agencies, education and training partners, and local boards continue to hear from their customers and adapt programs to meet their needs, rather than focus solely on programs and meeting federal law.

Similarly, a system with uncoordinated services is difficult for a customer to navigate. The OWIB's goal is to market services in a coordinated way so that customers can come to one place and understand how to get the services they need without needing to understand the ins and outs of how it will happen. This is needed for services within the workforce system and in collaboration with economic development and education. For many customers, services from more than one of these program areas will be needed to reach a successful outcome. The workforce system can be best coordinated and most effective when all partners understand each other's services and the communication paths are clear and well utilized.

Finally, the state has established a strategy to increase resources for occupational skill development, including setting a minimum threshold for local workforce board investment in occupational training to better prepare job seekers in the skills needed by businesses. Beyond the Title I investments, this strategy encourages all core programs to look at ways to minimize duplication and improve efficiency to support skill development that benefits individuals and businesses.

Oregon recently created the [Oregon Talent Council \(OTC\)](#)¹⁹ to “advise and be a resource for state agencies and educational institutions on issues of talent development, and to promote the growth and competitiveness of Oregon’s traded sector and high-growth industries.” Its mission is to “make Oregonians the first and best choice of Oregon employers.” The Oregon Talent Council will be able to invest in priorities guided by the [Oregon Talent Plan](#)²⁰ to address talent needs.

Section III. Operational Planning Elements

State Strategy Implementation

In many ways the implementation of the state strategies to meet its Workforce goals will be driven locally. Therefore, the methods to reach the performance outcomes will be different in each local area depending on the needs of the community and decisions of the local investment board.

¹⁹ [Oregon Talent Council \(OTC\)](#)

²⁰ [Oregon Talent Plan](#)

Critical industry sectors fuel the state's economy most broadly, although the sectors usually differ by local area. The workforce system must prepare workers for the higher wage, higher skill, in-demand occupations these sectors have to offer. This approach will create a mutual benefit for companies and workers.

Industry sector strategies are employer-driven partnerships that meet the needs of key industries within a regional labor market. Partners include business, labor, economic development entities, education and training providers and other stakeholders. Sector partnerships are intended to remove bottlenecks that inhibit recruitment, hiring, training and worker advancement within an industry sector or cluster. These sector partnerships simultaneously address the needs of workers by creating formal career paths to good jobs by reducing barriers to employment, and sustaining or increasing middle-class jobs. The success of sector strategies lies in building better public/private partnerships based on the practical needs of industry for a more highly-skilled workforce.

Oregon's workforce system must work to find new ways to operate more efficiently and effectively to meet new challenges and deliver on outcomes in a time of stagnant or shrinking resources. Partners in the workforce system must work together in new ways, and leave behind the systems and approaches that are less effective at meeting the stated outcomes and goals of this plan.

While Oregon's publicly-funded workforce agencies and programs have helped hundreds of thousands of Oregonians find jobs and thousands of businesses find workers over the years, the workforce development system in Oregon must continue to remove barriers to achieving better outcomes for customers. Multiple funding streams with sometimes conflicting requirements and goals, administrative fragmentation, lack of consistency and coordination, and a lack of system-wide accountability can reduce the effectiveness of the system.

Within the current environment, the focus is about getting better results from the resources we have by creating a more agile system that is highly responsive to local business and economic cycles. The workforce system at both the state and local level needs to collaborate to achieve common outcomes.

For additional info see [Oregon's Local Planning](#)²¹ website and [Oregon's Sectors](#)²² webpage.

State Board Functions: Oregon Workforce Investment Board

The [Oregon Workforce Investment Board \(OWIB\)](#)²³ has two standing committees, nine local workforce board accountability teams, and as-needed, temporary, project-based work groups to implement its functions under WIOA:

- The OWIB Performance Reporting Committee consists of state board members, core program representatives, and local board directors. This committee reviews dashboards of high level system measures on a quarterly basis, flags issues for full board discussion, and develops potential recommendations to the Governor for full board action;
- The OWIB Executive Committee, consisting of nine members representing all of the WIOA membership categories and board leadership, meets on a monthly basis to guide the work of the board and make recommendations for full board action on key policy decisions under WIOA. All work developed by OWIB committees or by staff workgroups are vetted first by the Executive Committee before consideration of the full board.

²¹ [Oregon's Local Planning](#)

²² [Oregon's Sectors](#)

²³ [Oregon Workforce Investment Board \(OWIB\)](#)

The nine local workforce development board accountability teams will each consist of two to three members from the business and workforce membership categories and will be supported by staff representatives from the four core programs. The purpose of these teams is to substantively engage with the local boards in their plan development and implementation processes through regular in-person or conference call meetings. At least once a year, the full OWIB will review the priorities and progress of each local board, with discussions focused on best practices that can be shared with other boards and challenges where additional technical assistance may be needed.

Implementation of State Strategy

Core Program Activities

WorkSource Oregon

The WorkSource Oregon (WSO) system integrates the services provided by the Wagner-Peyser Act administered by the Oregon Employment Department (OED) and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I programs administered by the Higher Education Coordinating Commission's (HECC) Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD). The activities in the one-stop centers are described in the attached WorkSource Oregon Operational Standards²⁴ document. Please refer to that document for detailed discussion and description of the one-stop services and activities.

In order to be designated as a WorkSource Oregon center, services among Wagner-Peyser and Title I staff will be aligned resulting in seamless provision of services to customers. Staff resources across both funding streams will be pooled together and allocated collectively to ensure all services are delivered in accordance with the requirements of these operational standards.

All operational functions, including supervision and management where appropriate, will be taken into consideration when developing a functional staffing plan for each center. Agreed-upon staffing plans, including methodology, roles, and expectations, will be documented and may be solicited during program monitoring.

Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth

At the state level, Oregon has formed several cross-agency workgroups focused on policy that are instrumental in implementing these state strategies. Locally, each of the nine local workforce boards (LWBs) will develop and submit a comprehensive four-year plan, in consultation with the chief elected official. This document clarifies what the LWBs must provide and do in order to implement State strategies and be in compliance with WIOA and state requirements.

The local plan will identify activities on how workforce partners and programs in each local workforce area will align and implement the vision and goals of the Oregon Workforce Investment Board and requirements of the WIOA (see Oregon Local Planning²⁵). The LWBs are responsible for convening the workforce partners necessary to develop and implement the plan in the local area.

As final regulations for WIOA are released, and additional guidance is provided from the U.S. Department of Labor and/or the Oregon Workforce Investment Board, the Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development

²⁴ [WorkSource Oregon Operational Standards](#)

²⁵ [Oregon Local Planning](#)

(CCWD) within the Higher Education Coordinating Commission may ask for the LWBs to provide additional information in the form of a local plan modification.

Employment Services

Services provided through the WSO centers will be customer-centered. There is no longer a required sequence of services in WSO centers. Rather, the appropriate service may be accessed at any time based on customer needs. WSO has adopted a set of service standards that will be used to guide local service delivery, and to ensure a common language for both customers and staff.

Adult Basic Education

The Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD) and local area Adult Basic Education (ABE) service providers will fund allowable activities under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act²⁶. (AEFLA). Local providers will align Title II activities with local area plans, such as sector strategies and career pathways. These adult basic education and literacy activities will also be coordinated across the core programs and partners through one-stop center participation, referrals, and co-enrollment where feasible.

An important goal for Title II Adult Basic Skills service providers will be in improving access to, and completion of, post-secondary credentials. CCWD, as the Title II agency at the state level, will collaborate with local Title II providers to support this goal, through investment of leadership funds and other activities. An important means to address this goal will be expansion of integrated education approaches. These include programs such as I-BEST, Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) and Oregon Pathways for Adult Basic Skills (OPABS), as well as other programs developed in response to local needs. Local Title II providers will be encouraged to explore bridge programs and services that result in transition to post-secondary education. Local Title II providers will work with the state and local boards to clearly define career pathways across the state that promote transition of adult education students into industry recognized credentials, licenses and portable stackable certificates.

Vocational Rehabilitation

Title IV, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) works with individuals with disabilities to identify, pursue, obtain and retain competitive and integrated employment. In Oregon VR includes the general VR agency as well as the Oregon Commission for the Blind's VR program (OCB). Core program activities include individualized assessment, vocational exploration, job placement services, retention services and necessary and appropriate support services. Title IV, Vocational Rehabilitation works in partnership with Workforce, Education, and relevant local programs that impact a positive employment outcome for individuals with disabilities.

As a Core program, VR will ensure that programmatic access to our services is available at all WSO sites. Depending on local needs and opportunities VR will continue to support the current co-location of VR staff and services. VR will continue to have conversations about increasing co-location opportunities around the state. VR will always be available to assist Workforce partners when it comes to serving individuals with disabilities and will provide technical assistance and training in the best techniques to work with such individuals.

²⁶ [Oregon Local Planning](#)

Vocational Rehabilitation services should be considered “value added” to assist our workforce partners when they are serving individuals with disabilities. VR is a participant on local boards and at the state level. This participation and engagement will allow VR to assist and help develop programmatic and individualized services to effectively provide employment for individuals with disabilities. Services through Vocational Rehabilitation are individualized and consumer driven. If there is the possibility of utilizing other funded activities, Vocational Rehabilitation is required to pursue any and all “comparable benefits”.

When initial assessment is complete, disability created barriers identified, accommodations identified and provided, and a career or vocational objective identified based upon interests, abilities, Labor Market Information and any other factor influencing the choice of vocational objective, employment services consist of:

- Individualized job placement activities.
- Coordination with other services that provide employment services as are available and appropriate based on the disability and the barrier being addressed.
- Follow-up and post-employment services (PES) as required for our clients in order to intervene more effectively and timely if a disability created impediment may cause job loss.

An Individualized Employment Plan (IEP) is to be completed within 90 days of eligibility unless the Vocational Rehabilitation Council (VRC) and the consumer are in agreement to delay. If this is the case, then the dates which the IEP will be completed must be identified.

At any stage of the VR process, VR may, with the consumer’s agreement, refer to any other entity in the workforce system that may be of benefit to achieving an acceptable employment outcome.

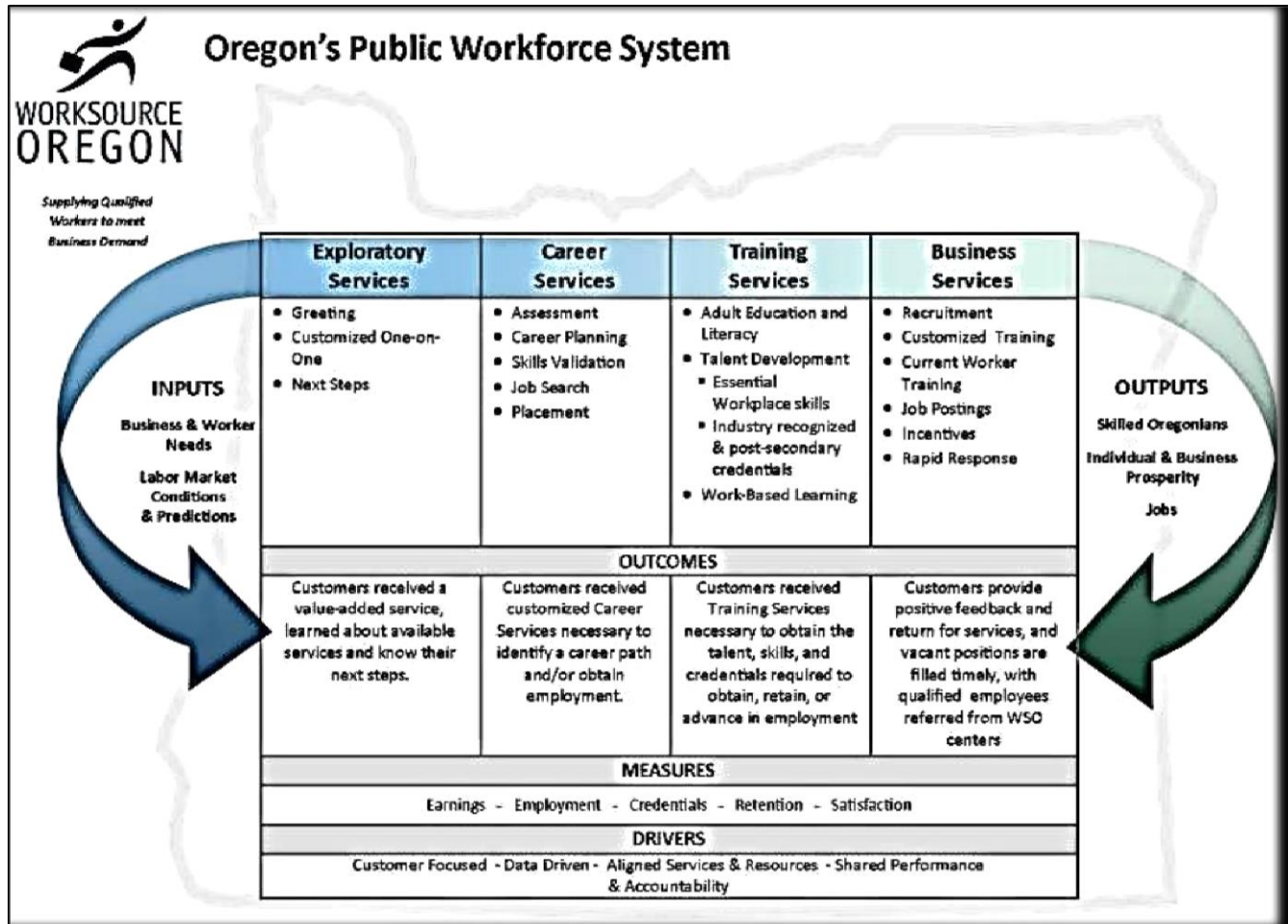
Core Program Activities to Implement the State’s Strategy

The WorkSource Oregon (WSO) system integrates the services provided by the Wagner-Peyser Act administered by the Oregon Employment Department (OED) and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I programs administered by the Higher Education Coordinating Commission’s (HECC) Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD).

The mission of WorkSource Oregon (WSO) is to effectively respond to workforce challenges through high-quality services to individuals and businesses, resulting in job attainment, retention and advancement. WSO also has a strong vision of Oregon communities where the employment needs of job seekers and businesses are met by solutions delivered effectively through engaged workforce system partners. The activities in the one-stop centers are described in the WorkSource Oregon Operational Standards²⁷ document. Please refer to this document for detailed discussion and description of the one-stop services and activities.

²⁷ [WorkSource Oregon Operational Standards](#)

Core program activities will be aligned across the core programs through local efforts to satisfy requirements in the WorkSource Oregon Operational Standards²⁸. All local areas will move forward to satisfy both co-location and alignment of the organization. Oregon’s Workforce System is summarized in the following chart:



It is not enough to have mandated and optional partners at one location, under one roof. Workforce partners at WSO Centers will combine their resources to staff WSO Centers and adequately staff their Exploratory, Career, Training and Business Services functions.

Oregon’s integrated model of service delivery is fully supported by state policies and administrative systems. System innovation requires the development of governance and accountability structures that will inspire continuous improvement and focus on results. Each WSO partner has roles and responsibilities, purposes and functions as they relate to WSO policy and operations. With WIOA and the addition of other required partners, common operational agreements will further clarify roles, responsibilities and the decision-making

²⁸ [WorkSource Oregon Operational Standards](#)

authority of all entities involved. These agreements will identify which decisions will be made jointly, and how those decisions will be made.

The HECC²⁹ has responsibility for developing state budget recommendations, allocating state funding, and approving new academic programs at Oregon's community colleges and universities. CCWD's mission is to contribute leadership and resources to increase the skills, knowledge and career opportunities of Oregonians. On behalf of the Governor, CCWD funds, implements and oversees the state's implementation of Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs and funding distribution (detailed information can be found on the CCWD website³⁰).

Title II in Oregon will fund allowable activities under the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act³¹ (AEFLA) in order to implement respective state strategies. These activities will be administrative at the state level and implemented at the local level. CCWD will administratively support data interoperability with core programs sharing data through data management systems such as Data for Analysis (D4A) and Performance Reporting and Information System Management (PRISM). Title II state and local activities will be aligned across core programs and partners through one-stop center participation, referrals, and co-enrollment when feasible. Administratively, CCWD will support one-stop infrastructure costs from the state grant allocation and designate the local adult education and literacy providers as the local one-stop participants. At the local level, flexible staffing resources and cross-training will occur to support one-stop center integration and access for Title II participants. In addition to one-stop center participation, local Title II providers will incorporate career pathways into academic programming. Title II providers will work to align career pathways and contextualized integrated education and training to local area sector strategies.

In addition, CCWD will work with all 17 community colleges to support effective practice in transitioning working learners into post-secondary credit programs. This work includes supporting these students during their programs with both internal college services and WIOA partner supplied services (i.e. SNAP, Vocational Rehabilitation). In addition, students will have appropriate guidance and support as they complete their degree or certificate and seek employment or further education.

The mission of OED is to promote employment of Oregonians through developing a diversified, multi-skilled workforce, providing support during periods of unemployment and supporting businesses by connecting them to well-qualified candidates for their job openings. The agency also provides labor market information for use by businesses, policy makers and a variety of stakeholders. OED is also responsible for Oregon's Unemployment Insurance (UI) program.

Title IV will continue to work with the local boards and other partners to ensure coordination and alignment of program elements. Current and future activities that are being practiced and proven at the local level will be shared among the VR agency to develop best practices. VR is a participant on local leadership teams and will continue to work within the workforce system to ensure that clients can access services they need without duplication.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) will continue to work with clients to ensure that businesses have access to the talent they need through the VR system. VR works with individual job developers to reach out to employers

²⁹ [The HECC](#)

³⁰ [CCWD website](#)

³¹ [Adult Education and Family Literacy Act](#)

and market the individual skills of participants who lack the ability to market themselves. Through this process, businesses often get employees whom they otherwise would not have screened into employment opportunities but who can meet their business needs. VR also works with federal contractors to help meet their Section 503 requirements and targets.

VR will be establishing procedures that are acceptable under our rules and regulations to assist our clients in moving forward in their careers and address disability based barriers that may preclude future career growth. We will also listen to the business needs of the in-demand occupations so that our clients will be prepared for employment opportunities that exist in our economy and have opportunities for growth and advancement.

VR is active in working with students and the educational system to ensure access to appropriate and timely labor market and employment information to assist the students in making informed decisions regarding future careers and work. VR is partnering with the educational systems to provide meaningful work experience and opportunities. While the VR focus and mandate is to work with students with disabilities, a framework is being established that may be replicable and effective for all students. We will build from our current youth program that is an internationally recognized best practice.

In order to implement WIOA and address and align these policy issues at a state level, Oregon has formed several state-level, cross-agency workgroups including:

The Workforce Executive Team (WSET)

The WSET is both an operational and decision-making group regarding workforce system project development and implementation. The WSET is responsible for the following activities:

- Collaborating and jointly agreeing on best approach to workforce systems issues that impact multiple agencies, programs, or initiatives.
- Developing content for guidance and criteria regarding the integrated workforce system.
- Providing/assigning resources to populate project teams.
- Ensuring that projects are staffed by cross-agency resources.
- Ensuring alignment across projects and teams with a system-wide viewpoint.
- Providing consulting and oversight to project teams.
- Making project, system, and program commitments for their agency, as appropriate.
- Reviewing and approving outcomes, products and recommendations of project teams.
- Making recommendations to leadership for approval, as appropriate.
- Representing agencies and briefing respective leadership on discussions and progress outside of meetings.
- Knowing when leadership must be consulted for a final decision and ensuring that all stakeholders requiring input at the leadership level are included in vetting processes. Inviting stakeholders (leadership, content experts, etc.) to meetings as appropriate to the agenda to ensure that work continues to advance.

WSET members include agency and program managers from:

- Employment Department (W-P/Title III, UI, MSFW, Vets, LMI)
- Community Colleges and Workforce Development (Titles I & II)

- Department of Human Services (Title IV, SNAP E&T, TANF)

WIOA Project Teams (WPT)

These project teams are assigned work by the WSET related to the implementation of WIOA, as well as trying to answer the “*How are we going to _____?*” questions. Membership includes representatives from the agencies and programs listed in the WSET, and others, including Carl Perkins and CTE representatives.

WIOA Local Area Advisory Group

The purpose of this group is to identify state and local policy and process needs and provide feedback on policy development. Membership includes local area program managers, compliance officers, etc., with state staff filling guest/advisory/technical assistance roles as needed. This group includes a youth-focused subgroup.

WIOA Services Group

The purpose is to define and align service and activity tracking to WIOA definitions and requirements. Includes state WIOA Title I & III staff and local area and MIS/ IT staff.

WIOA Registration Group

The purpose is for developing a streamlined or “basic registration” aligned with WIOA and the WSO Standards. Includes state WIOA Title I & III staff; will add IT staff as work progresses. Workgroup includes staff from OED (Research and Policy staff) HECC, and a local workforce board representative.

Career Pathways Alliance

The Alliance is made up of program staff, directors and others who oversee career pathway initiatives and programs within the 17 Oregon community colleges, including short-term training programs and bridge programs for Adult Basic Skills students. Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) is often a part of Oregon’s high quality, Career Pathways infrastructure. This track includes CTE programs with stackable credentials and strong relationships with the industry and local employers to identify competencies and needs. VESL courses accelerate time to completion and increase certificate and degree attainment for low-skilled workers and Adult Basic Skills students.

Service Equity and Access Project Group

The purpose is to focus on efforts around injecting service equity into our WIOA implementation efforts. Participating partners include:

- Department of Human Services
- Oregon Employment Department
- Community Colleges and Workforce Development
- Oregon Workforce Investment Board
- Business Oregon
- Secretary of State
- Bureau of Labor and Industries (tentatively)
- Department of Corrections
- Oregon Commission for the Blind

Oregon Council for Adult Basic Skills Development (OCABSD)

The OCABSD consists of Adult Education and Family Literacy Directors from the 17 Oregon community colleges and the Department of Corrections that currently serve as Title II providers.

Community College WIOA Workgroup

This is a diverse cross-section of community college administration, staff, and faculty members who serve in workforce development, career and technical education, customized training, and adult education programs. Within the WIOA Workgroup there are various subgroups working on specific issues: creating a community college planning framework, developing a definition/visual for career pathways in WIOA, investigating data and reporting concerns with the eligible training provider list, etc.

Alignment with Activities Outside the Plan

At the state level, alignment and collaboration between the core programs and the programs and activities provided by mandatory and optional one-stop partners will occur through the state-level, cross-agency workgroups described in the previous section. Additionally, options to provide meaningful access to required programs will be explored locally and addressed through local planning efforts. Service strategies will be tested for effectiveness and efficiency. When the opportunity exists and it makes good business sense, co-location options will be considered. To see how the activities of the local workforce areas will be aligned amongst the four core programs and with other programs, view the local plans at <http://oregonlocalplanning.weebly.com/>³².

Alignment of activities to ensure coordination of programs and activities and avoiding duplication will be satisfied through the pooling of shared resources and staffing the four services mandated in the WSO Standards³³. Jointly staffing the four services (Exploratory, Career, Training and Business) is Oregon's method to avoid duplication and ensure coordination of all partners within the one-stop offices.

The Workforce System Executive Team (WSET) is sponsoring a series of Local Area Alignment Meetings in conjunction with the local boards. These meetings bring together local program leaders with the goal of establishing a common vision, goals, communication and leadership plans that will allow them to implement integrated services that are tailored to local needs and situations. An independent facilitator leads the multiday meeting with the local leadership and state leadership present at the same time. This combination of individuals allows the state leadership to demonstrate commitment to the integration efforts and help remove real and perceived barriers to local operational planning and integration. State leadership benefits from hearing local ideas and best practices that can be duplicated around the state and also helps state leadership understand the local needs. By early spring, all areas of the state will have had this meeting and will be expected to have established local leadership teams with project plans in place to move their local plans forward.

Local state agency branch and field office managers from core and mandatory partners will work with their LWBs to ensure that those receiving public assistance, low-income individuals, and those who are basic skills deficient are included in local WIOA plans and that they have a voice in the system. The agencies will work to find a way to market WIOA services to the above categories of individuals to ensure that they are aware of services and that they may use their classification to ensure priority of service. Staff at the WorkSource Oregon centers and Affiliate Sites will be trained to understand that upon discovery that an individual belongs to a priority category that priority of service will be explained to that individual. Basic skills deficient individuals can be identified through Initial Skills Review testing in the WorkSource Oregon centers, through AccuVision (soft skills) testing, and the National Career Readiness Certificate. Basic skills deficient individuals can be identified for priority of service and can be expedited into job search and occupational skills training programs.

³² <http://oregonlocalplanning.weebly.com/>

³³ [WSO Standards](#)

The WSO Standards require Title II workforce preparation services, which are provided through each WSO Center. Local areas are responsible for ensuring WSO and Title II services are available and appropriate referral mechanisms are in place to connect WSO customers with Title II services as needed. Title II will work with other core programs and one-stop partners to develop a mechanism for referrals and co-enrollment where possible. Local adult education and literacy providers will align participation in one-stop centers with local service goals, supported by informed participant referrals facilitated by one-stop center staff cross-training.

As a partner to the core programs, Trade Act programs align with core programs in this plan.

- Trade Act co-enrolls participants based on systems and partners speaking to each other.
- Trade Act accepts assessments completed with partner staff; likewise, Trade Act provides assessment and training plan information to partners of co-enrolled participants.
- Wraparound services are provided for participants that meet the NEG/SEG or other funding streams requirements from partners.
- Trade Act will refer customers to resources within the agency or community.
- Information sessions to be focused on benefits and services available to affected workers as well as the sector strategies in their area.
- Trade Act will also actively pursue the business community through connections to Rapid Response, On-the-job training opportunities, and Business Teams within WSO centers. Connections to business will include marketing program information, layoff aversion resources, and job talent.
- Trade connects to all core programs through methods of assessment and referral to appropriate entities.
- Strategy meetings, which are bi-monthly meeting between Trade, CCWD, local service providers, unemployment insurance, and case managers, cover funding streams and special training opportunities in the area, education of partners in what Trade Act can pay for and services are provided.
- Trade Act refers participants to services outside of what can be provided by Trade to help with barrier removal.
- Conduct comprehensive assessments of skill levels, aptitudes, abilities, skills gaps, career interests, employment barriers, and supportive service needs individually and in group settings.
- Make work-based opportunities available to customers in accordance with local area plans and investment strategies.

It is the Oregon Unemployment Insurance (UI) program's goal is to ensure all UI claimants are fully aware of, and appropriately using, the reemployment resources available to them through our workforce system. Some UI program activities are performed in WorkSource Oregon offices and are aligned with programs and activities provided by mandatory one-stop partners and other optional WSO partners. Such activities include providing in-person information and assistance filing UI claims via phone or computer, providing general information about UI eligibility requirements, and referring potential UI eligibility issues to UI merit staff in the program's UI call centers. Through the filing of an initial UI claim, customers initiate the process to become co-enrolled across core and partner programs available in one stop centers.

Employment Services (ES) staff and partner staff in one stop centers maintain the ability to email or call UI merit staff in the UI center and in the UI Operations Policy and Support Unit to directly assist customers when necessary. Additionally, information is shared with UI claimants about the various programs available in Oregon at the centers on the public computers, hard copy brochures, posters, and public information videos playing on digital displays in the lobby.

The UI program in Oregon is also currently receiving federal grants to provide enhanced reemployment services for UI customers. Some customers are selected for a Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment

(known as REA or RESEA) as part of their orientation. REA/RESEA interviews are conducted in person by ES merit staff in one stop centers who are co-located with local board service providers.

Oregon's UI program also includes:

- A Self-Employment Assistance (SEA) program which enables customers to receive UI benefits while starting their own business,
- A Training Unemployment Insurance (TUI) program, which enables customers to receive UI benefits while attending school,
- An apprenticeship program which enables customers to receive UI benefits while participating in apprenticeship training programs, and
- A Trade Readjustment Allowance (TRA) program which enables customers to receive UI benefits while participating in the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program.

Information regarding all of these programs is also provided by staff at WorkSource Oregon centers.

Oregon's UI program is examining other innovative ways to increase the UI claimant reemployment rate. As an incentive to claimants, the agency allows customers to list one work seeking activity for each test taken for the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) and other similar activities. The program has also been working closely with Incite, a local workforce board, to work on a National Emergency Grant which looks at whether cognitive behavioral therapy techniques can help claimants get reemployed more quickly. Oregon is also working with the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy on a pilot project using behavioral economic approaches to create more effective work search results for claimants and is part of an effort being led by the U.S. Department of Labor to reexamine the work search requirements of the UI program to make them more effective.

Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Individuals

The core programs highlighted in this plan and mandatory one stop partner programs will coordinate activities and resources through implementation of the OWIB strategic plan, local planning process and the WSO Operational Standards. Local state agency branch and field office managers from core and mandatory partners will work with their LWBs to ensure that those receiving public assistance, low-income individuals, and those who are basic skills deficient are included in local plans. The local plan will identify how workforce partners and programs in each local workforce area will align and implement the vision and goals of the Oregon WIB and requirements of the WIOA (see Oregon Local Planning³⁴). Using the WSO Operational Standards as a statewide framework, all nine workforce areas are responsible for developing systems and processes to better serve WSO customers. The WSO Operational Standards require strong collaboration among system partners and holds local leadership teams accountable for outcomes.

The agencies will work to find a way to market WIOA services to individuals with barriers to employment to ensure that they are aware of services and that they may use their classification to ensure priority of service. Staff at the WSO centers and affiliate sites will be trained to understand that upon discovery that an individual belongs to a priority category, priority of service will be explained to that individual.

Title II providers in the local areas will coordinate activities and resources to provide high-quality customer services in cooperation with the other core programs. For example, adult education and literacy providers will

³⁴ [see Oregon Local Planning](#)

support cross-training of core program and one-stop center partner staff to support referrals and co-enrollment. Title II providers will leverage connections with core program and WSO center partners where feasible to include support services for participants, such as transportation, childcare, and housing. Title II providers also create, maintain, and build connections with training providers for career pathways and workforce preparation activities.

Trade Act staff participate in strategy meetings with local workforce boards and WorkSource offices. These local discussions help align services to meet the changing needs of trade affected workers. Trade Act staff participate in Rapid Response (RR) activities as part of the state and local teams serving the affected workers. Trade Act staff provide case management services to trade affected workers, and assist participants in navigating other services available through their local WSO center. Additionally, Trade Act staff advise and educate program service providers to help them understand program guidelines and protocols, and work with community and agency partners to coordinate and improve planned services.

Services offered to individuals in WorkSource centers are coordinated and aligned with the state's Unemployment Insurance (UI) program to ensure equal access. UI claimants are a targeted population within WSO centers and staff receive UI training to ensure access to information about UI benefits is comprehensive, high-quality, and customer-centered. In addition, Oregon uses a variety of media including brochures, posters, and digital displays in multiple languages in locations to ensure universal access.

Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Employers.

The coordination and alignment of activities and resources in WorkSource centers will involve multiple stakeholders in order to provide comprehensive, high-quality services to employers and meet their current and projected workforce needs. WorkSource Oregon stakeholders will align services to businesses through the use of sector strategies and partnerships, the Oregon Talent Council, local workforce boards, and the WSO Oregon Standards. Additionally, education and training system partners will work directly with industry to improve retention, expansion and recruitment. Industry and sector partners will work with education, workforce development, economic development, and community organizations to focus workforce priorities around key industry issues and goal attainment.

Industry partnerships provide a place for companies to solve major talent issues, a single place to work with public entities, and an opportunity to share costs to solve industry problems. These sector partnerships also provide educational partners a forum through which they can learn about evolving industry needs, and a vehicle to identify, build and refine curriculum, programs and credentials. Industry partnerships allow workforce partners to quickly refine their investments based on industry feedback and provide an efficient mechanism through which businesses can access public services.

All WorkSource Oregon (WSO) centers are required to develop, implement and actively manage two feedback loops aimed at aligning and improving services. Centers will develop a feedback mechanism that evaluates the quality and effectiveness of training funded by WSO. Feedback will be solicited from both the business and trainee to ensure training providers are meeting the needs of business. Feedback will also be solicited from business in order to determine the quality of WorkSource center job seeker referrals. Both mechanisms are designed to improve the workforce system's ability to deliver customer centric services.

The most important business service WorkSource Oregon centers provide is connecting job seekers to job openings. Providing quality referrals to connect job seekers and employers ensures that WorkSource Oregon is

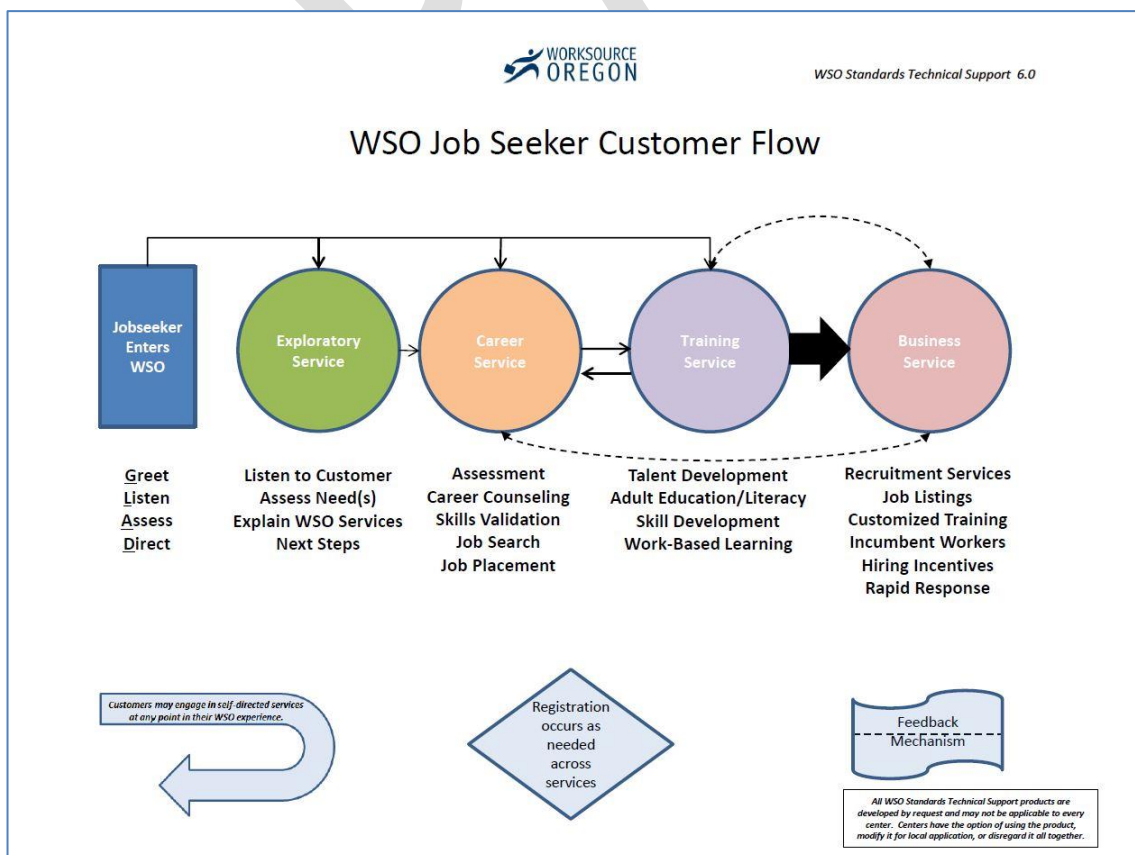
providing a value-added service to business and that it is supporting the goals of local sector and industry strategies and partnerships, targeted populations, and local workforce investment priorities.

In its new enhanced business services model, WSO center staff conduct an on-site employer visit prior to recruiting and referring candidates. WSO staff aim to refer only five candidates to one job opening, unless specified by the employer. Many WorkSource Oregon centers use this model to provide a consultative approach when serving business customers. The goal is to meet with business customers, understand their workforce needs, and then collaborate with workforce system partners to design a package of services that meet business needs.

This collaboration includes economic development as a workforce partner in order to develop comprehensive solutions to support the goals of business and industry customers. The state and local boards also consult with their network of cluster/industry associations, chambers and business leadership councils.

Placement and recruitment activities must include a feedback mechanism between WSO staff and employers. Employer feedback will be solicited to validate the readiness and quality of referrals, to monitor outcomes, and make adjustments to local career and training services based on the feedback received. Feedback will be shared with the workforce system to ensure continuous quality improvement.

Co-location and co-delivery efforts are designed to offer smooth service delivery and increased leveraged services while generating greater service options for business customers. Collaboration between all workforce system partners is required to ensure the broadest possible service options are made available to the business community, including how these options meet the needs and goals of sector strategies and industry partnerships. Co-location, co-delivery, and the use of the WSO labor exchange will increase the communication level across the partnerships, to include economic development, resulting in the necessary collaboration to ensure business customer needs are met through a cost-effective allocation of resources.



The WSO labor exchange allows staff and employers to manage job opportunities, greatly expanding the service delivery options for employers. Jobs may be entered via automated mechanisms, self-service, or staff-assisted services. Employers may also set up an account online to post job listings 24/7, match to qualified candidates, and contact the job seekers directly.

Oregon is exploring additional ways to align and integrate business services, by coordinating business outreach efforts and to identify and target Key Industries in order to increase market penetration for the WorkSource Oregon System and by understanding all the points of contact between businesses and workforce partners.

Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) partner with the Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) apprenticeship and On the Job Training (OJT) representatives to ensure that employers are aware of the benefits of hiring a veteran. LVERs also communicate apprenticeship and OJT opportunities for veterans to WorkSource Oregon Business and Employment Specialists and DVOP staff.

The Trade Act Navigators (TAN), who are integrated into WorkSource Oregon, provide a package of information to employers, which includes On the Job Training (OJT), classroom education, apprenticeship connections and layoff aversion information through Workshare and Trade Adjustment Assistance for Firms (TAAF). The TAN also make presentations to community, business, partner groups, and coordinate and assist with the planning and implementation of job fairs.

Services offered to employers in WorkSource Oregon centers are also coordinated and aligned with the state's Unemployment Insurance (UI) program. WorkSource staff receive UI training to ensure comprehensive, high-quality, customer-centered services, including supportive services, to ensure equal access to UI information for employers in Oregon. Additionally, Oregon's UI program provides the work history for UI claimants to help staff find unemployed claimants who may fit an employer's staffing needs. Other information includes but is not limited to UI tax rate information, information for employers as an interested party in the UI claim filing process, and the appeal process. Oregon also uses a variety of media including brochures, posters, and digital displays in multiple languages in locations to ensure universal access.

Partner Engagement with Educational Institutions

In 2014, the Oregon Workforce Investment Board (OWIB) and Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) formed a joint taskforce to develop aligned policies, outcomes measures, guidance, resources, communications, data and evaluation necessary to achieve Oregon's middle 40 educational and workforce goals. By 2025, this goal aims for 40 percent of Oregonians to have a baccalaureate degree or higher, for 40 percent to have an associate's degree or certificate in a skilled occupation (the middle 40), and for the remaining 20 percent without a postsecondary credential to have at least a high school diploma or its equivalent credential. Apart from the specific numbers, 40-40-20 signals Oregon's seriousness in preparing its young for the higher skill demands of 21st century work and life, and it signals the state's commitment to a new system design focused on outcomes.

The HECC has responsibility for developing state budget recommendations, allocating state funding, and approving new academic programs at Oregon's community colleges and universities.

Marketing Coordinated System Services and Uniting Communications and Information Sharing

In order to coordinate education and workforce development services for the benefit of all customers, greater understanding and improved communication paths will need to be built. Work is planned for continued engagement with the HECC, community colleges and universities to begin to build the tools and trainings to

increase understanding between these two policy arenas and to identify additional ways to improve joint customer experiences.

Building Partnerships to Connect School to Work

The key to this strategy is the explicit engagement of education at the secondary and postsecondary levels with workforce development and business. The OWIB will work to make these connections at the state level and will share best practices from across the state and country on how to make these partnerships successful. The OWIB will do this by engaging key programs housed in the Oregon Department of Education and the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, including career and technical education, science, technology, engineering and technology, community colleges, and the Youth Development Council.

Locally-Driven Sector Partnerships

Labor Market Information (LMI) will inform sector strategies, career planning, education and training decisions, business engagement and placement services. Strategies outlined in the board's local plans regarding service and investment priorities will focus on demand-side aspects including connections to economic development and regional priorities, and the engagement of employers and industry groups and partnerships.

Strategies at WorkSource Oregon centers will focus on the supply-side elements of sector partnerships utilizing sector-based career pathways and training programs to prepare and connect qualified jobseekers and workers to high-demand sector based occupations and careers. Representatives from community colleges, universities, K-12 and trade schools will supply education and training to the locally-driven sector partnerships depending on the industry's needs and goals.

Workforce representatives from one-stop service providers, organized labor, and community nonprofits will provide a range of programs from career assessments, job readiness and basic skills training, apprenticeships, youth programs, and other workforce services. The mix of these organizations will vary depending on the sector and targeted needs of the industry.

Create a Framework for Effective Partnering Within the Workforce System

The OWIB-HECC taskforce also recommended the utilization of state and local workforce investment plan development and revision as an opportunity to expand support for shared goals. These plans provide a platform for increased alignment between education and training providers and the workforce development system and broad-based, engagement and support of the state's middle-40 goal.

Title II providers in Oregon are currently community colleges, which leverages the connection between adult education and literacy programs and postsecondary education and training programs. Oregon actively promotes transitions to postsecondary education through investment of state leadership funds into academic bridge programs such as Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST), Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL), and Oregon Pathways for Adult Basic Skills (OPABS) programs. Oregon has also invested heavily in the alignment of adult education content standards with the College and Career Readiness (CCR) standards. The CCR standards and training modules have been shared with core programs and partner programs through a series of training sessions supported by the Moving Pathways Forward initiative.

Title IV, Vocational Rehabilitation has MOUs with all 17 community colleges that include language around working with the college's disability services offices to ensure that our joint students get the services and accommodations they need to access educational opportunities.

The Trade Act program has been a strong partner in the Trade Adjustment Assistance for Community Colleges and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant. A Trade Act liaison will continue outreach, marketing, and

collaboration with community colleges around the state. Oregon's Unemployment Insurance (UI) program has engagement with educational institutions through the Training Unemployment Insurance (TUI) program and the Trade Readjustment Allowance (TRA) program. Both programs enable customers to receive training at education and training providers, including community colleges and area career and technical education schools, while receiving UI benefits. In the initial stages of the application process, the UI program refers eligible customers to WorkSource Oregon to help determine best matches for labor market, career goals, and educational institutions.

Partner Engagement with Other Education and Training Providers

Under OWIB Goal 1 on creating a customer-centric workforce system that is easy to access, highly effective, and simple to understand, strategy 1.1 will create a framework for effective partnering within the workforce system. This framework for partnering will put processes in place for state agencies, local boards and other workforce organizations to work together and better understand each other's services. This framework will ultimately engage other education and training providers resulting in improvements to the workforce system.

Goal 3 of the OWIB Strategic Plan is about investing in Oregonians to build in-demand skills, match training and job seekers to opportunities, and accelerate career momentum. Strategy 3.4 focuses on rethinking and restructuring training and skill development to include innovative and effective work-based learning and apprenticeship models and to accelerate training. This work will require engagement with the community colleges, and other training providers to build responsive and effective training models.

Effective training often must go beyond classroom training to address all types of learners and provide hands-on experiences. Work-based learning and other innovative strategies that can help individuals understand more clearly what it is like to work in a certain industry or company are important to both improve learning outcomes and to help individuals with career exploration.

In partnership with Oregon businesses and local apprenticeship committees, the Apprenticeship and Training Division works to ensure that programs offer quality career opportunities through paid on-the-job training and education, with a focus on construction, industrial and manufacturing trades. The Apprenticeship and Training Division promotes equal employment opportunities in apprenticeship occupations for over 6,500 apprentices, particularly for women and minorities.

Community colleges offer a variety of workforce development services that are important to the overall capacity of the state workforce development efforts. The 17 community colleges in Oregon receive funding from a variety of sources but one primary source is from state general funds. During the 2015-17 biennium, this funding accounted for a \$550 million investment in education and workforce related services across the state.

The development and expansion of credit-bearing Career Pathways certificates across the 17 community colleges has been a key strategy for enhancing the training and job skills of Oregon's workforce. Currently, the community colleges offer more than 400 Career Pathway certificate programs. These certificates are defined in statute as being 15 – 44 credit certificates that are completely contained within a two-year Career and Technical Education degree. This means a working learner can continue to make progress toward a higher level credential without losing time or money having to take classes that are required in the higher level credential but different from those in the Career Pathway certificate.

An important goal for Title II Adult Basic Skills service providers will be in improving access to, and completion of, post-secondary credentials. CCWD, as the Title II agency at the state level, will collaborate with

local Title II providers to support this goal, through investment of leadership funds and other activities. An important means to address this goal will be expansion of integrated education approaches. These include programs such as I-BEST, Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) and Oregon Pathways for Adult Basic Skills (OPABS), as well as other programs developed in response to local needs. Local Title II providers will be encouraged to explore bridge programs and services that result in transition to post-secondary education. Local Title II providers will work with the State and local boards to clearly define career pathways across the state that promote transition of adult education students into industry recognized credentials, licenses and portable stackable certificates.

Other opportunities include designing a framework for Career and Technical Education and community colleges to collaborate on pre-apprenticeship programs developed in response to Sector Partnership demands. Funds will be prioritized for occupational training that gives people the tools that they really need to work in local businesses. By establishing a minimum requirement for funds spent on occupational training, the OWIB is promoting accountability to ensure that the workforce system is truly supporting services that benefit both job seekers and local businesses. This minimum threshold will be revisited each year of this strategic plan to adjust to the environment of the workforce system.

Overall, Oregon will leverage existing education and training resources across all six core programs and with other departments including the Department of Education, Department of Human Services, and the Business Oregon (Economic Development Department), Oregon's 17 community colleges, including providers on the state's eligible training provider list to improve the job-driven education and training system currently in place in the state.

Leveraging Resources to Increase Educational Access

Aligning and Leveraging Resources

In 2014, the Oregon Workforce Investment Board (OWIB) and Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) joint taskforce developed recommendations on aligning resources, communications, data and evaluation necessary to achieve Oregon's middle 40 educational and workforce goals. The HECC has responsibility for developing state budget recommendations, allocating state funding, and approving new academic programs at Oregon's community colleges and universities. The OWIB and HECC adopted the taskforce's recommendation that the two boards should establish a mechanism to meet biennially, at the start of the state's budget development cycle, to identify opportunities to support, leverage and co-fund common priorities. Work will continue to implement these recommendations.

Title II extensively leverages resources through its relationships with current providers who are responsible for supplying facilities, services, and matching funds. Title II providers are required to provide a match and CCWD, as the eligible agency, is required to uphold maintenance of effort in support of adult education and literacy programming in Oregon. In addition to the significant financial contribution made by the current Title II providers, adult education and literacy programs on community college campuses facilitate strong connections to postsecondary programs, including career and technical education and industry recognized certifications. CCWD will work to expand the use of leveraged resources through cross-training of core programs and one-stop center staff in an effort to increase referrals to adult education and improve access to educational services for low-skilled adults.

Trade Act encourages participants to sign up for financial aid in the form of grants and scholarships and coordinates with WorkSource Oregon to fund participants through their training plans with use of supportive

services beyond what is available through Trade Act. Trade Act also connects with local boards on scholarship, or “packaging”, opportunities.

Oregon’s UI program encourages people who may be eligible for various types of educational programs to take advantage of them through WorkSource Oregon. Depending on availability, while school attendance may pose an issue for UI claimants to maintain eligibility for benefits, UI merit staff seeks to enable customers to determine the best solution to achieve success in their short and long-term employment goals through education.

Oregon’s UI program also provides information about Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits available through the Training Unemployment Insurance (TUI) and the Trade Readjustment Allowance (TRA) programs. As workers lose their jobs through layoffs either as a result of foreign trade for the TRA program or other causes not resulting from faults of their own for the TUI program, they have the option of applying for these programs. Oregon leverages resources to increase educational access through sharing information with UI claimants about the programs through public service announcements, press releases, recorded messages on call center phone lines, hard copy brochures, posters, mailers, digital displays, social media, and website messaging.

Pursuing Additional Resources to Support Connecting Youth to Education and Work

Partnerships between the Oregon Workforce Investment Board and local workforce development boards around better connecting youth to education and work continue to grow and flourish. State and local strategies that flow from these partnerships pursue additional, area appropriate funding and resources. One example involves the Oregon Youth Conservation Corps (OYCC) and local workforce boards attempting to increase summer and year-round work experiences for youth ages 14 to 24. These strategies employ a competency-based approach to workforce and academic preparation including requirements for youth to demonstrate skills along a continuum of college and career readiness. More information on these strategies can be found at <http://oregonlocalplanning.weebly.com/>³⁵.

Improving Access to Postsecondary Credentials.

Customer Engagement on Education and Training Opportunities

The 2014 OWIB-HECC taskforce recommended that all middle 40 degrees, credentials, licensures and certifications issued by accredited public and private institutions, registered apprenticeships, recognized industry associations or third party vendors should be included in what is counted toward achievement of the state’s 40-40-20 goal. Credentials that count should be validated by accrediting bodies, third party review, and/or student demonstrations of mastery against set criteria. The taskforce also recommended that the state count the number of Oregonians with credentials and track all middle 40 credentials earned, because there is value in knowing which credentials have been awarded and how these tie to the requirements of the labor market and businesses. This work also allows the state and local areas to improve their ability to match supply and demand.

Title II will be involved in improving access to postsecondary credentials at the state and local levels. CCWD as the eligible agency will invest state leadership funds to expand academic bridge programs for individuals transitioning from adult education to postsecondary education, through research-based programming such as

³⁵ <http://oregonlocalplanning.weebly.com/>

Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST), Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL), and Oregon Pathways for Adult Basic Skills (OPABS). Local adult education and literacy providers will be encouraged to explore bridge programs and promote transition to postsecondary education when possible. Title II will work with the state and local boards to clearly define career pathways across the state to promote the transition of adult education students into industry recognized credentials, licenses and portable stackable certificates.

Targeting Resources for Occupational Training

Staff will develop and deploy a training program to educate staff in WorkSource Oregon centers and agency central offices about structured work-based learning, which includes registered apprenticeship. The training program will help all workforce partners understand the different training options that employers and individuals can access through the workforce system and each of their defining characteristics. The training will also teach staff how to identify an apprenticeable occupation, the characteristics of a good apprentice, and how to refer both individuals and employers to structured work-based learning training programs, certificates and credentials. The training program will help WorkSource Oregon staff understand the value of registered apprenticeship and structured work based learning, which will enable them to share the information broadly with employers and other service delivery partners.

In September 2015, the Oregon Workforce Investment Board (OWIB) approved two motions regarding the requirements for expenditures related to training services, as provided by local workforce development boards. This document clarifies and further defines the OWIB motions and provides guidance for planning and implementation (beginning July 1, 2016). [Click here for more details on Minimum Training Expenditures](#)³⁶.

Rethinking and Restructuring Training and Skill Development

There are numerous opportunities that Oregon can take advantage of to improve access to activities leading to recognized postsecondary credentials, including Registered Apprenticeship certificates. These activities include developing a statewide Earn and Learn Clearinghouse to promote models of internships, pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, etc. to business and industry; promoting opportunities to students, parents, and educators; and building these models in such a way that local boards can administer matches.

Other opportunities include designing a framework for CTE and community colleges to collaborate on pre-apprenticeship programs developed in response to Sector Partnership demands. Funds will be prioritized for occupational training that gives people the tools that they really need to work in local businesses. By establishing a minimum requirement for funds spent on occupational training, the OWIB is promoting accountability to ensure that the workforce system is truly supporting services that benefit both job seekers and local businesses. This minimum threshold will be revisited each year of this strategic plan to adjust to the environment of the workforce system.

Effective training often must go beyond classroom training to address all types of learners and provide hands-on experiences. Work-based learning and other innovative strategies that can help individuals understand more clearly what it is like to work in a certain industry or company are important to both improve learning outcomes and to help individuals with career exploration.

³⁶ <http://wioa.weebly.com/policies-and-guidance.html>

Provide Technical Assistance/Incentives to Support Adoption of Work-Based Learning Models

The system will build coalitions and relationships with industry and community partners to create and expand registered apprenticeship programs through two apprenticeship focused positions at OED and the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). OED will partner with local workforce boards to ensure that technical assistance and support for new apprenticeship programs are aligned with industry need and local sector strategies. ODE will partner with secondary and post-secondary institutions and community partners to increase the opportunities for youth to transition from high school into an apprenticeship or a pre-apprenticeship program. OED and the Apprenticeship Training Division will continue to work towards increasing the number of women and minorities involved in structured work-based learning and registered apprenticeship programs by working with community partners and the Department of Human Services to provide supportive services during portions of the apprenticeship training period.

Trade Act also supports industry supported credentials that enhance employment in sectors supported by WSO areas. Trade Act will collaborate with the Apprenticeship Program Liaison on available apprenticeship opportunities and educate participants on findings.

Oregon's Unemployment Insurance (UI) program also has engagement with postsecondary educational institutions with regard to the Training Unemployment Insurance (TUI), the Trade Readjustment Allowance (TRA), and the apprenticeship programs. The programs enable customers to receive training at postsecondary institutions while receiving UI benefits.

Coordinating with Economic Development Strategies

The workforce system will establish and enhance strategic partnerships with economic development organizations to assist with the development and creation of jobs. Business representatives from multiple partners including economic and workforce development partners, work together to coordinate services across their region, and target specific industries based on information from economic development partners. Additionally, workforce analysts work together with economic development professionals to enhance and improve business recruitment, retention, and expansion.

CCWD and local area Title II providers will fund allowable activities under Adult Education and Family Literacy ACT (AEFLA). Title II providers will align activities with local area plans, such as sector strategies and career pathways. These adult education and literacy activities will also be coordinated across the core programs and partners through WSO center participation, referrals, and co-enrollment where feasible.

Trade Act staff will coordinate with local boards, regional solutions centers, workforce partners, economic development, and training providers to create industry driven on-the-job training opportunities and talent development options based on knowledge gained from employer contacts and meetings.

Regional Solutions is an innovative, collaborative approach to community and economic development in Oregon. The state, in partnership with Oregon colleges and universities, established Regional Solutions Centers throughout Oregon. Starting at the local level to identify priorities, each center works from the bottom up to solve problems and complete projects. These centers integrate state agency work and funding to ensure that projects are finished as quickly and cost-effectively as possible.

Operating Systems and Policies

State Operating Systems

State operating systems to support implementation of the state's strategies are primarily divided into three categories:

- Labor Market Information
- Data Collection and Reporting Systems
- Operations and Management Systems

Labor Market Information

The Oregon Employment Department's Workforce and Economic Research Division provides accurate, reliable, and timely information about Oregon's state and local labor markets. The division's goal is to provide quality information that helps our customers make informed choices. Workforce development policy makers are a key research customer group, particularly serving the labor market information needs of state and local workforce development boards.

The division's efforts focus on direct employer surveys, information from tax records, analysis of the data, and dissemination through publications, presentations, and responses to customer requests. Most labor market information is available on-line allowing staff more time to focus on custom analysis and answering challenging questions about the labor market.

Oregon has long been a leader and innovator in labor market information, with activities and projects such as the Workforce Analyst program, the national award-winning QualityInfo.org³⁷ internet site, and our innovative and highly regarded special publications.

Data Collection and Reporting Systems

Oregon's Performance Reporting Information System (PRISM) was established to collect, analyze, and report on workforce development services, customers receiving these services, employment outcomes, median earnings, credential attainment and measurable skill gains after receiving services.

All WIOA Title II data are reported both locally and state-wide using TOPSpro Enterprise and reported to the federal Department of Education through the National Reporting System (NRS). Local programs have ongoing data analysis and program improvement opportunities through their performance management software, data quality checklist, database administrators' training, ongoing state training, and annual reporting requirements. Each June, programs submit a Strategic Framework, an evidence-based program evaluation, coupled with a detailed program improvement plan for the next year. In August, local providers submit their federal statistical tables, and the local data quality standards checklist. This process enables local programs to identify and correct data anomalies. Local program directors also identify common performance issues that local programs and state staff address collectively throughout the year.

The state provides technical assistance, facilitates state committees on assessment and data, and engages in ongoing data analysis to supplement annual training in order to ensure accurate data collection and reporting.

³⁷ QualityInfo.org

State data analysis begins with the export of local program data in July. Initial analysis of the state-aggregated database includes a review of a TOPSpro Federal Tables Summary Audit Report. Elements of the audit report identify the total “selected” students available; the number of students dropped, based on nine “drop reasons;” and establishes the number of students who “qualify” for the Title II Federal Report. Similar reports are developed for each grant type: Comprehensive Services, EL/Civics, Corrections, and Outreach Tutoring. The primary data system used for analysis and tracking relating to Oregon community colleges and students is the Oregon Community College Unified Reporting System (OCCURS). The OCCURS 2.0 data system provides stricter data security, ease of interfacing for end users at the community colleges, increased data reliability and validity, all while allowing external stakeholders the ability to query parts of the system via a web-based datamart.

Employers are required to report wage records to the UI program on a quarterly basis. This information includes the number of hours worked per quarter by employees. This data is used by several programs, including Labor Market Information, Employment Services, and other related state agencies for many purposes, such as measuring the effectiveness of various interventions designed to help people become reemployed or better skilled and understanding the composition of Oregon’s labor market and industries and seeing trends that can help target services. UI data is also used to help some partner agencies determine whether individuals are eligible for various programs they administer.

At the time an initial claim for Unemployment Insurance (UI) is filed in Oregon, wage records are used to establish eligibility for UI. Data is collected from the initial claim to establish customer records for WSO center partners. Using the records, a profile for the customer is established which is used by Employment Services (ES) to gather information about the success of services offered in the one stop locations.

Operations and Management Systems

The Division of Workforce Operations works to match the needs of Oregon’s employers with skilled Oregonians looking for employment and assist job seekers in finding jobs. The division operates several federally mandated programs and runs field offices throughout the state. Workforce Operations works closely with UI to support the reemployment of UI claimants and ensure the integrity of benefit payments, as well as with the Workforce and Economic Research Division.

State Policies

The WorkSource Oregon (WSO) system integrates the services provided by the Wagner-Peyser Act administered by the Oregon Employment Department (OED) and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I programs administered by the Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD).

The WSO standards³⁸ were implemented in 2015 and will be incorporated into state monitoring processes and local areas will be held accountable to their successful implementation in each and every WSO location in the state.

The Oregon Workforce Investment Board (OWIB), during its recent strategic planning process, developed four new goals and supporting strategies to address the current needs of the workforce system and customers. The

³⁸ <http://wsostandards.weebly.com/>

local workforce boards are key implementation partners of these goals and strategies and form collaborative relationships and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) at the local level to deliver services that align with the state's strategies and that abide by state policy.

Oregon has had a Joint Policy on Common Enrollment and Exits in place since 2012. Initially, this policy established an intake process and automatic co-enrollment across the Wagner-Peyser and WIA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. The policy is currently being revised to include WIOA-based eligibility requirements and references, and there are efforts underway to include other core program partners, although a "common registration" process that includes Title II and Title IV customer data and eligibility requirement continues to pose challenges at both the programmatic (data confidentiality/sharing) and programming (MIS/IT architecture) levels.

The remaining joint policies, the OWIB Youth Policy, and other policies are currently being reviewed by cross-agency workgroups and project teams and policy needs are continually assessed. As new policies are developed and published, they will be housed at <http://wioa.weebly.com/policies-and-guidance.html>³⁹. Current *WSO Joint Policies can be found here*⁴⁰.

The core programs will work to craft policies over time to support the state strategies, including co-enrollment practices and development of a universal in-take. At this time, the core programs do not have a shared case management system, data system, or shared in-take practices. Title II will be invested in the development of state policies that support development of the state's customer-centric workforce system.

Title IV, VR, will work to align policies as appropriate to ensure that the intent of the act is honored. Although the current management information system common intake practices currently used by Titles I and III are not practical for VR, local areas will work with partners to simplify joint referral and information sharing to ensure alignment and non-duplication of services.

A cost sharing tool has been developed for use by local and state partners participating in WSO center service delivery. The tool supports principles found in 2 CFR Part 200, and supports WIOA requirements to address infrastructure and other shared costs. This tool was developed by a cross-agency team comprised of staff from program, accounting, budget, contracts, auditing, and executive leadership. A smaller state team is working with all nine local areas/regions to implement the tool, with a goal to have cost sharing agreements in place by June 30, 2016. We expect the process to be iterative over the next couple of years, that the tool will be refined, and state benchmarks and guidelines clarified.

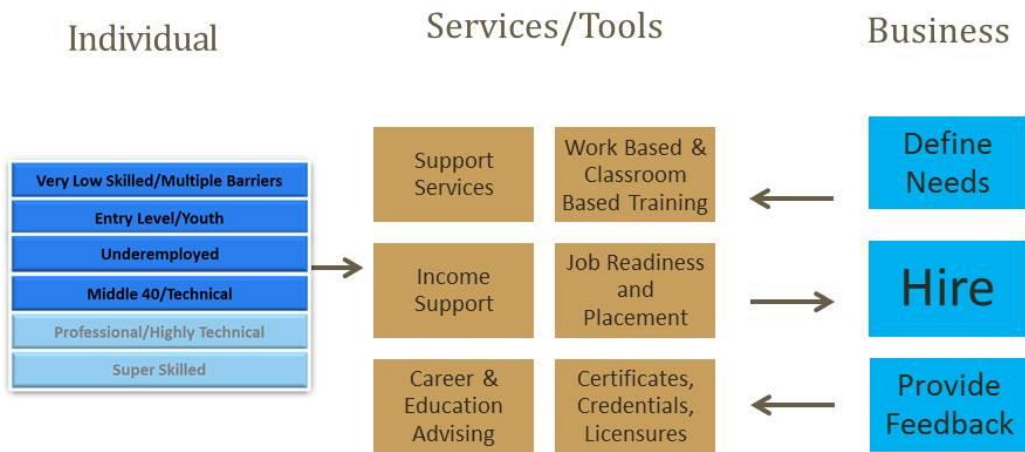
State Program and State Board Overview

The Workforce Development System is the web of programs and providers, both public and private that prepare workers and job seekers with the information and skills needed to find or maintain employment, and assist employers to employ skilled workers or to increase the skills of their existing workforce. The workforce system supports the economic prosperity of individuals, business and communities.

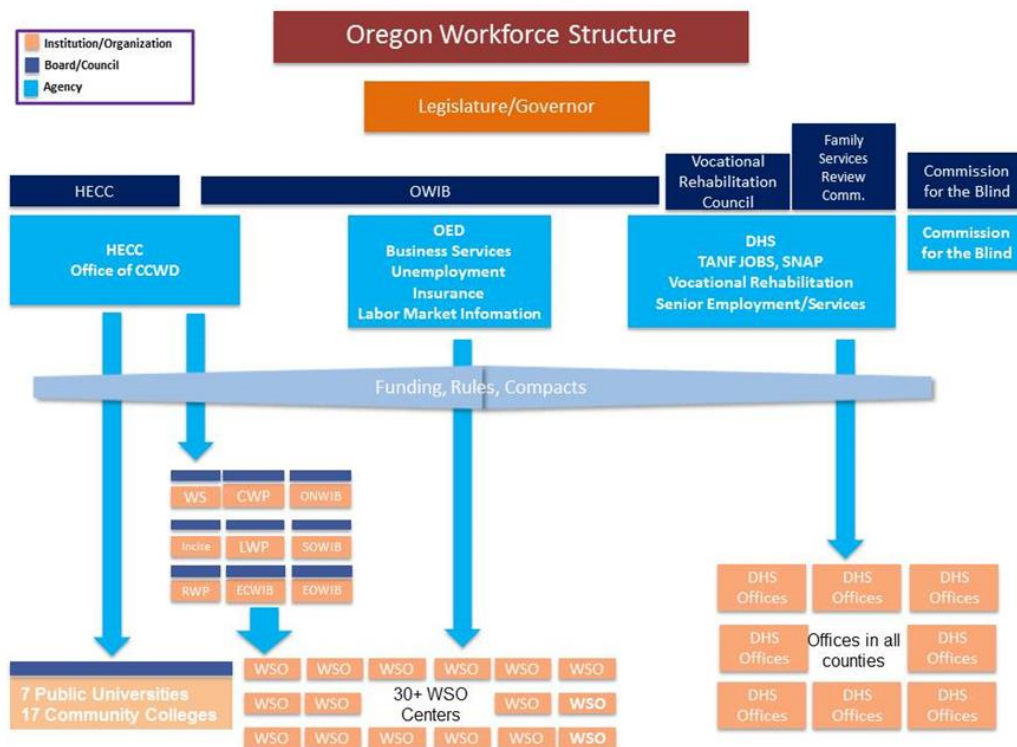
³⁹ <http://wioa.weebly.com/policies-and-guidance.html>

⁴⁰ <http://www.worksourceoregon.org/home/documents/workforce-integration/policies-and-procedures>

Workforce Development System



The organization of Oregon’s Workforce Development System is summarized in the chart below. There are four state agencies directly responsible for the implementation of the major programs involved in the Workforce Development System in Oregon. These agencies include the Oregon Employment Department, the Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development within the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC), Oregon Commission for the Blind (OCB) and the Department of Human Services – Self Sufficiency Programs and Vocational Rehabilitation.



The governing and advisory boards for the Workforce Development System include the Oregon Workforce Investment Board (OWIB) and nine local workforce development boards.

The OWIB is the Governor's chief advisory body on workforce matters. It is made up of business leaders, organized labor, state agencies, local government agencies, community-based organizations, education entities, elected officials, and the LWBs. The majority of the members are from business. The OWIB advises the Governor on workforce policy and plans, and contributes to the economic success of Oregon by:

- Aligning state workforce policy and resources with education and economic development;
- Promoting a proactive, flexible and innovative talent development system; and,
- Holding the workforce system accountable for results to ensure Oregonians develop the skills they need to sustain rewarding careers and businesses have the talent they need to be competitive.

The state board membership roster can be found on the [OWIB website](#)⁴¹.

The OWIB and its staff will be assisted by multiple interagency teams in carrying out its work. The WIOA Executive Leadership Group will provide inter-agency implementation leadership and core program review of any policy or program recommendations before they are submitted to the OWIB Executive Committee and full board for consideration. The WIOA Group also has staff teams to assist it in the development of options and recommendations. Staff representatives from the WIOA core programs, labor market information/OED Research Division, and from the DHS Self-Sufficiency programs participate in OWIB committees, including the System Performance Committee, to support implementation of state board functions.

Oregon has nine LWBs. These boards have significant autonomy over programming in their jurisdictions and are comprised of business leaders within the community, other community leaders, organized labor, educational institutions and elected officials. The LWBs have special obligations concerning programming for out of school youth and skills-deficient youth.

State Agency Roles

The following state agencies have responsibilities for the core programs under WIOA and other key workforce programs in Oregon.

The Oregon Employment Department (OED) was created in 1993 and is an active partner in the development of the state's workforce. The agency director is subordinate to the Governor. The mission of OED is to promote employment of Oregonians through developing a diversified, multi-skilled workforce, providing support during periods of unemployment and supporting businesses by connecting them to well-qualified candidates for their job openings. The agency also provides labor market information for use by businesses, policy makers and a variety of stakeholders. OED is also responsible for Oregon's Unemployment Insurance (UI) program.

The department offers a number of services and serves employers through timely recruitment of a qualified workforce, customizing state and local labor market information for use as a business planning tool and by

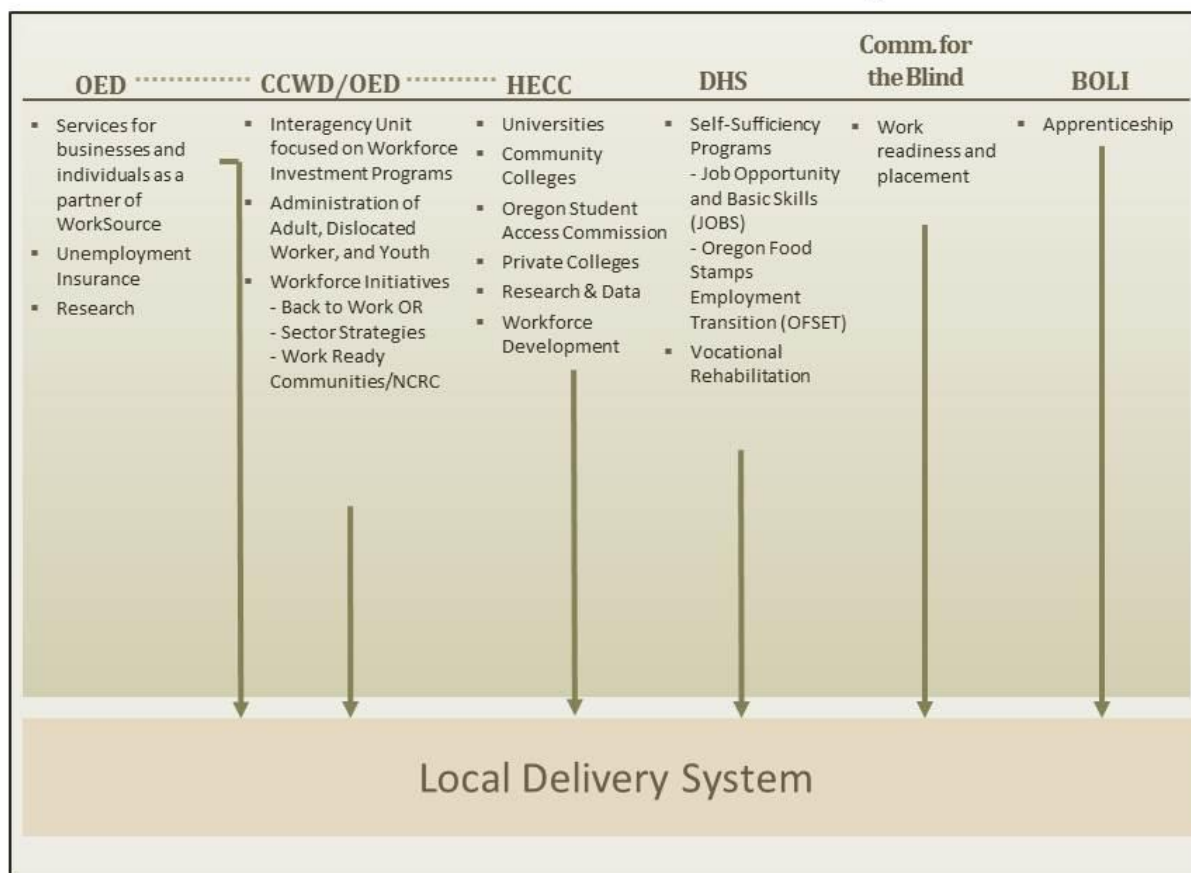
⁴¹ <http://www.oregon.gov/owib/membership/Pages/Membership.aspx>

offering job-matching services based on the needs of each employer. The department serves job seekers and employers by helping workers find suitable employment, providing qualified applicants for employers, supplying statewide and local labor market information and providing unemployment insurance benefits to workers temporarily unemployed through no fault of their own.

The Division of Workforce Operations works to match the needs of Oregon’s employers with skilled Oregonians looking for employment and assist job seekers in finding jobs. The division operates several federally mandated programs and runs field offices throughout the state. Workforce Operations works closely with UI to support the reemployment of UI claimants and ensure the integrity of benefit payments, as well as with the Workforce and Economic Research Division.

The OED Advisory Council was created to assist the Director of OED in developing or revising program policies and ensuring impartiality and fairness in the implementation of those policies. This includes promoting adequate administrative funding and wise use of agency programs, assisting the director in assuring the long-term fiscal health of the UI Trust Fund, and assisting the director in developing a legislative agenda and gaining approval by the legislature.

State Roles In Workforce Development



Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC)

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) is dedicated to fostering and sustaining the best, most rewarding pathways to opportunity and success for all Oregonians through an accessible, affordable and coordinated network for educational achievement beyond high school. Oregon's higher education system serves hundreds of thousands of students at its seven public universities, 17 public community colleges, workforce programs, private and independent colleges and universities, and private career and trade schools. The HECC supports the students and communities served by these institutions through statewide statutory responsibilities. The HECC has a 14-member public commission, supported by the HECC agency. The agency includes the offices of: Executive Director, Policy & Communication; Student Access & Completion; Community Colleges and Workforce Development; Operations; Private Postsecondary Education; University Coordination; and Research & Data. The director of the HECC is appointed by the governor.

The Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD) is the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I and Title II recipient in Oregon and administers the state general fund allocation to the State's 17 community colleges. The office links postsecondary information with workforce programs designed to be responsive to employer needs and to transition skills-deficient Oregonians into family-supporting jobs.

The director of CCWD reports to the executive director of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission. Oregon's 17 community colleges are independent, locally governed entities whose presidents report to local boards. The community colleges are a key access point for the majority of working learners seeking a postsecondary credential or degree, or who need Adult Basic Skills services. The colleges provide the opportunity for over 370,000 students each year to advance their educational levels and acquire new skills. CCWD administers the Community College Support Fund (CCSF), the state's contribution to community college operating costs. During the 2015-17 biennium, the CCSF was funded at \$550 million. These funds are not earmarked for specific programs; the local community college board determines the best use of the resources to meet local needs. Funds are distributed through a formula that is based on the number of full-time equivalent students at each of the 17 community colleges. The colleges combine state funding (31%) with local property tax revenue (24%) and tuition revenues (45%) to provide programs and services.

CCWD's strategic efforts to align education and workforce training are designed to increase access to, progress in, and completion of students in education skill development programs, and to improve the effectiveness and value of the programs and services for students, for employers and for the economic vitality of the community and the State of Oregon. The agency's major accomplishments fall into three broad categories:

- Increasing access and success at Oregon community colleges.
- Delivering value-added workforce development programs.
- Measuring results to help ensure Oregonians are prepared for lifelong learning, rewarding work and engaged citizenship.

CCWD's Education Systems Division is primarily responsible for overseeing course and program approval at Oregon's 17 community colleges, implementing accelerated learning programs and Carl D. Perkins Programs of Study in partnership with the Oregon Department of Education. In addition to providing support to the community colleges, the Education Systems Division oversees the Adult Basic Skills (ABS) programing of Title II of WIOA (WIOA Title II). WIOA Title II is a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to assist

adults in gaining literacy and numeracy, and to become self-sufficient. The Division also administers Oregon's GED program.

The Workforce Investment Division is an inter-agency unit consisting of staff from OED and CCWD. The Workforce Investment Division provides strategic direction to fund, implement and evaluate investments in Oregon's workforce system. It is a cross-agency collaborative division that conducts research and develops innovative solutions, provides resources and technical assistance, and monitors results/outcomes. The division is also Oregon's designated recipient of WIOA Title I funding. As such, it oversees allocations to the nine LWBs, and aids the Governor in administering the state-level funds the Governor has access to under WIOA. The Workforce Division also provides all staffing and resources for the OWIB. In addition, the division administers the Oregon Youth Conservation Corps (OYCC) and collaborates with business and communities to promote workforce and economic development within the state.

Oregon Department of Human Services

DHS is Oregon's principal agency for helping Oregonians achieve well-being and independence through opportunities that protect, empower, respect choice and preserve dignity, especially for those who are least able to help themselves. DHS provides services to the workforce development arena through its Self-Sufficiency, Aging and People with Disabilities, Developmental Disabilities and Vocational Rehabilitation programs.

DHS Self Sufficiency

The department's Office of Self-Sufficiency Programs (SSP) provides assistance with basic needs to low income families and individuals, as well as help in finding employment. Basic needs programs provide help with food, cash and daycare through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Employment Related Day Care program. The Refugee Program provides both cash assistance and employment services for individuals and families who fled persecution in their country of origin and were legally admitted for resettlement by the U.S. Government. Workforce related programs include the Job Opportunity and Basic Skills (JOBS) program, which is operated through TANF, and the Oregon Food Stamp Employment Transition (OFSET) program, which is administered through the SNAP program.

Workforce Related Programs

The Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) Program is Oregon's employment and training program. Education, training and job placement services are provided to TANF single-parent and two-parent families with the goal of helping prepare for, find and keep a job. Job retention and wage enhancement services are provided to clients transitioning from TANF or the Pre-TANF Program.

JOBS program services are planned for and provided through contracted partners as well as through a network of workforce partnerships including local workforce boards (LWBs), Employment Department offices, WorkSource Oregon, community colleges and other community partners that provide family stability services such as mental health and addiction services. Coordinated service delivery planning, for both workforce and family stability-focused resources, are conducted through local planning meetings. State leadership and technical assistance support local JOBS program efforts.

Oregon's Employment and Training Program

Oregon is currently undertaking an effort to expand the Employment and Training Program (E&T) as part of our ongoing investment in the Oregon economy and our communities. As part of the continuum of services

done in partnership with partners engaged in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Oregon will provide SNAP participants who are unemployed or underemployed, opportunities to lift themselves out of poverty.

In Oregon there are three different types of Employment and Training (E&T) programs. Oregon is currently working on continuing the expansion of the E&T 50/50 component and it is a program priority. This expansion will include the development of strategic partnerships in local areas, these partnerships will be led by local Department of Human Services (DHS) managers and LWB managers in order to make sure processes are in place to allow SNAP participants to receive seamless services from multiple E&T partnerships.

Oregon's SNAP Program has formed an E&T Steering Committee comprised of multiple partnerships including workforce partnerships from the LWBs, local DHS management, community colleges and private non-profits. This steering committee is charged with developing the framework and a tool kit for local LWBs/DHS Leadership to be able to convene community groups to provide the 50/50 funding and collaboration opportunity. The steering committee will provide statewide leadership and ongoing guidance for the E&T 50/50 program and partners.

Vocational Rehabilitation

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) assists individuals with disabilities to get and keep a job that matches their skills, interests and abilities. VR staff work in partnership with the community and businesses to develop employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Our services are individualized to help each eligible person receive services that are essential to their employment success. VR Staffing Solutions provide pre-screened, ready-to-work applicants with a wide range of skills and abilities from around the state.

Commission for the Blind

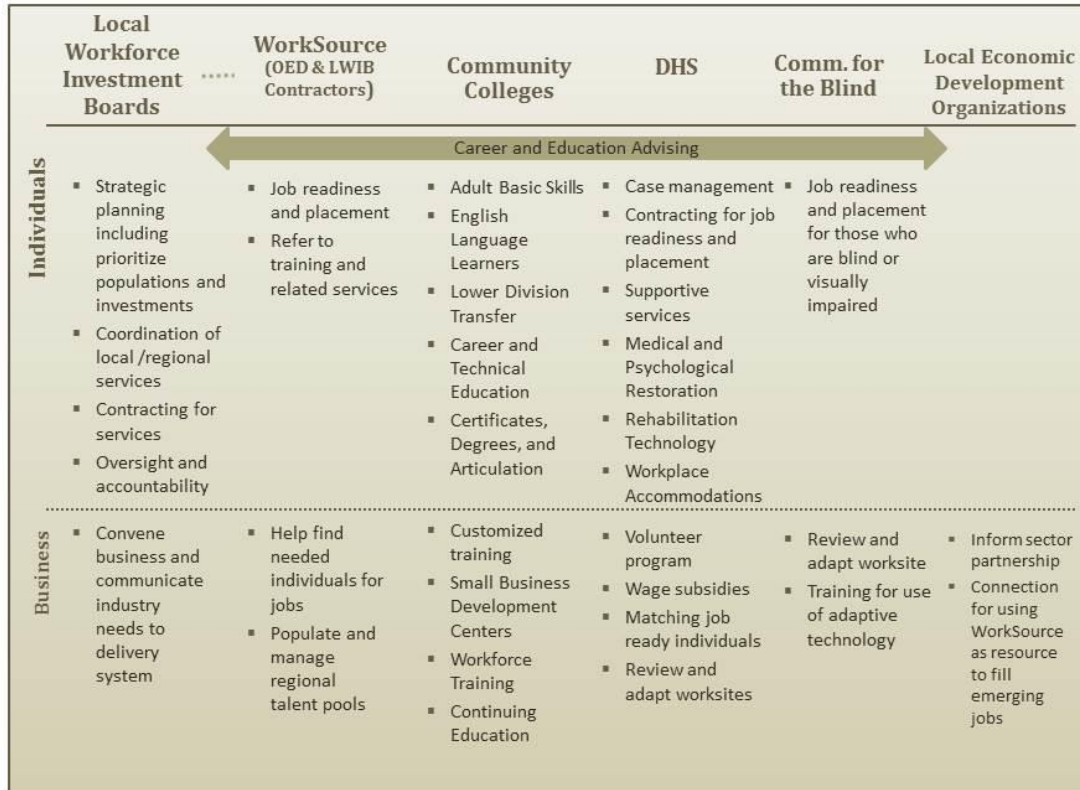
For over 50 years, the Oregon Commission for the Blind has been an important resource for Oregonians who are blind. Our mission is to assist Oregonians who are blind in making informed choices and decisions to achieve full inclusion and integration in society through employment, independent living and social self-sufficiency.

Local Service Delivery

The agencies, organizations and services provided are shown in the following graphic and are described in the following section:

The Local Workforce Boards (LWBs) broker services for Adults, Dislocated Workers and Youth in nine local workforce development areas (LWAs) across Oregon. These services are carried out in WorkSource Oregon Certified One-Stop Centers and are the key access point for Oregonians seeking employment and skill development as well as business customers seeking skilled workers. CCWD provides the WIOA Title I and II funds. The Title I funds are distributed to the LWBs through a formula based on economic and employment factors. The WorkSource Oregon system serves over 200,000 Oregonians per year. The Title II funds are distributed to the 17 community colleges.

Local Delivery of Services to Customers



The nine Local Workforce Development Boards (LWBs) that broker services for Adults, Dislocated Workers and Youth in their local workforce development areas across Oregon are described below:

1. Worksystems is a non-profit organization that pursues and invests resources to improve the quality of the workforce in the City of Portland, Multnomah and Washington counties. Worksystems designs and coordinates workforce development programs and services delivered through a network of local partners to help people get the skills, training and education they need to go to work or to advance in their careers. Partners to Worksystems include employers, labor groups, government, community colleges, high schools, community-based and economic development organizations. Their mission is to coordinate a regional workforce system that supports individual prosperity and business competitiveness by ensuring that the public workforce system serves business, by developing qualified employees and by giving current and future workers the skills and support they need to successfully engage, advance and succeed in the labor market.
2. Incite Incorporated is the workforce investment board serving Linn, Marion, Polk and Yamhill counties. The core mission of Incite Incorporated is to grow economic vitality by helping businesses find workforce solutions so that they thrive in these challenging economic times. They facilitate training and career readiness for adults and connect youth to business and career opportunities so that they are better able to enter the job market and be an asset to local businesses and the community.
3. Clackamas Workforce Partnership (CWP) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to building a strong workforce in Clackamas County. Through public-private partnerships, CWP attracts funding to help

local businesses proactively address a key challenge to their success - a skilled, competitive workforce. The partnership makes critical investments in workforce training and education so that businesses can be competitive and prosperous and provides workforce initiatives and programs which provide employment and training solutions that save businesses time, money and energy in finding and retaining a highly skilled workforce. In addition, CWP funds key community agencies that provide employment and training solutions for job seekers and laid-off workers through WorkSource Clackamas.

4. Lane Workforce Partnership (LWP) is a business-led workforce development organization dedicated to meeting the workforce skill needs of employers and to helping individuals gain the knowledge and skills to find a first, new or better job. As the LWB for Lane County, Oregon, the partnership makes investment decisions to promote a demand-driven workforce development system responsive to local businesses, workforce and economic development needs. Their goal is to provide businesses with greater access to a skilled labor pool and to provide individuals with greater employment opportunities. The Lane Workforce Partnership strives to meet its mission – to meet the workforce needs of employers and individuals through partnerships and innovation – by continually evolving as the needs of businesses and job seekers change.
5. The Rogue Workforce Partnership was formed in 1975 as a prime sponsor under the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) representing Jackson and Josephine counties. Today, Rogue Workforce Partnership funds contractors that provide workforce resources to businesses, youth and adults throughout Jackson and Josephine counties. Their programs are grouped within four primary service areas: Business Services, Job Seeker Services, Youth Programs and Child Care Resources.

The following four new boards were established as local workforce development boards in 2015 and are currently in the process of developing the board vision, mission, and goals for the local areas.

6. East Cascades Workforce Investment Board - Counties Served: Crook, Deschutes, Gilliam, Hood River, Jefferson, Klamath, Lake, Sherman, Wasco, and Wheeler
7. Eastern Oregon Workforce Investment Board - Counties Served: Baker, Grant, Harney, Malheur, Morrow, Umatilla, Union, and Wallowa.
8. Oregon Northwest Workforce Investment Board - Counties Served: Benton, Clatsop, Columbia, Lincoln, and Tillamook
9. Southwestern Oregon Workforce Investment Board - Counties Served: Coos, Curry, and Douglas

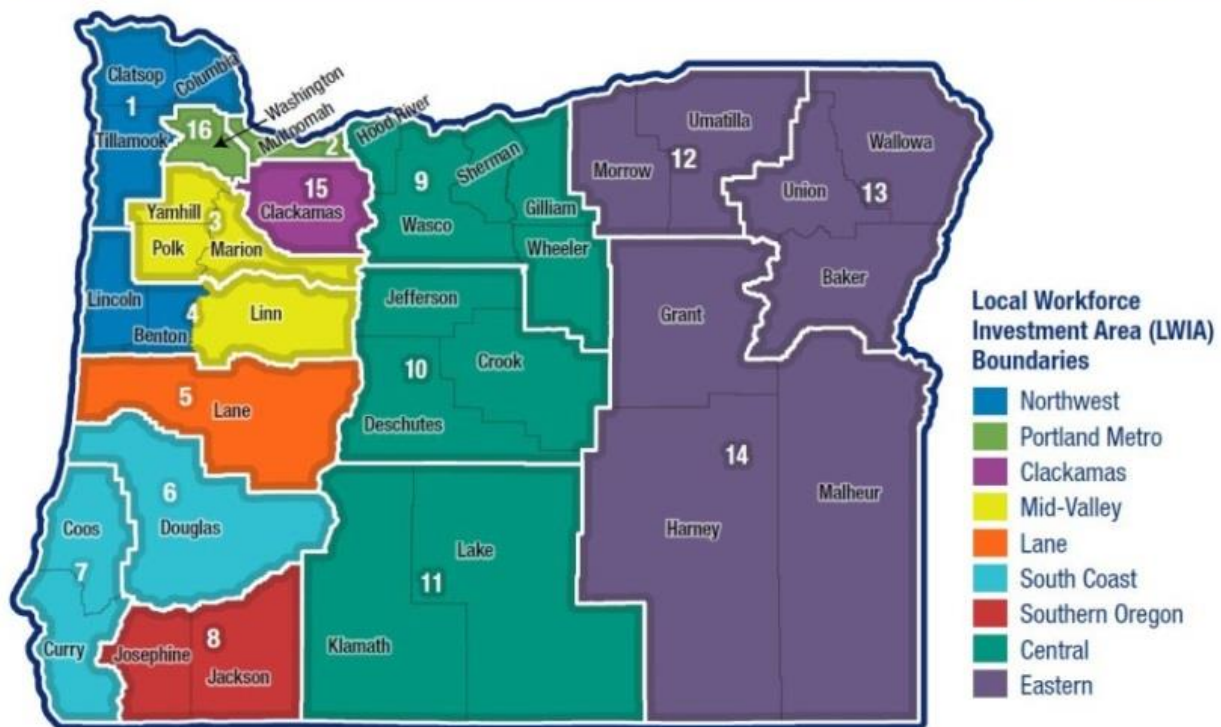
The Oregon Workforce Partnership (OWP) is a non-partisan, private/public, statewide association committed to building a more highly skilled workforce to support and expand Oregon's economy. OWP is driven by the leadership of 120 local businesses, investing their resources to better align economic, education and training systems for job creation and greater prosperity. OWP works with CCWD, OED and the Governor's Office on statewide strategies and approaches to achieving these goals.

DHS Workforce Related Programs

A core set of mandatory procedures and services are in place in all areas. However, service delivery mechanisms and program design may vary among the 16 Districts due to differences in local needs and resources. For example, Portland-area offices may deal with clients' transportation related barriers in a different manner than rural offices due to the availability of public transportation. To provide JOBS services to working TANF clients to help them transition from TANF to employment, DHS staff uses a strength-based case management approach. The intent of case management is to help families become self-supporting while

assisting them with basic needs. DHS respects and empowers clients by recognizing they are capable, have strengths, and have resources that can help them take control of their lives. DHS assists clients in identifying their needs and building on their strengths while supporting them in meeting their goals. Benefit delivery is integrated with self-sufficiency enhancing services. Family self-sufficiency is increased through individualized case management. Case management takes a team effort. The team consists of the client, the case manager, branch staff and community partners with which the client may be working. JOBS services include various levels of Job Preparation and Placement services, Retention and Wage Enhancement services, Self-Sufficiency and Intervention services, Youth and Child services and Teen Parent services.

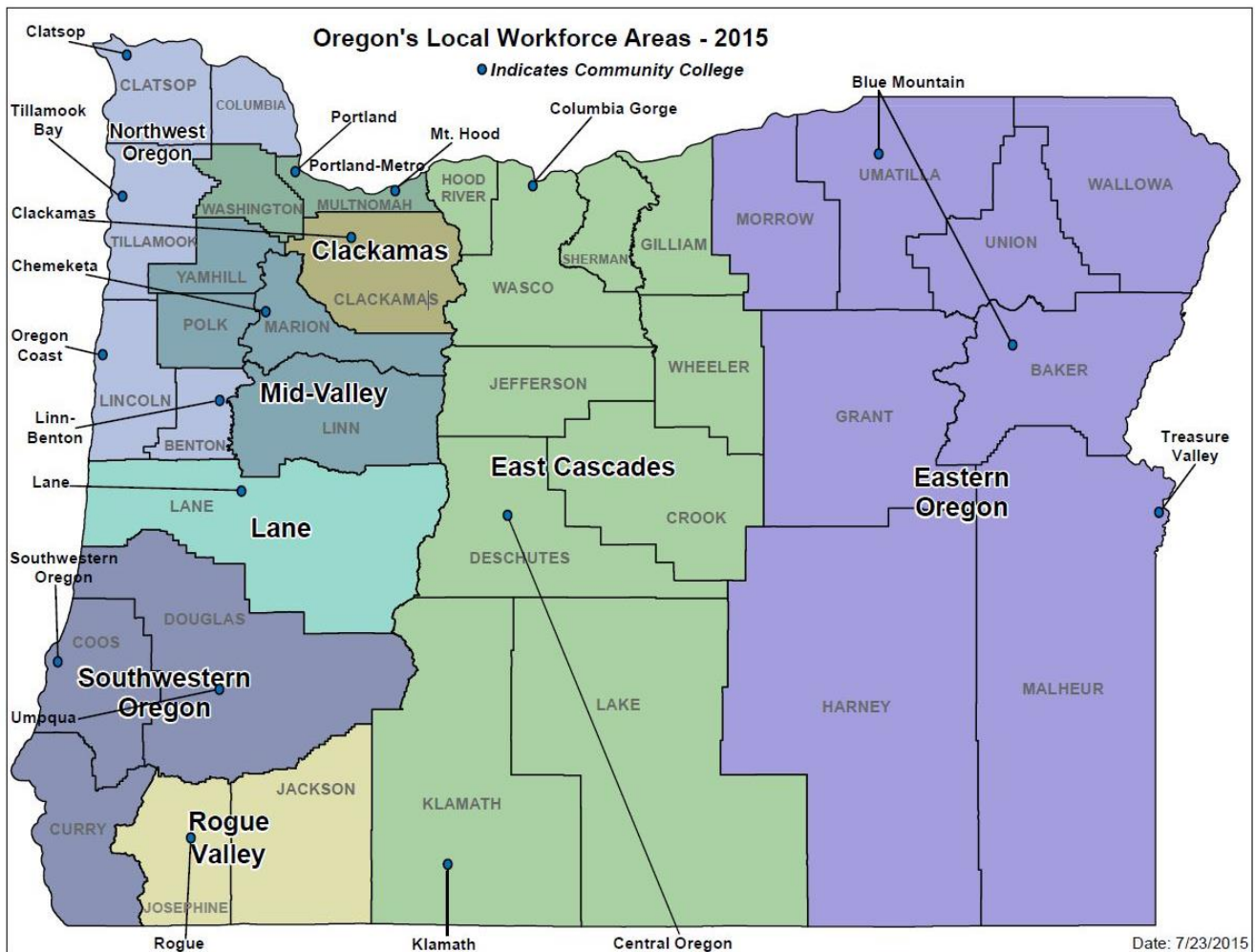
DHS Districts and Local Workforce Investment Area (LWIA) Boundaries



Community Colleges

The community colleges are a key access point for the majority of working learners seeking a postsecondary credential or degree, or who need Adult Basic Skills services. The colleges provide the opportunity for over 370,000 students each year to advance their educational levels and acquire new skills. Community Colleges offer a variety of workforce development services that are important to the overall capacity of Oregon's workforce development system. Continuing education is specifically directed toward individuals wishing to increase and improve their job skills. The goal of customized training is employer satisfaction and employee retention. The goals of continuing education are individualized, according to the needs of the student. The 17 community colleges in Oregon receive funding from a variety of sources but one primary source is from state general funds. During the 2015-17 biennium, this funding accounted for a \$550 million investment in education and workforce related services across the state.

The map below shows Oregon's 17 community colleges and in which local workforce area each is located.



Assessment of Programs and One-Stop Program Partners

Assessment of Core Programs.

Oregon will be using the federal measures as prescribed in WIOA. Available data supports the evaluation of programs at the state and local levels. The service delivery model and economic conditions will be assessed annually against the outcomes achieved during the prior year. Options for continuous improvement will be discussed at the state and local area levels, and performance targets will be adjusted accordingly.

Oregon is researching the use of additional indicators to monitor service delivery in real-time, improve outcomes, and respond to immediate needs of our local communities. Once any additional measures are developed, tested, and approved, the measures will be applied and used to monitor activities on a timely basis. The goal is to support the real-time adjustment of resources and service delivery to match local demand.

Oregon continues to work toward state and local workforce development agencies and boards shifting from a compliance- and program-specific orientation to a highly integrated, outcomes-based system that makes value-added investments based on the WSO standards of performance⁴² and community needs. To the extent that Oregon can achieve this, the workforce system will assure that all workforce programs operate efficiently, without unnecessary duplication, and leverage resources. The WorkSource Oregon Operational Standards provide the minimum-level content/services(s) required at all WSO centers. They also build-in an accountability mechanism to ensure that this effort will come to fruition across the entire state. Finally, they offer an opportunity to work together to continually improve the system, engage new partners, and better serve Oregon's job seekers, workers and businesses.

CCWD will conduct annual assessments of Oregon's aggregate Title II performance and performance by local providers. Adult education and literacy providers will be evaluated by individual provider, rather than by local area performance. Overall program quality will be measured by student persistence, retention, and transition to either employment or postsecondary training. Title II performance evaluations will be supported by: regular submission of programmatic performance numbers, quarterly reporting of programmatic activities, and annual financial audit. Regular monitoring of program quality will be used for continuous improvement activities, allowing CCWD to provide technical assistance based on assessment results.

Title II will assess WSO delivery system partner program services based on the number of cross-trained staff, appropriate referrals, and participant co-enrollment. WorkSource partnerships will also be qualitatively reviewed within Oregon's local areas through quarterly programmatic reporting of Title II providers.

VR has incorporated the accountability measures into our rolling monthly performance reports and our quarterly business reviews. Given the long term nature of the measures, proxy measures have been put in place to make managing to the measures achievable. The monthly performance reports are broken down into the fourteen branches for VR. The quarterly business reviews are a statewide roll-up of the outcome data to date. These two reports give us a local view and a chance to review statewide trends. In this way, local trends can be identified and we can easily identify areas where higher performance may indicate the presence of a best practice that needs to be duplicated.

⁴² <http://wsostandards.weebly.com/read-the-worksource-oregon-operational-standards-here.html>

Over the first two years of this unified plan, local branches will work to develop mechanisms to set local expectations of performance and strategies to enact local VR plans that are congruent with the local WDB plans. These plans will be used to manage the effectiveness of the programs.

VR is currently revamping its quality assurance processes and will use these statewide to help ensure that service delivery is done to a standard that is consistently high across the state. New service contracts will allow VR to better measure the effectiveness of purchased services through individual providers and service category.

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program is an essential part of the safety net for vulnerable Oregon families. TANF stabilizes families and prepares parents for employment that sets them firmly on a pathway out of poverty, and into economic stability and self-reliance. TANF provides supports to keep children safe, healthy and thriving within their own families, financial assistance to stabilize households and training and job search services to help parents find and retain employment

A combination of policy changes and a targeted reinvestment strategy directs \$29.7 million in savings from a projected decline in the TANF caseload into strategies and policy changes that will improve outcomes for children and families. These reinvestment proposals include reducing the number of participants affected by the “benefits cliff” when they become employed, simplifying eligibility requirements to strengthen family connections and stability for children, expanding family stability services, increasing flexibility in support services to prevent families from entering TANF, and improving program capacity to provide strength-based, customized and outcome-focused case management.

Assessment of One-Stop Program Partner Programs

To position the workforce system in Oregon for relevance and growth there must be clarity about what WorkSource Oregon is at both the state and local levels, what it offers, and how existing partnerships bear a shared responsibility to create value to additional partners in the future. The WSO Operational Standards Self-Assessment Report and subsequent development of the WSO Operational Standards will ensure that much of this work is done and continues to improve service and performance within the workforce system.

System wide, the WorkSource Oregon Standards will be utilized to assess the delivery system of partner program services, including but not limited to partner programs outlined in this Unified State Plan. Progress toward, and achievement of, these 80 workforce standards will tracked, reviewed, and managed to better assess and improve outcomes taking into account both local and regional planning strategies and goals.

Oregon is currently developing a certification process that incorporates these WSO Standards to ensure consistency, ongoing system improvement, and federal, state and local compliance.

There are other additional assessments used to evaluate partner programs across the system. One of the key programs managed through the Oregon Employment Department (OED) to help unemployment insurance claimants become reemployed is the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor. This program is evaluated annually using a combination of federal performance measures and ad-hoc reports developed using OED’s business analysis software. An evaluation form is also available for WSO centers to assess the quality and effectiveness of staff engagement with RESEA customers. RESEA program data including staff and customer feedback is evaluated by a standing workgroup that focuses on strengthening claimant reemployment efforts and streamlining agency operations and communications to better serve claimants in one stop centers.

The Trade program is assessed through the Trade Act Participant Report (TAPR), local performance measures for Trade Act Navigators (TAN), and customer surveys. TAPR provides a quarterly look at effectiveness of the program that would have to be reworked to provide a yearly assessment. Local performance measures are to be determined in each area for the TAN.

Oregon will assess performance for the Unemployment Insurance (UI) Program through the State Quality Service Plan (SQSP) each year in compliance with Unemployment Insurance Program Letter (UIPL) 21-14. The SQSP includes Benefits Timeliness and Quality (BTQ) measures, the Tax Performance System (TPS), Cash Management measures, the Benefit Accuracy Measurement (BAM), and Benefit Payment Control (BPC) measures.

Previous Assessment Results

An analysis of Oregon's WorkSource offices was conducted in 2015 and will be used to implement a set of service and performance standards. The partners at WorkSource Oregon, the one stop centers, have developed statewide operational standards for the centers. The standards recognize that workforce areas are starting at different places and the ability to meet all standards will vary across the state. The assessment was used to determine a strategy for implementing the statewide operating standards and will continue to help determine how well we are striving toward full implementation of the standards by region. For the full report, see [WorkSource Oregon Operational Standards Self-Assessment Report \(April 2015\)](http://wsostandards.weebly.com/wso-operational-standards-self-assessment-report-april-2015.html)⁴³.

Previous Title II assessments focused primarily on enrollment and measurable skill gains, such as GED completions. Over the past two years, Title II enrollment in Oregon has decreased from 16,204 in 2013-2014 to 13,882 in 2014-2015. The number of hours participants received services was nearly identical during the two-year time period, 1,666,063 hours in 2013-2014 and 1,624,815 hours in 2014-2015. On average, Title II students received services for over 100 hours a year. The percentage of pre- and post-tests was also similar between 2013-2014 and 2014-2015; approximately 57% of enrolled participants completed pre- and post-tests. The 2014-2015 outcome measures are not yet available. In 2013-2014, Title II outcomes measures totaled 710 GED completers, 2,578 participant transitions to postsecondary education, and 1,699 participants entered employment.

Under WIOA, overall Title II program quality will be measured by student persistence, retention, and transition to either employment or postsecondary training. Title II performance evaluations will be conducted on an annual basis with quarterly performance reporting to support continuous improvement activities. CCWD will then adapt its strategies to focus on program quality and effectiveness.

Title IV regularly uses evaluations of data and qualitative information to measure the effectiveness of our program. Evaluations completed in the last two years have resulted in such things as: a revamping of our statewide procurement process for job placement service, changes to the job placement service delivery model, training to help staff move clients into plan faster, trainings on specific disability barriers, cross trainings with other agencies to ensure better partnerships, changes to business practices using the LEAN model, and the piloting of some new evidenced -based best practices around transition.

An assessment of the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program show that it is effective in helping speed claimants return to work and in preventing and detecting unemployment insurance

⁴³ <http://wsostandards.weebly.com/wso-operational-standards-self-assessment-report-april-2015.html>

(UI) overpayments. Over the past two years, the RESEA program has helped shorten claims duration, reduce exhaustion rates, and increase detection of potential issues resulting in disqualification or overpayment.

In the last two years, Oregon's State Quality Service Plan (SQSP) reports have revealed that Oregon's Unemployment Insurance (UI) program needs to improve the quality and timeliness of work. The report has also identified that the program has made progress on many areas. Although more funding was available to provide services to our customers during the recession, systems maintenance, staff training and regular updating of policies and practices were deferred.

The agency is now performing the needed work, while maintaining appropriate levels of performance and customer service, with significant federal funding decreases. Examples include:

- Additional reviews of the adjudication process and more training has resulted in increased Benefits Timeliness and Quality (BTQ) scores and Oregon exceeding the DOL standard for BTQ for four straight quarters.
- The UI program has also undertaken a LEAN effort to streamline its work processes and imbed a culture of continuous improvement.
- The program has also made progress in overpayment detection and appeals timeliness, and is working towards improvements in prevention and recovery of overpayments.

The state will conduct evaluations and research projects on activities under WIOA core programs; how such projects will be coordinated with, and designed in conjunction with, State and local boards and with State agencies responsible for the administration of all respective core programs; and, further, how the projects will be coordinated with the evaluations provided for by the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Education under WIOA. The WSET will determine the WIOA core program activities that will be evaluated and researched. The WSET is both an operational and decision-making group regarding workforce system project development and implementation. Through the leadership of this group, projects will be determined, assigned, coordinated amongst state, agency staff and local partners responsible for both the administration and implementation of WIOA and core programs.

Additionally, Oregon plans to adopt new methods and criteria for the assessment of offices, partners, and programs based on the WSO Operation Standards (referenced in the "Assessment of One-Stop Program Partner Programs section"). The WSO Operational Standards assessment and other assessments will be utilized to understand and improve the effectiveness of the core programs and other WSO Oregon partner programs. The WSO Operational Standards are currently being implemented, and these standards will be in effect for the PY 2016-2018 time period. State agency and program leadership, in partnership with local workforce boards and other local partners, workgroups and project teams will coordinate to adapt strategies and operational methodologies based on the outcomes of these assessments and any other relevant assessments by collaboratively acknowledging, researching, and analyzing what is working, what is not, and what needs to be changed and improved – all with the goal of providing better service delivery and exceeding performance objectives.

Distribution of Funds for Core Programs

Currently, the Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD) distributes Title I formula funds for Youth and Adult to local areas using three equally weighted factors:

- One-third on the basis of the relative number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment in each workforce investment area, compared to the total number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment in the State;
- One-third on the basis of the relative excess number of unemployed individuals in the area compared to the total excess number of unemployed individuals in the entire state; and
- One-third based on the relative number of disadvantaged youths/adults compared to the total number of disadvantaged youths/adults in the entire state.

CCWD also uses a hold-harmless formula so that no local area receives less than 90 percent of the average allocation percentage of the local area for the two, preceding fiscal years. Amounts necessary for increasing such allocations to local areas to comply with the hold-harmless are obtained by ratably reducing the allocations to be made to other local areas.

It is the policy of the State of Oregon to allocate dislocated worker funds to local areas based on the average distribution of the data that reflects the following factors as they relate to the workforce areas (this average distribution assumes all factors are weighted equally):

- Total Unemployed
- Excess Unemployed
- UI Exhaustees
- Total UI Claimants
- Declining Industries

The resulting average distribution per workforce area will be applied to the formula dollars the state will distribute to the areas. Effective July 1, 2016, a hold-harmless formula will also be applied to dislocated worker funds distributed to local areas.

The Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD), which administers the Title I programs in Oregon, is currently in the process of developing WIOA compliance policies for Youth, Adult and Dislocated worker employment and training. The intention of the department is to complete these policies as soon as possible contingent upon guidance available from Department of Labor and based on WIOA (see page 76 of WIOA⁴⁴). CCWD intends to include as many policies as possible in this plan by the required deadline. As policies are created and published, they will be made available at <http://wioa.weebly.com/policies-and-guidance.html>⁴⁵.

Awarding multi-year grants or contracts

CCWD will award competitive grants to eligible Title II providers on a three-year cycle. Eligible Title II providers must demonstrate effectiveness by providing appropriate documentation including:

- Description of program activities and services provided to both low-skilled adults and English language learners;

⁴⁴ <https://www.doleta.gov/WIOA/docs/BILLS-113hr803enr.pdf>

⁴⁵ <http://wioa.weebly.com/policies-and-guidance.html>

- Description of how the organization facilitates student transitions from adult education to either employment and/or postsecondary education;
- Outcome data for students under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act definitions or similar metrics such as educational functioning level gains,
- GED completions,
- Transitions to employment and/or postsecondary training; and
- Successfully passing a fiscal audit for the two preceding years.

The competitive Request for Application (RFA) process will be conducted in an open and fair manner. All information related to the RFA will be provided on the Title II website. The RFA will be designed with a single application for all Title II provider applicants, including a published timeline and scoring criteria. The competitive grants will be awarded by county, rather than local workforce development area, to promote access to Title II services in rural areas of Oregon. A single review tool will be used for all applications across the state, including a universal scoring rubric.

Vocational Rehabilitation services portion

Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation and the Oregon Commission for the Blind decide through mutual agreement on the distribution of funds between the two agencies. This agreement is reviewed periodically to ensure that the service, staffing, and operational needs of both agencies are adequately met based on the availability of funds. Changes to the current funding levels can be requested by either agency at any time and changes can be made based upon mutual agreement.

Program Data

Data Alignment and Integration

In 2015, the Oregon Employment Department was authorized to begin planning for procuring, customizing, and executing an integrated technology platform for the state labor exchange and the Unemployment Insurance programs. The overarching goal of this modernization project is to provide better value of service to the customer by utilizing modern technology and products. Ultimately, the new platform would improve functionality and flexibility of these systems while lowering the risk of a major technology failure and providing better service to stakeholders. The feasibility plan will explicitly consider how the system can be effectively leveraged and integrated with other workforce programs, both to make the system easier for the public to use and to improve how the programs interact with each other.

Transforming multiple diverse systems into one integrated system has been an incremental process that has resulted in challenges to reporting aggregate numbers accurately. Although our common customer registration process enrolls customers in all of the W-P and WIA Adult programs for which they are eligible, both W-P and WIA services are still tracked separately.

Although some service/customer data resides in separate systems, Oregon continues to improve the interoperability of systems between systems and agencies. Data-sharing agreements, confidentiality issues, and program-specific requirements continue to create challenges in aligning and integrating data systems. In some cases, Oregon has developed innovative processes, and we continue to explore options at both the functional and administrative levels. For the Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker programs, the Employment Services and labor exchange functions, and Trade Act, customer data is passed between multiple systems, and staff have access to view customer data from any of the programs in which a customer is enrolled.

At this point in time, the state's core programs will utilize an aggregate data system to achieve interoperability for common data. The core programs will provide data to the state level data system, PRISM. Title II will collect programmatic data in TOPs Pro and convert that individual data into the CCWD data management system, D4A. Data in D4A will then be merged with PRISM. The data available in PRISM will be aggregate and not utilized for program improvement purposes. CCWD will monitor data submitted by individual adult education and literacy providers as it is transmitted in TOPs Pro for programmatic performance and continuous improvement purposes.

OWIB has established a goal and five strategies around creating a customer-centric, easy to access workforce system, including developing accountability mechanisms focused on results. Alignment of technology and data systems across the partner programs and agencies are the key to creating such a system and accountability mechanisms. The state board will assist the Governor by continuing to focus on system results and the needs or impediments to both measuring and improving the results for individuals and employers.

The user interface layer of this shared system is the WorkSource Oregon Management Information System (WOMIS), a multi-application customer- and staff-accessed system that comprises Customer Registration, Program Eligibility Determination, iMatchSkills® (labor exchange), Trade Adjustment Assistance, some WIOA service tracking, and other customer services and resources. Enhancing WOMIS requires ongoing analysis and research, extensive information technology programming and coding, statewide hardware and software changes, and continuing fine-tuning, enhancements, and troubleshooting.

User groups made up of state and local staff continue to monitor the MIS elements for consistency and needed changes. In addition to WOMIS, each local workforce area must use a management information system to record, track, and report on customer data for individuals participating in WIOA-funded services and activities.

CCWD encourages all local areas to deploy a customer record tracking and retention process that is efficient and effective for staff and customers, supports a data and file structure that is consistent statewide, and honors the federal Paperwork Reduction Act and state paperless initiatives, while meeting federal performance requirements.

All local areas use a single MIS statewide (I-Trac). Customer demographic and service data is consolidated and checked for errors at the state level before being reported to DOL. At the state level, MIS elements are being reported uniformly, via this web-based platform with expanded data management capabilities making it possible for us to track and report program participant information on any number of federal, state, and local grants and funding streams. These enhancements have allowed data management collection and reporting services for every local workforce board in the state.

Assessment of Participants' Post-Program Success.

Oregon will be using the federal measures prescribed in WIOA. Available data supports the evaluation of programs at the state and local levels. The service delivery model and economic conditions will be assessed annually against the outcomes achieved during the prior year. Options for continuous improvement will be discussed at the state and local levels, and performance targets will be adjusted accordingly.

Oregon is researching the use of additional indicators to monitor service delivery in real-time, improve outcomes, and respond to immediate needs of our local communities. Once any additional measures are developed, tested, and approved, the measures will be applied and used to monitor activities on a timely basis. The goal is to support the real-time adjustment of resources and service delivery to match local demand.

Title II will track participants who have exited into employment and postsecondary education. A wage record match will be conducted to determine employment of adult education and literacy participant's following program exit. The wage record match occurs through an agreement with the Employment Department and requires the use of participant social security numbers. Participants will be tracked into postsecondary education, through CCWD's student database, D4A, using the student's social security number and universal student identification number.

Title IV VR receives UI wage data through a contract with the Employment Department and will track client progress in maintaining employment through the four quarter period following closure.

VR has an agreement with CCWD's student database to match VR closed client records via the use of the client's social security number which will be used to assess the client's progress in completing credentials and obtaining skill gains post closure from VR.

Use of Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage Record Data

Oregon currently has the statutory authority in place to share Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage Record Data to partners under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 for the purpose of administering state workforce programs under the Act. As Oregon's cycle for full legislative sessions occurs every two years, the state will update its statutory authority to authorize disclosure of UI Wage Record Data to partners under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 no later than July 1, 2017. The UI program will seek information and data sharing agreements to share UI wage record data with the appropriate state agencies permissible under state and federal law.

Oregon currently uses UI wage record data to support federal performance measures. The necessary information sharing agreements are in place. Once federal reporting requirements and record layout are finalized, state and local partners will perform an analysis to determine next steps to effectively and efficiently meet the reporting requirements.

Unemployment insurance wage record match will be conducted to determine employment of adult education and literacy participants following program exit. The wage record match occurs through an agreement with the Employment Department and requires the use of participant social security numbers.

Privacy Safeguards.

All information collected under the programs administered by the Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development, the Oregon Employment Department and Vocational Rehabilitation is considered confidential. This includes programs under Titles I, II, III and IV, as well as other required one stop partner programs. State law, rule and policy provide security controls to govern processes, procedures, data systems, information release, and audits. These controls are designed to make sure all confidential information is protected from the time the information is received to the time it is destroyed. Employees and partners are also trained on the appropriate use and security of confidential information, and the penalties for its misuse.

Priority of Service for Veterans

The State Veterans Program Coordinator provided the following materials in accordance with the Jobs for Veterans Act, section 4215 of 38 U.S.C. to all WSO centers in order to educate the WorkSource center staff on the roles and responsibilities of Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialists (DVOPs), and Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs), and to ensure that veterans and eligible spouses receive priority of service in all Oregon WorkSource locations:

- Priority of Service example tools
- Customer workflow diagram example, and
- Department of Labor approved Priority of Service Training for Frontline Staff available online via iLearn, Oregon's interactive training site for all WSO staff and partner staff.

The priority of service training materials were disseminated to each WorkSource location in Oregon in order to ensure:

- That eligible veterans and eligible spouses receive priority of service in the customer intake process, for training opportunities, referrals to employers and for employment based workshops offered at each OED/WorkSource location.
- OED/WorkSource staff can refer special disabled veterans and veterans with barriers to employment to DVOPs for intensive services and case management services.
- Each Business and Employment Specialist staff member can provide excellent customer service and core employment services to those veterans that are not eligible to meet with a DVOP.

WorkSource Oregon centers have posters indicating that serving in the military entitles customers to priority of service and all front line staff are trained to ask the question as well as provide priority of service to covered persons. The centers provide color coded initial intake forms that contain DVOP eligibility questions to help local WorkSource Oregon staff identify veterans and spouses that are eligible for DVOP services. If the veteran or eligible spouse self discloses that he or she has a significant barrier to employment or disability that qualifies him or her for DVOP services, business and employment specialist staff promote the intensive employment services that a DVOP can provide and facilitate a warm hand off or a referral via phone or email to DVOP staff. All WorkSource Oregon field offices have approved local office plans in place that outline how each office will provide priority of service and refer eligible veterans and spouses to DVOP specialist for intensive employment services. All local office plans are monitored and updated each program year.

Addressing the Accessibility of the WSO Delivery System`

Local-level Equal Opportunity Coordinators are required to monitor facilities for compliance at least every two years. The state Universal Access Coordinator (UAC) completes a site visit to area WSO locations on a rotating basis to ensure compliance with ADA accessibility. The state UAC's oversight Monitoring Review Guide includes specific monitoring review guidelines to ensure that all plans and contracts contain the required assurance language.

Current Oregon practices designed to broaden the composition of those considered for participation and employment at the WSO centers include but are not limited to the following:

- Designated bilingual positions postings
- Recruitment of applicants with bilingual skills and experience
- Identification and testing of staff with bilingual skills
- Information exchange and collaboration with community organizations regarding translators, interpreters and resources for those with Limited English Proficiency
- Publication of selected materials in languages other than English
- Use of telephone interpreters and contract interpreters as needed to provide language assistance to customers on a case-by-case basis
- Disability awareness and cultural sensitivity training for staff

- Accessibility to auxiliary aids and assistive devices and trained staff in all WIOA regions
- Participation in local and statewide job related events including job fairs, school career days, media feature stories, seminars and networking groups.

State recipient agencies and local workforce staff will conduct programmatic and architectural accessibility compliance site reviews for their own and sub-recipient sites at least every two years and training for recipient and sub-recipient staff on an on-going basis.

OED's Language Assistance Policy, COM 2, clarifies the standards for making WSO services accessible and delivering services to customers that are English Language Learner (ELL), consistent with federal and state law and well-established ELL principles. This policy is used by all WorkSource Oregon staff.

In addition, the WSO system follows the federal Department of Justice's Vital Documents Questions and Answer guidelines. The state Universal Access Coordinator (UAC) works with local EOCs and workforce boards to develop a plan of improvement if a workforce region is not meeting the standards for equal access.

The state UAC will determine the need for language assistance by utilizing the Four-Factor Analysis. The number or proportion of ELL individuals eligible to participate or likely to be directly or significantly affected by the program or activity; the frequency of contact a participant or beneficiary is required to have with the program or activity; the nature and importance of the program or activity to the participant or beneficiary; the resources available to the recipient in carrying out the program or activity.

A variety of on-line courses on diversity are available to all staff, as well as a lending library with a number of titles on diversity and inclusion, and Equal Opportunity. In addition, the EOCs and the state UAC work together to provide training and support for staff of the WSO centers. They also provide ELL and cultural competency training. OED staff is trained annually on telephone interpretation service and the language assistance policy. Trainings may happen in person, through webinars, e-learning or publications.

The Governor's office and Workforce Development Boards in Oregon are focusing on improving employment outcomes for populations that are traditionally under or unemployed, such as the ELL and Persons with Disabilities (PWD) populations. The state UAC, through coordination with local EOCs and WSO service providers, will ensure that recipients take reasonable steps to include members of various demographic groups in their programs or activities. The state UAC provides an ongoing assessment of target populations receiving WSO services in comparison to census data. This assessment is evaluated by all workforce regions and an analysis of compliance is completed. The review for universal access examines plans for targeting and outreach to identify target populations. Recipients are expected to engage in specific outreach efforts targeted to members of various demographic groups by using a variety of media outlets and methods to ensure they provide universal access to services and to employment opportunities. Local workforce area providers are monitored on universal access as part of the annual self-assessment. The assessments are evaluated and analyzed by all regions and reported to the state UAC, who then, along with the Universal Access Workgroup, reviews the analysis and makes any final comments or observations. Areas not meeting compliance will be asked to develop a corrective action plan. Population changes including language and special needs are viewed on a continual basis.

The UAC also implements and monitors the agency's Language Assistance Policy. The agency utilizes the four-factor analysis as noted in Federal Register, 66, No. 11, to determine required populations for language assistance. OED conducts outreach activities in those OED offices that meet the Essential Language and

Significant English Language Learners population thresholds. All OED offices that meet an essential language threshold will submit to their assistant director, regional manager, or administrator an annual outreach plan for identified ELL populations.

The Americans with Disabilities Act Checklist for Readily Achievable Barrier Removal is utilized as a field evaluation. WSO centers are required to do a self-assessment as part of the Annual Compliance Review.

Although the Disability Navigator Program (DNP) funding has ended, the WSO system continues to benefit from the legacy of experience and assistance provided by the navigators. These benefits include:

- Provision of information for WSO staff regarding service delivery for customers who experience a disability or people who have encountered multiple barriers to employment. Navigators provided specialized assistance and guidance to available resources to help the WSO center staff better meet the needs of job seekers with disabilities and others experiencing barriers to employment. An example of this might be training and advising staff on how to meet the needs of a customer who is deaf or providing guidance on jobsite accommodations. Navigators also provided information on resources for services that went beyond the ability of the center.
- Provision of information that WSO staff can use to assist job seekers to get information about available programs and services that might impact their search for employment and to assist the job seeker in breaking down barriers to employment through access to resources such as Career and Resource Mapping Workshops, resource coordination and assistance in negotiating Integrated Resource Teams.

Provision of information on assistive technology and accommodation that WSO staff can use are available to assist employers who will be employing individuals with disabilities. WSO staff also learned how to give employers information about an underutilized labor pool, tax savings information, and conduct outreach to agencies/organizations that serve people with disabilities.

In each WSO center, staff is trained in disability etiquette and how to ensure customers receive requested accommodations. The on-site compliance review will combine a review of summary materials as completed in a desk audit compliance review with an architectural accessibility review of the recipient's facilities, operations and procedures. Physical review of each facility may be done in collaboration with CCWD and other state agencies.

In Gresham and Eugene, WSO Offices have installed a Video Relay System (VRS) for assuring equitable access to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D&HH) community. VRS works in the same way as the 711 Relay services and is funded by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The difference is that with VRS, a D&HH customer may use Sign Language to communicate with a relay operator who then transmits the information to the hearing receiver through a regular phone. There is no need for a VRS, or video phone, on the receiving end.

The VRS in these two offices serves as a pilot project and is in compliance with ADA regulations in terms of assuring that customers have equitable access to our services. If the pilot proves successful, more offices will receive the VRS devices. Many D&HH individuals already have VRS in their homes. The VRS in our offices will be treated as a means for this community to contact UI as well as for employment purposes. Should a UI claims taker or other UI staff receive a call via the VRS, they will be told that a VRS operator is on the other end before the customer's message is relayed, just like if they were receiving a 711 call.

Coordination with Unified State Plan Programs

A state planning workgroup comprised of program leads and executive management from Title I (Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs), Title II (Adult Basic Education and Literacy Programs), Title III (Wagner-Peyser Employment Services, Title IV (Vocational Rehabilitation and Commission for the Blind), and DHS Self-Sufficiency, Aging and People with Disabilities, and Developmental Disabilities services. Members of this group worked collaboratively in true partnership in planning and coordinating amongst WIOA required core programs and WorkSource Oregon partners in the design, development and completion of the Oregon Unified State Plan. This workgroup included staff from the Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (both the Workforce Investment Division and the Education Division/Community Colleges), the Oregon Employment Department (including the departments of Business Services, Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers, Unemployment Insurance, Veterans Services, Workforce and Employment Research Division, and State Universal Access), Vocational Rehabilitation, Commission for the Blind, and DHS Self Sufficiency.

Section V. Common Assurances

All required assurances are included in Appendix 2.

Section VI. Program Specific Requirements for Core Programs

Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities under Title I: General Requirements

Regions and Local Workforce Development Areas

In October 2014, the Governor designated five new local workforce areas. The designation process conformed to Section 116 of the WIA and TEGl 37-10, and aligns with Section 106(b)(4) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Nine Workforce Development Areas have been designated by the Governor.

They are:

1. Multnomah, Washington counties and the City of Portland
2. Clackamas County
3. Linn, Marion, Polk and Yamhill counties
4. Benton, Clatsop, Columbia, Lincoln and Tillamook counties
5. Lane County
6. Jackson and Josephine counties
7. Coos, Curry and Douglas counties
8. Crook, Deschutes, Gilliam, Hood River, Jefferson, Klamath, Lake, Sherman, Wasco, and Wheeler counties
9. Baker, Grant, Harney, Malheur, Morrow, Umatilla, Union and Wallowa counties

Further, for purposes of identifying regions, as described and required in WIOA Sec. 106 (a), each of these local areas will be a region unto itself, as allowed in WIOA Sec. 106 (a)(2)(A).

Determining Local Areas

Local areas were designated under WIA Section 116(a)(4), Designation on Recommendation of State Board. As required in the Act, areas were designated upon request of the Local Elected Officials. The requests were

brought before the State Workforce Investment Board. The Board recommended the designation of areas to the Governor. Designation took place during the initial implementation of the WIA. In 2014, local elected officials recommended that the Governor consider new boundaries within two existing local areas comprising a 24 (non-contiguous) county local area and an adjacent three county local area.

In August 2013, Oregon's Governor Kitzhaber issued an Executive Order clarifying expectations that all Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) would be expected to expand their roles to better support the development of local solutions to labor market challenges. Other Workforce Redesign efforts were occurring at the same time, and the Governor realized that these efforts, combined with the Executive Order, might require – or benefit from – organizational changes for some local areas.

In March 2014, the Governor issued a letter inviting LWDBs and chief local elected officials to consider realigning local workforce development area boundaries, to allow for greater alignment of workforce boards with local economic development and job creation strategies, better align with Regional Solutions Teams boundaries, and support local decision making.

The role of the OWIB in designation included reviewing forwarded designation requests from the Governor, determining/evaluating whether there was compelling evidence that a designation would improve a variety of factors, providing opportunities for public comment throughout the process (see Section II.) and making final recommendations to the Governor.

For the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Governor Kate Brown designated nine Local Workforce Development Areas (local areas).

Initial Designation

Four local areas were designated as a Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) for the purposes of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), and requested initial designation as described in WIOA Section 106(b)(2).

Additionally, these local areas performed successfully and sustained fiscal integrity for the two years preceding the enactment of WIOA, as defined in WIOA Section 106(e), and were approved to continue to be a local area for the purposes of WIOA, through June 30, 2017 (PYs 2015 & 2016).

The four local areas receiving approval for initial designation are:

- Multnomah and Washington counties and the City of Portland
- Clackamas County
- Lane County
- Jackson and Josephine counties

Designation on Recommendation of the State Board

In 2014, local elected officials recommended that the Governor consider new boundaries within two existing local areas comprising a 24 (non-contiguous) county local area and an adjacent three county local area.

The Oregon Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development, the Governor, and the Oregon Workforce Investment Board (OWIB) collaborated to develop a voluntary, locally initiated procedure for LWA Designation Requests, based on guidance found in the Workforce Investment Act, Final Rule, TEGL 37-10

Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and Appropriations Act Provisions on the Designation of Local Workforce Development areas, and contact with DOL/ETA Region 6 staff.

On October 22, 2014, the Governor designated five new local workforce areas. The designation process conformed to Section 116 of the WIA and TEGL 37-10, and aligns with Section 106(b)(4) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. This entire process, including the State Board review criteria, public comments, and the Governor's approval letter, became part of Oregon's State Plan via *WorkSource Oregon State Plan Modification #01-14*, and Oregon received official approval of the modification and designations from the Department of Labor on January 20, 2015. This modification is in effect through June 30, 2016.

The five local areas so designated are:

- Linn, Marion, Polk and Yamhill counties
- Benton, Clatsop, Columbia, Lincoln and Tillamook counties
- Coos, Curry and Douglas counties
- Crook, Deschutes, Gilliam, Hood River, Jefferson, Klamath, Lake, Sherman, Wasco, and Wheeler counties
- Baker, Grant, Harney, Malheur, Morrow, Umatilla, Union and Wallowa counties

Oregon believes that the designation process aligns with the intent of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. It provides additional flexibility to local boards and allows them to focus on local economic issues, while potentially strengthening their strategic roles locally and across the state. This should allow these new, smaller local boards to better serve the specific need(s) of their community(ies) while ultimately fostering regional collaboration. For additional information and details, please see related documents here <http://www.oregon.gov/owib/boardmeetingsandevents/Pages/boardmeetings.aspx>⁴⁶

Appeals Process

The draft appeals process in Oregon that is required in section 106 can be found at http://wioa.weebly.com/uploads/3/9/2/2/39223489/attachment_a_-_wioa_local_area_designation_process_-_draft.pdf⁴⁷. As policies are finalized they will be posted at <http://wioa.weebly.com/policies-and-guidance.html>⁴⁸.

Statewide Activities

Oregon does administer state funds for use within the workforce development system. This state funding is flexible and provides the system the ability to innovate and use this funding as governor needs dictate. CCWD is currently drafting WIOA compliant policies and anticipates that the policy will be ready by the time this plan must be submitted to DOL. As policies become finalized they will be published, distributed and posted at <http://wioa.weebly.com/policies-and-guidance.html>⁴⁹.

Governor's Set Aside Funding

While the state is ultimately responsible for the delivery of all Rapid Response services according to section 133(a)(2), CCWD works in partnership with Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB) and designated

⁴⁶ <http://www.oregon.gov/owib/boardmeetingsandevents/Pages/boardmeetings.aspx>

⁴⁷ http://wioa.weebly.com/uploads/3/9/2/2/39223489/attachment_a_-_wioa_local_area_designation_process_-_draft.pdf

⁴⁸ <http://wioa.weebly.com/policies-and-guidance.html>

⁴⁹ <http://wioa.weebly.com/policies-and-guidance.html>

Dislocated Worker Liaisons, to provide contracted Rapid Response services. These activities and services are designed to assist companies throughout the business cycle. A concerted effort will be made to avert layoffs. The State of Oregon prides itself on having a very collaborative and all-encompassing pre-layoff strategy that includes employers, workers, and partners. CCWD's Dislocated Worker Unit, is responsible for the coordination of lay off activities throughout the state, providing technical assistance to a statewide network of Dislocated Worker Liaisons and Rapid Response Coordinators to assure the highest level of services to affected workers in the State of Oregon.

The state holds back funds specifically to provide rapid response and additional assistance to LWDBs. These funds are governed by CCWD policy number 589-20.10 which clearly outlines four ways in which local areas may access funds. All funds are distributed on a first-come, first-serve basis. Rapid Response Funds can be utilized for pre layoff activities such as surveys, information sessions, on-site resource rooms, transition team set-up, peer advocates, etc.

Local Workforce Areas can access Additional Assistance Funds to provide a gap fill while a LWDB has a pending National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) application, or in cases where the closure or layoff does not meet DOL participant thresholds for NDWG. Funds may also be used for layoff aversion projects.

CCWD and local Title I providers have an agreed upon Joint Communication Plan which is implemented whenever either party is notified of a layoff or closure, regardless of size. The Joint Communication Plan outlines a conversation that the local areas and state will have during any layoff or closure activities. These conversations determine next steps and inclusion of additional state and local partners and resources and if the services will be offered on site or at the local WorkSource Oregon centers.

The Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notice (WARN) is not the typical method in which the state receives notification or information about layoffs or closure. In the State of Oregon most layoffs or closures do not meet the thresholds required to activate the WARN Act. State Rapid Response Liaisons often learn about layoffs or closures through local media, local elected officials, local and state economic development partners, or affected workers contacting either the state or local WorkSource Oregon center. Layoff information is also gleaned from a variety of local print and on line sources, one of these sources is "Around the State" a weekly publication from the Oregon Employment Department, which is a compilation of information gathered by labor market analysts throughout the state.

Rapid Response activities are unique to each closure or layoff. Rapid Response activities include information sessions on a variety of topics. All sessions will cover WorkSource Oregon services, ranging from Unemployment Insurance, Health Insurance Exchange, Trade Adjustment Assistance and union information, if applicable. Other topics that may be included are Department of Human Services (DHS) services, such as Temporary Need to Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Consumer Credit Counseling, and University and Community College partners. Services are determined by the needs of the affected workgroup and their employer in conjunction with local workforce staff and should be brought on site whenever possible.

If the layoffs are trade related or the affected company is trade certified, then all relevant TAA requirements and guidelines are followed.

CCWD is currently drafting policy updates and anticipates that these policies will be ready by the time this plan must be submitted to DOL. CCWD is waiting on addition federal guidance. As policies become finalized they will posted at <http://wioa.weebly.com/policies-and-guidance.html>.

State Policies and Procedures to Provide Rapid Response

Should the Governor declare a state disaster, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) may respond by also declaring a federal disaster. Once/if these two declarations are made, CCWD will work with the local workforce board and its providers/partners to apply for a National Emergency Disaster Grant.

The purpose of these grants is to provide temporary disaster relief. This can happen in a limited number of ways but includes the following:

- Temporary employment to provide food, clothing, shelter and other humanitarian assistance for disaster victims
- Demolition, repair, cleaning, renovation and reconstruction of damaged or destroyed public structures, facilities and lands located within the declared disaster area
- Training for people dislocated due to the disaster that need to be returned to gainful employment

An emergency declaration by Oregon's Governor is not sufficient to apply for funding assistance.

Rapid Response on Behalf of Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)

As part of the state's Rapid Response to layoff and dislocation events, contact is made with the employer and Rapid Response services should, whenever possible, be scheduled to begin within 24 hours. As part of these services, the Dislocated Worker Liaison/Rapid Response Coordinator will coordinate with the local area team members which may include the Trade Act Navigator. The Trade Act Navigator (TAN) represents the Trade Act program on the local area's Rapid Response Teams. The TAN will collaborate locally with WorkSource Oregon staff, the Workforce Board, and the Central Trade Act Unit to meet dislocated worker needs on a local level.

The TAN will communicate if a petition for Trade Act has been, or will be, filed for planning efforts and attend all planned Rapid Response activities planned by the team. The Trade Act Navigator is responsible for providing an overview of "potential Trade Act benefits" and Next Steps if a Trade Act Petition is granted. They will also act as lead presenter at the Trade Act Information Sessions (TAIS) that follow notification of the approved petition.

The Trade Act Leadership Team, made up of state level Trade Act partners and the Dislocated Worker Unit, participate in bimonthly, statewide strategy meetings to plan Rapid Response activities and participate in statewide Rapid Response training. The Trade Act Leadership Team provides statewide communication on all Trade Act Petition activity.

If a Trade Act Petition is, or will be filed, on behalf of the affected worker groups, a high-end overview of Trade Adjustment Assistance Reauthorization Act (TAARA) services and benefits will be provided. Contact information for the Central Trade Act Unit and detailed instructions on how to follow the status of their petition on doleta.gov will also be provided.

Oregon's Unemployment Insurance (UI) program participates in early intervention to worker groups on whose behalf a Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) petition has been filed. UI staff is included in the team of cross-agency representatives for Rapid Response who meet with affected workers.

Adult and Dislocated Worker Program Requirements

Work-Based Training Models

Oregon is utilizing work-based training models including on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, transitional jobs, and customized training as part of its training strategy and these models ensure high quality training for both participants and employers.

TAA and WIOA pursue high quality, on-the-job training opportunities with employers and make appropriate OJT-related referrals for work-ready job seekers based on the talent of the participant and the need of the employer. TAA works with the Apprenticeship Program Liaison on opportunities to develop relationships with local apprenticeship programs and training centers to make this training model available to customers.

Registered Apprenticeship

The Oregon Employment Department (OED), in conjunction with the Apprenticeship Training Division (ATD) of the Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI), will undertake a number of activities in order to expand structured work-based learning options for employers and individuals.

OED and ATD will develop and deploy a training program to educate staff in WorkSource Oregon centers and agency central offices about structured work-based learning, which includes registered apprenticeship. The training program will help all workforce partners understand the different training options that employers and individuals can access through the workforce system and each of their defining characteristics. The training will also teach staff how to identify an apprenticeable occupation, the characteristics of a good apprentice, and how to refer both individuals and employers to structured work based learning training programs. The training program will help WorkSource Oregon staff understand the value of registered apprenticeship and structured work-based learning, which will enable them to share the information broadly with employers and other service delivery partners.

OED and ATD will build coalitions and relationships with industry and community partners to create and expand registered apprenticeship programs through two apprenticeship focused positions at OED and the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). OED will partner with local workforce boards to ensure that new apprenticeship programs are aligned with industry need and local sector strategies. ODE will partner with secondary and post-secondary institutions and community partners to increase the opportunities for youth to transition from high school into an apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship program. OED and ATD will continue to work towards increasing the number of women and minorities involved in structured work-based learning and registered apprenticeship programs by working with community partners and the Department of Human Services to provide supportive services during portions of the apprenticeship training period.

Training WorkSource Oregon staff on the value of apprenticeship in addition to providing staff support to create and expand apprenticeship programs represents a significant emphasis by the state to encourage local partners to increase the use of structured work based learning strategies.

Training Provider Eligibility Procedure

Under WIA, Oregon had a waiver for subsequent eligibility. Beginning July 22, 2015, Oregon allowed Eligible Training Providers (ETP) to be grandfathered onto the new ETP List (ETPL) effective July 1, 2015 until December 31, 2015. Because the WIOA requirements are significantly more stringent than Oregon's past Eligible Training Provider policies, Oregon is instituting an ETPL transition procedure for Continuing Eligibility that allows current ETP programs to remain eligible past June 30, 2016. The transition procedures

will remain in place until WIOA-compliant criteria are developed. A WIOA-compliant initial eligibility application is in development and expected to be in place by June 30, 2016.

The transition procedure requires a continued eligibility application for training providers that were previously eligible under WIA and those who were eligible during the WIOA transition period. A critical component of this transition period is the requirement that the training provider indicates they are able to comply with the WIOA data reporting requirements for their eligible programs. Due to an existing data sharing agreement between Oregon Employment Department and Higher Education Coordinating Commission – the oversight body of both public and private training providers – training providers will primarily be required to only submit student social security numbers in order to provide student performance data. Program data will still need to be supplied by the training provider. The state will receive and review the applications and make eligibility determinations for the State ETP List.

Long-term, Oregon intends to integrate the ETPL application process for both initial and continued eligibility into the existing program approval process training providers already undertake with the Higher Education Coordinating Commission. This process would apply to community colleges, private career schools, and vocational schools. Apprenticeships will be included on the list by indicating their interest prior to quarterly publication of the ETP List.

Oregon is creating an online portal for eligible training provider applications that will be connected to approval process for both public and private training programs in the state. The intent is to reduce duplication of entry for training providers and capture needed information only once. The portal is also being developed to connect the data collection to existing performance reporting systems to ensure that the ETPL aligns with existing reporting mechanisms and systems.

Though the ETPL Policy and Procedures are not yet finalized, the intent of the portal is to allow providers to complete an application related to the provider, location, program(s), credentials, and performance. Once providers complete the application and meet the minimum thresholds (minimum performance standards are yet to be determined), they will automatically be approved as Initially Eligible to provide training services in accordance with WIOA. Programs reviewed and posted on Oregon's ETPL by the State, and are granted Initial Year eligibility status for one calendar year from the date the program is first posted. At the conclusion of Initial Year eligibility, programs are subject to Continued Eligibility criteria.

The State will apply the following eligibility criteria as drafted to date, include, at a minimum:

- Be in partnership with employer(s)
- Lead to a recognized post-secondary credential; and,
- Be aligned with in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

Continued eligibility criteria will include the above, with the additional requirements to provide the following performance indicators: unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit and during the fourth quarter after exit, median earnings, training program completion, and attainment of credentials or industry-recognized certificates. Additional criteria and information requirements may be developed later which will be included in any plan modification that occurs.

Initial and continued eligibility applications will be submitted to the State to review provider applications and make eligibility determinations. Local workforce development boards may develop additional eligibility

criteria, information requirements, and minimum performance levels for local providers beyond the State's requirements, but this will only affect a program's eligibility and performance level eligibility requirements within the local area.

Registered apprenticeship programs will receive communication with regard to procedures to opt-in to the ETPL. If an apprenticeship program opts in, the State will verify the registration status of apprenticeship programs. When the registration status has been confirmed, the entity will be added to the State ETPL and local WDBs will be notified.

Next steps in implementing the ETPL are to refine the Educational Training Provider application and approval process, consider recommendations for additional measures, and implement new performance accountability measures.

Adult and Dislocated Worker Priority of Service

As previously described in the plan, the coalition of executive managers, including representatives from the six core programs and TANF and SNAP, will work together on policies and with the state and local boards to streamline processes and foster collaboration across the workforce system. The agencies will work together and make decisions together to result in a more cohesive workforce system in Oregon with better communication and collaboration. The agencies will involve their stakeholder and advocacy groups in order to ensure that there is a variety of ideas and opinions included in state-level planning and to ensure the support and assistance of these groups during implementation of WIOA.

Local, state-agency-branch and field office managers from core and mandatory partners will work with their LWDBs to ensure that those receiving public assistance, low-income individuals, and those who are basic skills deficient are included in local WIOA plans and that they have a voice in the system, including the following activities:

- Attendance at LWDB meetings and participation on planning and programmatic committees by state agency managers for Vocational Rehabilitation, TANF, and SNAP.
- Participation in local planning processes to build relationships and help local plans lift those most in need out of poverty, while understanding that each local plan will look different depending on the economic and demographic makeup of the local area.

Oregon will use the Statistical Adjustment Model under WIOA to ensure that local performance measures are based on actual local conditions and characteristics of participants. Local areas will apply the model to ensure that people receiving public assistance benefits, in low-income situations, or who are basic skills deficient are receiving the training and services that they need. The exact results and methods in each local area may vary slightly based on economic situations and local demographics.

The core and mandatory state agencies do not believe that clients receiving TANF, SNAP, or Vocational Rehabilitation services should be required to identify themselves when entering a WSO center. Clients on public assistance, with disabilities, or belonging to a low-income category are often uncomfortable or reluctant to divulge this information due to fear of discrimination or feelings of low self-esteem. The agencies will work to find a way to market WIOA services to the above categories of individuals to ensure that they are aware of services and that they may use their classification to ensure priority of service. Staff at the WSO centers and affiliate sites will be trained to understand that upon discovery that an individual belongs to a priority category that priority of service will be explained to that individual. Basic skills deficient individuals can be identified through Initial Skills Review testing in the WSO centers, through AccuVision (soft skills) testing, and the

National Career Readiness Certificate (both available in English and Spanish). Basic skills deficient individuals can be identified for priority of service and can be expedited into job search and occupational skills training programs.

Current state data systems only allow for “after the fact” matching of clients participating in various WIOA programs to priority of service categories. The core and mandatory agencies involved under WIOA will work together to establish a better system for data sharing among agencies and other partners to better track the various categories of WIOA service participants and for easier identification of priority groups under WIOA who are being underserved. Improvements to data systems and sharing will take time over the course of WIOA implementation.

Oregon is currently revising State and local policies regarding the prioritization of services and is developing a related initiative to serve populations with that have traditionally experienced barriers to employment. When finalized, components of these policies will be incorporated in Oregon’s monitoring guidance and process to ensure adherence to this state policy.

DRAFT

Criteria on Transfer of Funds

To transmit the requirements for the transfer of funds between the adult and dislocated worker programs, an LWB may transfer up to 100% of a program year's "base allocation" for adult employment and training activities to dislocated worker activities, and conversely, up to 100% of a "base allocation" for dislocated worker employment and training activities to adult activities. Before making such a transfer, a LWB must obtain written approval from the office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD) on behalf of the governor.

Prior to any transfer of adult employment and training funds or dislocated worker employment and training funds, procedure dictates that LWBs must forward a letter to CCWD for approval to transfer the funds. The letter must be in the form of a request for local plan modification and include the following criteria for review and approval by CCWD:

1. The reason(s) for the request to transfer funds and the percentage the transfer represents of the program allocation;
2. The fund source of the transfer;
3. A Participant and Budget Plan
4. A program analysis that includes:
 - a. Proposed services and number of participants originally planned to be served by the allocation compared to services and number of participants planned to be served once the funds have been transferred. This analysis must provide justification that the transfer of funds will not have an adverse impact in providing services to participants and that necessary services and participant planned activities will be maintained in the program from which the funds are transferred;
 - b. The labor market conditions contributing to the need for the transfer;
 - c. A discussion of the local area's past history of the request for transfers and how previous transfers impacted participants and funds;
 - d. If funds are transferred from the dislocated worker program, the analysis must provide an assessment of any potential layoffs or closures of which the LWB is aware and how these events will be addressed using existing funds;
 - e. Current cash draws versus year-to-date expenditures for adults and dislocated workers.
5. A LWDB may request a transfer of funds anytime during the program year. The local area must confirm that this transfer will not reduce the required rate of expenditure of the fund source to which funds are transferred by the end of the program year. The Department of Labor requires that 80% of the WIOA Title I adults and dislocated workers resources be expended by the end of each program year.
6. The transfer request must be accompanied by the LWB meeting minutes that include the board request for approval of the transfer. The minutes should also reflect that at least one labor board member was present at the LWB meeting at which the transfer was discussed and acted upon.

Youth Program Requirements

Oregon encourages local areas to develop youth programs that will provide paid work experiences, provide labor market information and opportunities to connect to local in-demand sectors, and support post-secondary transition and retention. Oregon aims to increase the number of individuals that obtain a post-secondary education. Oregon's goal is that by 2025, 40 percent of Oregonians will have a baccalaureate degree or higher, 40 percent will have an associate's degree or certificate in a skilled occupation, and for the 20 percent without postsecondary credential to have at least a high school diploma or its equivalent.

The Oregon Workforce Investment Board (OWIB) has developed a youth goal which addresses the current need to develop the skills of the emerging workforce. The goal states: "Create and develop talent by providing young people with information and experiences that engage their interests, spur further development, and connect to Oregon employers."

Examples of ways in which OWIB will help local youth programs meet this goal include:

- Create pipeline plans, as part of Oregon's sector strategy approach, to connect in-school and out-of-school youth to opportunities in local sector partnerships.
- Pursue additional resources to support local youth initiatives in both rural and urban communities.
- Provide technical assistance and/or incentives to support adoption of work-based learning, apprenticeships, and internships.
- Build partnerships to increase youth exposure to job and career opportunities and better connect school to work.

As allowed under WIOA, local areas determine and establish their individual youth program design for WIOA youth funds. Some local strategies used to deliver the WIOA program elements include:

- Partnering with local industry sectors and business to offer occupational skills training.
- Job readiness training and ongoing job coaching including job search, resume writing, interviewing skills and soft skills development.
- College preparation including campus tours.
- Computer skills workshops and general tutoring.
- Mentoring opportunities.
- Career awareness and exploration.
- Money management and hands-on cash handling.

The state will achieve improved outcomes for out-of-school youth by using the following strategies:

- Move forward with creating the state youth committee, a subcommittee of the Oregon Workforce Investment Board that will work to provide youth with experiences that further their career development. The state will recruit members of the committee from TANF, Vocational Rehab, other DHS programs, Local Workforce Investment Boards, Department of Education, Oregon Youth Authority, etc. Having representatives from a wide range of programs will ensure that all youth populations will be considered when developing strategies.

- Provide training to youth workers on the challenges of engaging and working with today’s out-of-school youth including: aligning out-of-school youth with to a career pathway, addressing the barriers that hold youth back, techniques for working with youth one-on-one or in large groups, etc.
- The state has a dedicated, full-time staff member with youth program experience that is primarily responsible for the WIOA youth implementation process. This person is also looking at aligning and connecting youth programs wherever possible. This staff person will also staff the state youth committee.

The state will also ensure that all 14 program elements are made available by reviewing each local plan which must include an analysis and description of youth workforce activities, including activities for youth with disabilities. Local plans must also identify successful models and best practices, for youth workforce activities relevant to the local area.

To ensure that the 14 program elements are effectively implemented, the state will evaluate program performance on an annual basis. Monitoring and program improvement processes will be developed to align with the new requirements under WIOA. Local plans must include local board actions to become or remain a high-performing board. The factors that will be used to determine this will include effectiveness and continuous improvement.

The State defers to local areas to determine the need for and to develop criterion and policy for additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment. When a Local Workforce Development Board does establish this criterion, the following policy conditions/language must be met:

- Distinguish separate elements/definitions for In-School Youth (ISY) and Out-of-School Youth (OSY) participants.
- Barriers already established by the WIOA cannot be included in the local Needs Additional Assistance policy.
- Required documentation must be identified and defined for each criterion established.
- In a single program year, not more than 5 percent of the ISY served can be determined eligible using this criterion.

Local areas that choose to use this criterion in their OSY or ISY eligibility must create a policy that is adopted by the local board and included in the Local Plan.

State’s Definition of “Alternative Education”

Per ORS 336.615, alternative education program means a school or separate class group designed to best serve educational needs and interests and assists students in achieving the academic standards of the school district and the state.

Definition of Not Attending School and Attending School

Oregon has developed a definition for this purpose.

Not attending school:

Not attending any school as defined by State law as:

- a) A youth who does not have a GED or secondary diploma and is not enrolled in secondary education; or
- b) A youth who has a GED or secondary diploma and is not enrolled in post-secondary education; or
- c) A youth who is attending an alternative education program, an adult education program under title II (ABE/ESL), or YouthBuild or Job Corps programs.

Attending school:

Attending school as defined by state law as:

- a) A youth who is enrolled in secondary or post-secondary education including GED and homeschool.

Basic Skills Deficient Definition

Basic Skills Deficient means an individual who:

1. Is a youth that has English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the 8th grade level on a generally accepted standardized test.
2. Is a youth or adult that is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society.

The state defers to Local Workforce Development Boards to develop criterion and policy for the second part of the definition. When a Local Workforce Development Board does establish this criterion, the following policy conditions must be met:

- The Local Board must further define what will determine if a youth is unable to demonstrate these skills well enough to function on the job, in the individual's family or in society.
- In assessing basic skills, local programs must use assessment instruments that are valid and appropriate for the target population, and must provide reasonable accommodation in the assessment process, if necessary, for people with disabilities.
- Local programs must test individuals on a generally accepted standardized test to determine basic skills deficient eligibility.
- Criterion and policy must be included in the Local Plan.

Wagner-Peyser Act Program (Employment Services)

Professional Development Activities for Employment Service Staff

In April 2015, a workgroup was formed to identify training needs for WSO staff so they can successfully provide high quality services to our customers. In addition to state representation, this workgroup included individuals from urban and rural communities and encompassed management and front line staff, local providers, and community colleges.

The workgroup identified the knowledge and competencies all WSO staff should have and provided the WSO Training Team with a roadmap that has been used to develop and deliver relevant training to all nine workforce areas throughout Oregon. The WSO training curriculum is based on the National Career Development Association's (NCDA) guidelines. As a nationally recognized training, this curriculum prepares WSO staff to meet the demands and needs of the world of work by examining the many aspects of the career development process (i.e. labor market information, career theory, and diverse and targeted populations). As WSO staff

complete this multiple-course curriculum, they have an opportunity to apply for and receive a global credential from NCDA for the career development work they do.

The workgroup suggested that staff need Enhanced Business Services Training, which takes a more holistic approach to assisting the employer with their recruitment needs. Enhanced Business Services has proven to be a high value recruitment strategy for employers and the training ensures that WSO staff will continue to be able to provide employers with high quality services.

Employment Services Staff Trained to Identify UI Eligibility Issues

The WorkSource Oregon and Unemployment Insurance (WSO/UI) Connectivity Group encompasses staff from both Employment Services and UI programs. They discuss issues that pertain to the shared UI customer and their overall experience with the system. The team also identifies potential training opportunities. For example, throughout 2015, several ‘joint’ training programs were developed and delivered to educate staff from both programs regarding their shared customers. These programs also included specific training courses for WSO staff regarding UI eligibility and issue detection.

Meaningful Assistance to UI Customers through WorkSource Oregon Centers

Front line staff in WSO centers will receive special training to help guide customers in filing for unemployment insurance benefits and to connect them with appropriate resources to address questions and issues related to their unemployment claim. Resources to assist customers in centers include access to the online claims system, phones for connecting with UI staff and claiming weekly benefits, pamphlets and brochures regarding UI information, and several online videos addressing frequently asked UI questions such as how to file an initial claim for benefits, how to report weekly earnings, and how to report work seeking activities. Employment Services staff and partner staff in WSO centers also maintain the ability to email or call UI program staff in the UI center and in the UI Operations Policy and Support Unit to get direct assistance to help customers when necessary.

Reemployment Assistance to UI claimants

WSO centers offer a variety of services to customers, including Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants, to assist them with their efforts in becoming job ready and/or finding new work.

Most UI claimants are required to complete an electronic profile for job matching purposes and attend an orientation with Employment Services staff. Only claimants attached to a closed union, in approved training (including apprenticeship programs), who commute while living out of state, or who have a definite return to work date within 28 days of their lay off date do not have to complete these steps. The orientation includes a review of their electronic profile for completeness and provides an overview of services available to job seekers through WSO centers and partners.

Of those claimants, some are selected for a Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (known as REA or RESEA) as part of their orientation. Initial REA/RESEA interviews are conducted in person by ES staff who are co-located with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) service providers. The REA/RESEA includes an overview of UI eligibility requirements for remaining able, available and actively seeking work. It further provides more customized discussions with each claimant about “next steps” that could assist the person with becoming reemployed sooner as part of a basic reemployment plan.

Each REA/RESEA includes an audit of the claimant’s recent work search efforts for both detecting deficiencies (which are reported to UI centers for review) and to aid the customer in determining ways to make his/her work

search as successful as possible. Some of the claimants who complete the initial REA/RESEA may be selected for subsequent REA/RESEAs in order for additional work search review and personalized assistance with finding work. Second and third REA/RESEA interviews are completed through a combination of in person meetings and telephone discussions.

Wagner-Peyser Funds to Support UI Claimants

Through the filing of an initial Unemployment Insurance (UI) claim, customers initiate the process to become co-enrolled across core and partner programs available in the WSO centers. UI claimants in Oregon are required by law to complete registration with the state's employment service at one of the WSO centers within several weeks of filing the claim.

In Oregon, Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants are required by law to complete registration and attend an in-person orientation interview with Employment Services (ES) staff at one of the WSO centers. During the orientation and in subsequent meetings, UI claimants requiring assistance in seeking work receive the necessary guidance and counseling to ensure they make a meaningful and realistic work search from ES staff. ES staff also provide counseling, testing, occupational and labor market information, assessment, and referrals to employers for UI claimants and refer information to UI staff about UI claimants' ability or availability for work, or the suitability of work offered to them. Lastly, ES staff refer issues to UI staff for investigation when they identify people that may not be applying for suitable work when directed to, accepting offers of suitable work or actively seeking work, among other potential UI eligibility issues they may identify.

Oregon's Unemployment Insurance (UI) program provides referrals to and application assistance for training and education programs with regard to the Training Unemployment Insurance (TUI) program and the Trade Readjustment Allowance (TRA) program. Eligible customers are referred to WSO center locations to help determine best matches for labor market, career goals, and educational institutions. Information about the programs is also provided to customers through public service announcements, press releases, recorded messages on call center phone lines, hard copy brochures, posters, mailers, digital displays, social media, and website messaging.

All unattached claimants must complete the Welcome Process, described above, within 14-days of filing an initial claim for unemployment benefits as a condition of benefit eligibility. The agency, through specific federal funding, also conducts Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) interviews for claimants identified as most likely to exhaust benefits and UCX (military) claims. This initiative is an important element of the agency's strategy to help claimants become reemployed and address the issue of long-term unemployment. RESEA also helps to prevent and detect benefit overpayments.

Claimants selected for RESEA, in addition to completing the Welcome Process, also receive an overview of unemployment benefit eligibility and weekly work search requirements, which helps to avoid unintended overpayments during the course of their claim. Potential issues discovered that may affect the claimant's eligibility for benefits are referred to unemployment insurance for review. RESEA claimants are also provided a "work search advisory and reemployment plan" that identifies eligibility requirements and work seeking activities specific to each claimant, including one or more job search activities or "Next Steps" that are mutually agreed upon with staff.

RESEA claimants are selected for up to two additional RESEA interviews if they remain unemployed and continue to claim benefits. During each subsequent RESEA interview, staff review and update the claimant's work search advisory and reemployment plan, refer the claimant to appropriate resources and services, and

assess the claimant's ongoing eligibility for unemployment benefits. Potential eligibility issues detected are referred to unemployment insurance for review.

Coordination of Labor Exchange

All unattached claimants filing an initial claim for unemployment benefits are notified by letter of the requirement to register with the state's labor-exchange system and meet with staff to complete enrollment activities, referred to as the Welcome Process. Claimants have 14-days from notification date to complete the Welcome Process. At the time of notification, a flag is added to the individual's unemployment claim for the week in which enrollment activities must be completed. If a person attends timely, the flag is inactivated and no stop is placed on the claim. If the person fails to attend by the due week, that week, once claimed, will not be paid.

Registration of UI Claimants

All unattached claimants are required to register with the state's labor-exchange system as a condition of benefit eligibility. Staff work with the claimant to gather additional information to ensure the registration is complete and reflects the type of work the claimant must seek as part of receiving unemployment benefits. A quality registration helps ensure the claimant is matched to suitable job listings by staff and employers using the state's labor-exchange system.

Administration of Work Test

As part of the agency's Work Test, claimants are notified of their rights and responsibilities when filing an initial claim for unemployment benefits, including a written notice of their monetary determination and work search expectations. Staff in WorkSource (WSO) centers are trained in issue detection and referral procedures. Staff are also trained how to address potential issues with claimants and help them identify solutions, including agency resources and services, to overcome potential barriers to receiving unemployment benefits.

Provision of Referrals

Claimants registering with the state's labor-exchange system are co-enrolled in Wagner-Peyser (Title III) and, if eligible, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs (Title I). This enrollment is accomplished through the state's unified registration system that is used to determine a customer's eligibility for both Title I and Title III programs and services under WIOA.

As part of the initial Welcome Process, staff refer claimants to education and training programs, including job-finding workshops, available through the WorkSource Oregon system and appropriate to the individual's needs and career goals. Staff also demonstrate how to access labor market information and career information to make informed choices.

Many WorkSource Oregon centers have staff from various programs co-located onsite, so referrals are often a matter of a "warm hand-off" to a different staff person – and more offices are moving towards the co-located staff model described by WIOA and the WSO Operational Standards. Additionally, all physical locations feature electronic methods for referrals to partner programs and other organizations and resources.

Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP)

Assessment of Need

Agriculture continues to be one of Oregon's multi-million dollar industries and is a chief contributor to the Oregon economy. The top labor-intensive crops harvested in Oregon are fruit, such as apples, cherries and blueberries, vegetables such as onions, corn, greenhouse plants and Christmas trees. The geographical agricultural regions for these crops are eastern Oregon, the Columbia Gorge, southern Oregon and the Willamette Valley. Tree fruits are harvested July through December, blueberries, July through August. Vegetables such as onions and corn are harvested from August through December. Greenhouse plants are grown and sold primarily March through September and Christmas trees are tended and harvested from July through November.

Worker data is difficult to find due to lack of funding from the U.S. Department of Labor to do specific research and surveys on this population. A national database would be very helpful in assessing needs of farmworkers and creating this plan. Based on numbers from the Oregon Agripedia and the Oregon Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Enumeration Study by Alice Larson, the industry counts on 90,000 migrant seasonal farmworkers to hand-harvest the crops each year. The predominant language of the MSFW is Spanish. Oregon agriculture depends extensively on a consistent migrant workforce. Many times, the migrant farmworkers that do come to Oregon face inadequate, unstable housing. The employers that provide good housing for its workforce often find their employees return the next season. Agricultural employers that do not have good housing for farmworkers are generally in a continuous struggle to find farmworkers to meet their harvest demands. Over the past year, complaints from farmworkers include not being paid or paid correctly, safety conditions, inadequate housing issues, sexual harassment and fear of retaliation by employers if they speak up about issues.

Farm employers note that there seem to be fewer U.S. workers to help with the harvest and are increasingly turning to the H-2A Temporary Agricultural Worker Program to meet the need for a stable workforce. Growers are concerned that various factors such as the aging of the workforce, a younger generation that chooses not to follow in their parents' paths but instead pursue higher education, jobs in the manufacturing sector, food service, and construction opportunities may diminish the availability of agricultural workers. Immigration reform that would allow foreign workers to return for three years rather than year to year is a focus of legislation introduced to the U.S. Senate. Other issues farm employers feel affect their ability to stay in business include the many federal and state laws that add layers of paperwork and cost. The Affordable Care Act and Oregon's new Paid Sick Leave Law make it imperative that more records be kept to ensure compliance. This law will also increase costs for employers. Water access rights are becoming more important as drought conditions persist in some areas. The cost of providing housing is prohibitive and the need for help in this area is acute.

Factors that could help retain or bring in more workers include a drought in California that reduced the number of jobs there, driving more workers to Oregon. Oregon's high minimum wage, one of the highest in the country may also help attract workers from other states. An alternative option for the future of Oregon's agricultural workforce is the growing use of the H-2A program which allows agricultural employers to bring temporary workers from foreign countries to harvest the crops. Another option to meet employer need for workers is the Agriculture Recruitment System, which involves recruiting in neighboring states for workers. One of the requirements imposed by the alternative recruitment systems is a higher wage called the Adverse Effect Wage Rate which guarantees both domestic and foreign agricultural workers performing the same work a wage that is higher than the Oregon minimum wage, providing an incentive to workers in the agricultural system. These recruitment options also require employers to give hiring preference to domestic farmworkers.

Outreach Activities

OED will assign full-time Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW) representatives to appropriate locations in coordination with local leadership based on data supporting the needs of the area. OED is also conducting wage and practice surveys to assess real-time agricultural working conditions to better determine requirements for H-2A job listings and to help employers recruit workers.

OED is leveraging outreach activities with our Section 167 partner, Oregon Human Development Corporation (OHDC), local interest groups and employer groups through employer and worker forums and farmworker support groups.

The department's outreach goal for the MSFW PY 2016 is to contact 30,000 MSFWs and increase that by 3 % during the next three years. OED will look to reach an estimated 1500 agricultural employers as the H-2A program continues to increase in Oregon. While Oregon provides workforce services in 37 statewide offices, the main MSFW outreach activities will be focused out of the designated seven significant offices: Hermiston, Ontario, Woodburn, The Dalles, Beaverton-Hillsboro, Salem and Medford. Outreach focuses on marketing the services and benefits, and the Complaint System available to farm workers from OED staff, education training partners, and other MSFW services providers. OED will also educate agricultural employers about the responsibilities they have to workers as well as the job placement services provided. Partner agencies that conduct outreach to MSFWs come into contact with an average of 10,000 MSFWs on a yearly basis per the data they provide to OED on quarterly reports. In the next four years OED staff will experience an increase in the H-2A program by agriculture employers requiring more frequent field visits to those workers which will be working in conjunction with Oregon domestic MSFWs.

Oregon has been designated as one of the top five states in the country with the highest estimated year round migrant seasonal farmworker (MSFW) activity. Due to this designation, the Oregon Employment Department (OED) will assess designation of significant offices and the number and placement of full-time staff to increase awareness in the MSFW community of employment opportunities as well as wage and safety issues. This requires that full-time, year round staff be assigned in areas of high MSFW concentration to ensure that MSFWs are aware of and are offered appropriate workforce services. Presently, seven of Oregon's WorkSource Centers are designated as significant offices and a re-evaluation will occur this year to determine appropriate staffing to meet the needs of MSFWs across the state. The remainder of the field office MSFW outreach staff will conduct outreach activities as needed during their respective area's peak season. While some new areas may arise with a potential significant office designation, evaluations will be conducted and discussed to encourage a thorough assessment and availability of staffing potential. While some areas may not be designated significant offices, outreach time with partner agencies has been improved resulting in contacting a much higher percentage of MSFWs in those areas. OED is committed to exploring the

availability of conducting outreach activities to reach hidden pockets of MSFW that do need to be informed of their legal protections, the Complaint System and the services available to them at any of Oregon's WorkSource Centers. The MSFW program and the ability to provide qualitatively equivalent and quantitatively proportionate services to MSFWs are hampered by reduced funding, and perhaps the absence of program-specific funding. Oregon's Wagner-Peyser grant has declined over \$1 million (-11%) over the last seven years, further diminishing the resources available for mandated activities. Funding constraints limit the impact for all customers with significant barriers, in particular the underserved, hard to reach, MSFW population. Oregon's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) partners will be included in regional and local planning to ensure MSFW program customers are considered in their program service provisions. WorkSource Oregon staff currently work closely with the training resources available through the National Farmworkers Jobs Program. Other training resources especially for migrant workers include Oregon State University College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), Chemeketa Community College - College Assistance Migrant Program, Portland Community College - College Assistance Migrant Program, Oregon Migrant Leadership Institute, University of Oregon High School Equivalency Program (HEP), Chemeketa Community College High School Equivalency Program, Portland Community College High School Equivalency Program (HEP), and the High Desert Education Service District.

Significant offices will be initiating yearly agricultural employer forums to address workforce needs, and provide educational seminars on employment regulations to prevent enforcement agency intervention and possible fines. Wage surveys will also be coordinated by the Foreign Labor Coordinator with the field MSFW outreach staff on a yearly basis. While the designated significant offices have full time staff dedicated to MSFW outreach, all other field offices will continue to have office staff provide services and information to MSFWs that visit any WSO center. The Monitor Advocate will also be available to assist any offices with outreach and marketing job search services and the Complaint System. Evaluation and assessment of several field offices that are located in high concentrations of MSFW activity will continue to be evaluated by the Monitor Advocate who will work with management and the state administrator on suggestions and recommendations for changes in the coming year.

Outreach by Wagner-Peyser and Other Agencies

OED will use Spanish and English language radio, TV and print to inform MSFWs about workforce services. This will include efforts to secure regular 'job shows' with standardized content areas on Spanish language radio where they do not exist. WSO will seek at least one Spanish language radio interview about OED services per year in each workforce area with Spanish language radio coverage and in appropriate sub-areas. In Program Year 2016, the Monitor Advocate will work with any and all groups to explore opportunities for strengthening partnerships in radio outreach activities. Staff will continue to offer to speak at partners' staff meetings and provide them with up-to-date information about workforce services and commitments. The Monitor Advocate will engage in conducting outreach activities alongside outreach workers and conduct presentations to partner agencies. MFSW representatives will conduct traditional one-on-one outreach to farmworkers. This aspect of outreach will focus on directly reaching migrant farmworkers, including those living in labor camps. Oregon also has a population of farmworkers who require information in indigenous languages to effectively learn about workforce services.

When possible, OED outreach staff will work with local partners to identify and engage interpreters to assist with outreach to indigenous language speakers. MSFW representatives will publicize seasonal agricultural and other work opportunities to increase MSFW awareness of the opportunity. OED will heighten publicity efforts to notify workers about seasonal agricultural work, including work listed for recruitment throughout Oregon

and the US through the Agricultural Recruitment System and the H-2A Foreign Labor Certification Program. Standardized bilingual job flyers will be available for posting and distribution within communities and to partners. Offices will use lists of local organizations that work with farmworkers to email or deliver flyers for wider publicity.

State Strategy

All OED field offices will collaborate with workforce partners and service providers leveraging training services for MSFWs. Partners will include OHDC/ National Farmworker Jobs Program grantee of Oregon. OED will also have an ongoing cooperative Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with OHDC to provide access to the job seeker registration system as well as connecting them to local office workforce planning. Other partners include WIOA Title I providers, universities, local community colleges, special programs funded to serve MSFWs, HEP language classes, community development non-profit farmworker housing associations, Centro Cultural, migrant health clinics, migrant education programs, Migrant Head Start, farmworker legal services, and other farmworker advocacy organizations.

Migrant and seasonal farmworkers are recognized in WorkSource Oregon centers as a targeted population group entitled to effective and equal access to the full range of workforce services. Federal regulations require that they receive workforce services on a quantitatively proportional and qualitatively equivalent basis as those provided to non-farmworkers. Using an integrated service delivery, all customers will be offered a comprehensive menu in Spanish and English of skill enhancement products, including but not limited to occupational training. In addition, staff at WorkSource Oregon centers will use a variety of tools to attempt to match the job seekers' skills, interests and abilities with available high wage, high demand jobs in their current labor market area, or in other areas if desired. The integration of services with the new WIOA partners is intended to increase the quality of services, focus on skill and talent development of both unemployed and current workers, and, on a system-wide basis, increase the wages, job retention and job advancement of Oregonians. In addition to improved customer outcomes, more efficient and effective customer service is expected from the systematic coordination of federal workforce services. Finally, more efficient use of resources and elimination of program duplication from enhanced integration are also expected to improve the use of limited and declining funding. Designated MSFW representatives within each workforce area will continue to work with local management and staff to keep focused on service delivery and equity outcome goals regarding MSFWs.

They will also serve as an MSFW voice at the local level to raise any issues impacting MSFW customers as system integration moves forward through awareness of the Job Service Complaint system. Outreach includes information regarding the use of the complaint system and follow up of complaints. All complaints are logged and reported to US DOL as provided in federal guidance. In addition, staff will provide MSFWs with information regarding worker rights through information sharing sessions and flyers.

MSFWs will be encouraged to go to WorkSource Oregon Centers to receive the full services offered to all job seekers. MSFWs who are not fluent in English receive one-on-one interviews with staff for registration and job referrals. Staff that are not bilingual in the language of the job seeker are to seek interpreter services, including in indigenous languages, through the department's contracted interpreter service or with the assistance of the coordinator of the Limited English Proficiency program. Other MSFWs are to be offered assistance in registration to assure quality registrations are completed. Staff assistance is available to all MSFWs for learning the OED computer job match system and for using English and Spanish websites for looking at available jobs and learning about other workforce services. OED MSFW representatives will assist MSFWs in filling out applications for job listings registered in the OED system. The majority of MSFWs registered with

OED, consistent with the overall farmworker population, require services to be provided in Spanish. The menu of services and resources identified and promoted through the workforce system will include access to and referral of MSFWs to all WIOA service program providers and specifically OHDC's National Farmworker Jobs Program in the five areas of the state in which they operate. Information about services from community partners including food, clothing, housing, transportation, medical, social and legal assistance will also be a continuing referral. With significantly increased concerns over an adequate labor supply for Oregon agriculture, OED expects our labor exchange system will become a critical resource for agricultural employers.

Services Provided to Agricultural Employers

Training resources through the broader workforce system are also of interest to agricultural employers. They have identified that increased skills are needed for many agricultural opportunities, whether for supervisory positions or to meet the changing mechanization and technology requirements of the industry. WorkSource Oregon staff will work to increase placement results through more effective identification of skills that agricultural employers are seeking and identifying through their registrations in iMatchSkills.

Integrating WIOA and Wagner-Peyser services is an advantage to agricultural employers and their access to the workforce system. In particular, locally designed employer services teams will have the responsibility for connecting local employers to WorkSource Oregon centers. To the extent agricultural employers connect with the workforce system individually or industry wide, job seekers will be better informed about available jobs, needed skills and training options related to agriculture, and the workforce system will be more informed about and responsive to the workforce needs of agriculture.

OED will undertake a number of activities to better prepare for increased requests for recruitment assistance locally and with listings. Staff at both the field office and administrative office levels will update and, as necessary, expand their networks of agricultural employer/ agricultural organization and farmworker contacts so they can get accurate information on conditions in their areas. Account representatives in those parts of the state with significant labor-intensive agriculture will keep in contact with key agricultural employers for ideas to increase awareness of recruitment options and other workforce system services.

Activities that offices may pursue to facilitate increased successful labor exchange on all agricultural listings include handing out and collecting applications for work, scheduling interviews, and providing space at a specific field office for the employer's interviews. Staff may also assist workers with the actual application, help with translation at interviews when needed, and re-contact workers referred for an interview. This follow-up activity can produce more reliable recruitment results for the employer and the agency, helping to see that available workers are hired for needed employment. Staff will also use historical information on monthly employment patterns to identify opportunities for workers to effectively move from one local grower to another or be available for referral on any agricultural listing approved for recruitment of non-local workers.

OED will continue to promote membership on local and state workforce boards and to meet key agricultural business owners and other business owners who see limited English proficient MSFWs and others as potential employees. This will help raise awareness of training needs within agriculture for MSFWs to reach higher levels of education and may open new options for securing training funds from within and outside the workforce system.

Other Requirements

State Monitor Advocate statement

As the State Monitor Advocate I have been engaged in the writing of Oregon's AOP and agree with the plan set for providing workforce services to the targeted Migrant Seasonal Farmworker population and agricultural employers. I will have the opportunity to review and approve the final version before final submittal.

Fernando Gutierrez, State Monitor Advocate

Public Comment

Section 167 of the National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantees, other appropriate farmworker groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations, have been given an opportunity to comment on the State AOP.

Below is the list of organizations from which feedback and suggestions are solicited. Responses to the comments will be posted along with the comments of the Unified State Plan as a whole.

- Columbia Gorge Growers Shippers, Executive Director
- Legal Aid Services of Oregon, Attorney
- Oregon Association of Nurseries, Wilsonville Executive Director
- Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries, Compliance Manager
- Oregon Department of Agriculture, Special Assistant to the Director
- Oregon Farm Bureau, Director of Governmental Affairs
- Oregon Human Development Corporation, Executive Director
- Oregon Human Development Corporation, Operations Director
- Oregon Law Center, Farmworker Office, Managing Attorney
- Pinos y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste, President
- State of Oregon Governor's Office, Affirmative Action Officer
- US Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, Portland District Office
- US Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, Community Outreach Specialist

Assessment of Previous AOP PY 14-15

The MSFW Outreach and employment service delivery made progress during July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015, while making strides in some areas, the State Workforce Agency (SWA) failed to accomplish its primary goal: ensuring that services to MSFWs be provided qualitatively equivalent and quantitatively proportionate to the services provided to other job seekers. The performance measures established by DOL are placement of 42.5 % of total active 5,525 applicants, OED's end of the year performance fell short at 6.81 %. The other critical and very important performance measure is the placement of 3% of total active MSFWs in non-ag jobs. OED's placement result in that category was 2.35%. Several issues can be attributed to this non-performance by OED. In February 2014 DOL sent out TEGL 13-13 informing OED that Oregon was a designated significant state and would need to assign full-time, year-round staff to provide employment and outreach services to MSFWs. This directive was not implemented by OED until the end of the Program Year contributing to the failure to meet DOL established goals. The SWA brought these deficiencies of services and concerns repeatedly to higher management to no avail throughout the PY. Had the directive been implemented, statewide attention could have been paid to providing career guidance and marketing MSFWs into the non-ag market sector to meet the established performance measures. Since then, seven WorkSorce Oregon centers have been designated significant and assigned seven full-time, year-round MSFW representatives.

MSFW outreach workers are also in need of vehicles allowing them to conduct outreach to areas that are hard to access but where the majority of MSFWs work. This need would also allow outreach workers to provide services to our important agricultural employer base.

Data shows that in three to four program years the SWA has had very high numbers of MSFWs registered, but that number has fallen dramatically due to the inability of conducting comprehensive vigorous outreach to both MSFWs and Oregon's agricultural employers who continue to express the need for appropriate referrals from the SWA. Some significant offices with senior outreach workers have engaged in providing, inviting and conducting services to agricultural employers and that is a projected plan for all significant offices.

To meet and improve the services to this targeted population, the SWA and Oregon Employment Department management need to provide training to all local office staff and management to make them aware of the MSFW program goals, have managers hold MSFW representatives accountable for those goals, increase awareness of employers about the workforce system and responsibilities to workers, and provide vehicles capable of reaching the MSFWs to promote vigorous outreach.

2013 Oregon Agricultural Employment Estimates													
	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	AA
Bend MSA (Deschutes County)	720	740	740	780	770	770	770	780	770	760	730	730	750
Corvallis MSA (Benton County)	710	750	820	880	890	900	1,020	1,070	970	1,040	1,200	1,070	940
Eugene MSA (Lane County)	2,030	2,090	2,170	2,210	2,280	2,380	2,360	2,470	2,350	2,490	2,240	2,130	2,270
Medford MSA (Jackson County)	1,390	1,560	1,600	1,480	1,470	1,660	1,640	2,070	2,400	1,840	1,670	1,650	1,700
Portland MSA (Oregon portion)*	12,170	13,150	13,580	14,430	15,140	18,240	20,970	18,880	17,010	15,590	14,810	13,100	15,590
Salem MSA (Marion & Polk Counties)	8,210	8,940	9,460	9,740	10,790	13,360	15,740	13,770	12,440	12,010	11,010	8,740	11,190
Baker	540	540	570	600	620	600	590	600	600	670	580	560	590
Clatsop	190	180	180	180	180	180	180	180	200	440	640	500	270
Columbia**	410	470	500	510	490	380	350	350	350	340	340	330	400
Coos	500	500	510	510	520	530	530	540	530	520	520	500	520
Crook	430	420	440	490	480	470	480	520	460	430	420	410	450
Curry	200	200	210	220	230	240	240	250	300	320	230	220	240
Douglas	1,190	1,190	1,190	1,240	1,290	1,340	1,660	1,480	1,440	1,360	1,290	1,280	1,330
Gilliam	150	150	160	150	150	160	180	180	170	150	150	150	160
Grant	330	330	340	360	350	360	350	350	360	340	340	350	350
Harney	520	520	540	550	550	560	570	560	530	530	510	510	540
Hood River	1,910	2,360	2,480	2,090	2,100	3,170	4,440	5,340	4,300	3,560	1,590	1,650	2,910
Jefferson	490	580	690	860	830	790	740	820	810	700	600	560	710
Josephine	460	470	490	500	510	500	490	490	500	500	480	480	490
Klamath	1,290	1,310	1,350	1,590	1,640	1,690	1,750	1,630	1,670	1,840	1,500	1,390	1,550
Lake	590	590	610	620	640	670	720	760	740	760	620	640	660
Lincoln	230	230	230	230	230	240	230	230	230	230	240	230	230
Linn	2,400	2,430	2,400	2,440	2,650	2,790	3,040	3,150	2,880	2,780	2,670	2,550	2,680
Malheur	1,310	1,320	1,540	1,820	1,900	2,220	2,260	2,050	2,030	1,970	1,670	1,480	1,800
Morrow	1,070	1,120	1,280	1,310	1,490	1,460	1,370	1,610	1,590	1,320	1,180	1,110	1,330
Sherman	150	140	140	150	150	150	150	160	150	150	150	140	150
Tillamook	620	620	620	630	640	640	640	630	640	650	630	640	630
Umatilla	2,520	2,750	2,910	3,080	3,450	3,910	4,040	4,320	3,790	3,540	2,830	2,470	3,300
Union	540	540	550	640	640	690	880	810	660	590	550	530	640
Wallowa	350	340	350	370	370	370	400	410	390	360	350	360	370
Wasco	980	1,100	1,060	1,320	1,440	5,760	9,720	2,110	1,130	920	940	1,010	2,290
Wheeler	160	160	150	160	160	150	170	170	160	160	160	160	160
Oregon	44,350	47,370	49,370	51,670	54,570	67,160	78,480	68,470	62,200	58,360	52,530	47,510	56,840

* Portland MSA is comprised of Columbia, Washington, Multnomah, Clackamas, and Yamhill counties.
 **Statewide figure does not add Columbia county twice (Columbia County included in Portland MSA)
 Columns and rows may not add due to rounding
 AA = annual average

2013 Benchmark

Adult Basic Education and Literacy Programs

Aligning of Content Standards

The Oregon Adult Basic Skills (ABS) Learning Standards Initiative, adopted by the Oregon Council for Adult Basic Skills Development (OCABSD) in April 2010, reflect a common vision of what adults need to know and

be able to do in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and math to carry out their life goals and purposes. Oregon's ABS Learning Standards are contained in a Learning Standard Frameworks, which provides detailed information for instruction and are organized by educational functioning levels (EFLs) as defined by the US Department of Education, Office of Career Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE) and reported through the National Reporting System (NRS). Additionally, the Oregon ABS Learning Standards are aligned with the College and Career Readiness Standards of the Common Core State Standards.

In 2014, on the advice of OCTAE, the Office of Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD) undertook a project to align the Oregon ABS Learning Standards to the National College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards, in order to ensure that adults are ready to transition to a career and/or postsecondary education and training upon exit from ABS. OCTAE recommended several national experts who were well-versed in the national CCR standards to perform gap analyses and identify where the Oregon Frameworks needed to increase rigor, focus and scope. These experts then drafted revised frameworks. Starting in 2015, teams of Oregon standards experts worked to finalize and publish the revised Oregon ABS Learning Standards Frameworks for use by Title II programs and others in adult education. Experienced Learning Standards trainers then revised the existing Learning Standards Orientation, Learning Circles, and Reading, Writing, Math and Listening/Speaking Institutes and created new trainings to incorporate the revised standards, focusing material more clearly on work, work readiness and career training skills, and incorporating the use of technology. Trainers also reviewed courses such as the College and Career Awareness curriculum to better align content with the Learning Standards.

Local Activities

HECC, as the eligible agency, will fund eligible providers to operate programs that provide adult education and literacy activities. Following guidance provided by OCTAE, HECC/CCWD will extend current grants through June 30, 2017. CCWD awards grants to local providers using a performance-based funding model. This funding model will continue during the competitive award process that will take place between July 1, 2016 and June 30, 2017 with new contracts, guided by WIOA in place by July 1, 2017. The competitive request for applications (RFA) process will be conducted in a fair and open manner, with equal access to information for current and future providers. Grants will be awarded to providers based on county of service rather than local workforce development areas.

Local funding will be allocated on a formula that takes into account:

- Number of adults in the target populations served.
- Number of hours of instruction.
- Percentage of time each student attends.
- Number of students with paired pre- and post-tests.
- Ability of the local eligible provider to meet and exceed local performance targets.

Additional RFA considerations for funding include ability of adult education and literacy provider's to address the specific considerations in Section 231(e) of WIOA. CCWD has determined that overall program quality will be measured by student persistence, retention, and transition to either employment or postsecondary training. Potential provider's responses to program intensity (Section 231(e)(5)), instructional practices (section 231(e)(6)), contextualized learning (Section 231(e)(8)), and development of career pathways (Section 231 (e)(10)) for participants will be weighted in a manner to represent their contribution to program success. Potential providers will also be required to demonstrate past effectiveness, as well as their ability to maintain high-quality information management and reporting capacity to report measurable participant outcomes.

Preference will be granted in the RFA to providers who have strong linkages to community partners, workforce services, and postsecondary education (including career and technical education and industry recognized credentials) to better ensure smooth transition.

Local activities will focus on the design and the delivery of adult education and literacy programs that transition adult learners to either work or postsecondary education. Local providers of adult education and literacy programs will be responsive to local area needs, including a demonstrated need for additional English language acquisition programs and civics education programs. Providers will use instructional practices that include the essential components of: reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, and English language acquisition instruction.

Adult education and literacy programs in Oregon will provide:

- Adult education;
- Literacy;
- Workplace adult education and literacy activities;
- Family literacy activities;
- English language acquisition activities;
- Integrated English literacy and civics education;
- Workforce preparation activities; or
- Integrated education and training.

Providers will offer integrated education and training concurrently and contextually with both workforce preparation activities and workforce training for the purpose of career advancement. The Oregon Pathways for Adult Basic Skills (OPABS) which incorporates specific sector strategies into ABS classrooms will be explored as a model for integrated education and training. In addition, Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) and Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) programs will be promoted by CCWD to further expand integrated education and training, as well as promote transition to postsecondary training programs.

Additionally, local providers may offer options in distance learning instruction and activities. The Oregon ABS Distance Policy and Application approved by OCTAE are used by local programs for distance learning applications. These applications are reviewed by CCWD for adherence to policy.

Corrections Education and other Education of Institutionalized Individuals

Oregon will continue to support corrections education programs under Section 225 of WIOA in accordance with Title II. Academic programming within Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC) facilities will include adult education and literacy activities, English language acquisition activities, peer tutoring and special education where feasible. Corrections education has well established academic programs that utilize professional instruction and peer tutoring support. In addition to continuing existing adult education and literacy activities, DOC, in partnership with educational providers, will explore integrated education and training and career pathways. The goal of career pathway exploration, in a limited number of facilities, is to increase the number of institutionalized individuals transitioning to postsecondary education. Oregon Youth Authority is using the RACHEL education server to provide electronic education and training services to incarcerated youth in correctional facilities. Young people can attain college credit through face to face classes and on line courses/resources.

Funding for corrections education programs will be awarded to DOC which is the sole source provider of corrections education in the state. DOC will receive a proportional funding award based on ability to respond

to the Title II Subtitle C, Considerations. DOC will focus responses and program performance on measurable skill gains, such as Educational Functioning Level gains and GED completions.

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program

In preparation for implementation of Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education under WIOA, Oregon convened the EL/Civics Advisory Committee, which was composed of state and local EL/Civics providers, to identify Oregon's best practices associated with EL/Civics curriculum development, instruction, and support services, both current and historic. These best practices, in association with WIOA guidance, will shape the development of the competitive RFA related to Section 231(e)(13).

Oregon has contracted with national experts to align the state's current ABS Learning Standards in Reading, Writing, Math and Listening/Speaking with the College and Career Readiness Standards. This will ensure that instruction for EL/Civics by local providers will be aligned with the national standards. CCWD will explore additional professional development options to prepare local providers to meet WIOA guidelines, including the online learning platform for Oregon Adult Learning Standards, expansion of I-BEST and VESL programs, and development of career pathways that will transition participants to either employment or postsecondary training.

Title II providers in Oregon will be encouraged to conduct outreach activities targeting English language learners who are professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education programs will promote co-enrollment of participants, where appropriate, in Title I and III services to support job placement activities.

CCWD will extend current grants through June 30, 2017. Oregon currently awards grants to local providers using a performance-based funding model. This funding model will continue during the competitive award process that will take place between July 1, 2016 and June 30, 2017. New contracts will be in place by July 1, 2017. CCWD will distribute Title II funds to successful grant applicants according to WIOA guidelines and the needs of local programs. Competitive grant awards will comply with considerations in Section 231(e) of WIOA.

CCWD will afford flexibility for local programs to implement activities to best serve local populations of English language learners. Program activities will be in alignment with WIOA requirements and be focused on program performance targets. Once programs are contracted through the RFA process, EL/Civics programs will become part of the annual monitoring activities. CCWD will offer professional development opportunities for providers to explore new instructional methods and practices, collaborate with colleagues from around the state, and provide forums for continuous program improvement activities.

Research-based instructional methods and practices will be used to provide both English language and career instruction designed to meet the needs of English language learners (ELL) in a way that both advances students toward their goal of speaking English and supports their career goals in a timely manner. The Oregon Adult Learning Standards have been aligned with the national College and Career Readiness Standards to help programs and partners design effective learning experiences that meet the needs of their students. Trainers are redesigning their Learning Standards trainings to prepare Oregon instructors to meet those needs. In the past, math instruction was not part of the instruction of English language learners, but in the future, ELL students will have that option. Likewise, Listening/Speaking will be expanded to include native English speakers and Generation 1.5 students (children of immigrants).

Expansion of I-BEST and VESL options for English language learners (ELL) will be supported by CCWD. There will be continuing professional development for Title II providers in methods and practices that facilitate ELL participants' transition to postsecondary programs and pursuit of industry certifications. In addition, CCWD will explore and promote techniques and resources to accelerate the path for immigrant professionals who wish to re-enter their professions through skills assessments, credential validation, transcript evaluation, connections to professional organizations, and pursuit of credentials.

CCWD will explore and support methods to increase and streamline referrals between WIOA programs where feasible, support professional development for Title II providers, and work with other WIOA agencies to create effective referral processes, performance indicators and outcomes. CCWD will facilitate inter-agency communication strategies and support the efforts of local Title II programs to collaborate with organizations, agencies and employers that serve their populations. CCWD will leverage the existing efforts of sector strategies, refocused employer engagement efforts and stronger referral systems between ABS and workforce partners to better serve English language acquisition students.

State Leadership

The proposed state leadership activities are consistent with WIOA guidance. Oregon has and will continue to focus on professional development activities to effectively transition to WIOA. Required adult education and literacy activities identified to develop or enhance the adult education system in Oregon include:

- The continued alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other core programs and one-stop partners to implement the strategies identified in the State Plan, such as development of career pathways to provide access to employment and training services for individuals engaged in adult education and literacy activities. Career pathway development will occur at the local level and be guided by the state accepted definition. State leadership funds will be invested to expand Oregon ABS Learning Standards alignment with CCR standards coursework and to promote additional Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) and Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) programs in Oregon.
- High quality professional development programs will be developed and/or acquired to improve the instruction provided at the local level. Existing professional development will be enhanced through the alignment of College and Career Readiness content standards. In addition, an online training platform has been built and will be expanded to ensure that Oregon ABS Learning Standards training and other training is available and accessible to all instructors of Title II participants throughout Oregon. This professional development will focus on incorporating the essential components of reading, writing, math, listening and speaking instruction and specific needs of adult learners.
- Development of instructional practices and dissemination of promising practices in adult education and literacy will occur through the Oregon Council for Adult Basic Skills Development (OCABSD). All Title II providers will participate on the OCABSD and have access to current instructional and professional development materials. In addition, models and promising practices occurring within Oregon will be shared on the CCWD Adult Basic Skills website.
- Technical assistance will be provided to Title II adult education and literacy providers to promote development and dissemination of instructional and programmatic practices based on the recently aligned and revised Oregon ABS Learning Standards.

- New elements of WIOA, such as the role of eligible providers as WSO partners, will be supported through technical assistance from CCWD. CCWD has been actively engaged in the development of WSO center definitions and the establishment of access for adult education participants to employment, education, and training services within WorkSource Oregon centers.
- CCWD supports the use of technology to expand professional development opportunities for instructors, and eligible providers, and to improve system efficiencies. The continued implementation of the online training platform for the Oregon ABS Learning Standards will be available and accessible to all instructors of Title II students throughout Oregon. The CCWD Adult Basic Skills website will also be upgraded to provide technological links to current instructional and professional development materials and information. All RFA related materials will be provided on the CCWD Adult Basic Skills website to provide open access for current and future Title II providers.
- Monitoring and program improvement processes will be developed to mirror the performance outcomes under WIOA. Evaluation of program quality will be conducted on an annual basis in order to monitor program's performance and to drive continuous improvement. CCWD will develop a monitoring plan for adult education and literacy providers. The monitoring plan will be available as part of the Title II competitive grant process and viewable on CCWD's website.

CCWD will pursue the following permissible state leadership activities:

- To promote transition of adult education students to employment and/or postsecondary education, CCWD will fund the development of instructional content and models for career pathways. CCWD will explore the revision of OPABS and support the expansion of I-BEST and VESL models that integrate education and training as a method to facilitate student transition.
- Technical assistance to eligible providers will include support for developing and implementing strategies to achieve measurable progress toward the state adjusted performance measures. CCWD will investigate the development and implementation of an adult education and literacy orientation that may be applied universally across providers. An established orientation process with identified learning outcomes that prepares students to enter into adult education and literacy programs, will ensure that learners entering the program will be more likely to be successful and be counted toward performance measures.
- The CCWD State ABS Team will investigate data management needs in order to prepare for WIOA data requirements. Additional resources may be contracted to support the state in exploring data management and information sharing to ensure data responsiveness and reporting (e.g., I-Trac, D4A).
- The CCWD will utilize Poverty Simulation kits to increase awareness of the many challenges that Title II and workforce system participants face related to poverty. The increased awareness the simulations can bring to campus and workforce system partners is expected to result in policy and practice changes that will benefit Title II and other workforce system participants.

Assessing Quality

CCWD as the eligible agency will assess the quality of providers of adult education and literacy activities on an annual basis. The annual assessment will be supported by: regular submission of programmatic performance numbers (e.g., number of students enrolled, hours attended, matched pre and post-tests, etc.), quarterly reporting of programmatic activities, a biannual desk audit, and annual financial audit. CCWD will be increasing the frequency of reporting in order to more effectively utilize TOPS data for program improvement.

Regular monitoring of program quality will create a culture of continuous improvement, allowing CCWD to tailor technical assistance to areas of greatest need based on assessment results. Adult education and literacy providers will be assessed by individual provider, rather than by local area performance. Overall program quality will be measured by student persistence, retention, and transition to either employment or postsecondary training.

Oregon is currently revising State and local policies regarding the prioritization of services and is developing a related initiative to serve populations with that have traditional experienced barriers to employment. These policies are intended to create a cohesive link between the federal requirements, the needs of the individuals seeking services, and the local areas' population. When finalized, components of these policies will be incorporated in Oregon's monitoring guidance and process to ensure adherence to this state policy.

Vocational Rehabilitation and Commission for the Blind

Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation and Commission for the Blind leadership and staff played an important role in the collaborative efforts and overall development of this Unified Plan. In addition to their significant contributions to this plan, they developed the VR Oregon State Plan. Because there are many plan and programmatic requirements that overlap and are intermixed between the Unified State Plan and the VR State Plan, the VR portion of this Unified State Plan is included in Appendix 2.

Appendix 1: Performance Goals for the Core Programs

	PY 2016/FY2017		PY2017/FY2018	
	Proposed/ Expected Level	Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	Proposed/ Expected Level	Negotiated/ Adjusted Level
<i>Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)</i>				
Adults	60%	TBD	60%	TBD
Dislocated Workers	60%	TBD	60%	TBD
Youth* (Education, Training or Employment)	50%	TBD	50%	TBD
Adult Education	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Wagner-Peyser	60%	TBD	60%	TBD
Vocational Rehabilitation	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
<i>Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)</i>				
Adults	55%	TBD	55%	TBD
Dislocated Workers	55%	TBD	55%	TBD
Youth* (Education, Training or Employment)	50%	TBD	50%	TBD
Adult Education	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

Wagner-Peyser	55%	TBD	55%	TBD
Vocational Rehabilitation	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
<i>Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)</i>				
Adults	\$4675	TBD	\$4675	TBD
Dislocated Workers	\$4675	TBD	\$4675	TBD
Youth (Education, Training or Employment)	\$2465	TBD	\$2465	TBD
Adult Education	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Wagner-Peyser	\$4675	TBD	\$4675	TBD
Vocational Rehabilitation	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
<i>Credential Attainment Rate*</i>				
Adults	68%	TBD	68%	TBD
Dislocated Workers	68%	TBD	68%	TBD
Youth (Education, Training or Employment)	30%	TBD	30%	TBD
Adult Education	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Vocational Rehabilitation	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

<i>Measurable Skill Gains**</i>				
Adults	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Dislocated Workers	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Youth (Education, Training or Employment)	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Adult Education	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Vocational Rehabilitation	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
<i>Effectiveness in Serving Employers</i>				
Adults	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Dislocated Workers	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Youth (Education, Training or Employment)	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Adult Education	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Vocational Rehabilitation	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

*According to the specifications for the Performance Scorecard, this measures Credential Attainment or Employment within 1 year of exit. The specs reference a data element that is not in the PIRL layout. The calculation and resulting number is based on speculation only.

**No data is available for 3 of the 4 skill types (Secondary/Post-Secondary Transcript/Report Card, Training Milestone, Skills Progression). This figure is based only on Educational Functioning Level gain (and these assessments are only given to youth). The specs reference a data element that is not in the PIRL layout. The calculation and resulting number is based on speculation only.

Appendix 2: Core Program Assurances

(To be completed upon submittal through Department of Labor's Portal System)

Appendix 3: Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation Plan

Vocational Rehabilitation Portion of the State of Oregon
Workforce System Unified State Plan
2016-2019

[View the entire Vocational Rehabilitation State Plan](#)



Vocational Rehabilitation Portion of the State of Oregon

Workforce System Unified State Plan

2016-2019

Section	Page
Input from the State Rehabilitation Council	3
Request for Waiver of Statewideness	9
Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce System	16
Coordination with Education Officials	17
Cooperative Agreements with Private Non-profit Organizations	20
Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services	21
Coordination with Employers	22
Interagency Cooperation	24
Comprehensive System of Personnel Development	26
Statewide Assessment	34
Annual Estimates	38
State Goals and Priorities	40
Order of Selection	45
Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI Funds	50
State's Strategies	51
Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services	55

Summary of Input and Recommendations of
the State Rehabilitation Council;
Response of the Designated State Unit; and
Explanations for Rejection of Input or Recommendations

INPUT 1:

The council would like to acknowledge the efforts of VR's new Director, Trina Lee, to improve the program's transparency. Her leadership in this area is vital to the culture of VR and to the effectiveness of the SRC-VR federally mandated partnership.

Recommendation(s):

- a. Continue in efforts to be transparent with the SRC as full understanding of the issues facing the VR program is essential to effective consultation and development of policies and procedures that impact consumer service and informed choice.
- b. Continue to provide a culture of transparency with VR staff and stakeholders that promotes the input and feedback for program improvement.

VR RESPONSE:

VR Administration thanks you for the acknowledgement and accepts these recommendations. With leadership and personnel changes, VR is looking forward to meaningful working relationships with the SRC, VR staff, and stakeholders. With these relationships in place, we can effectively address the needs of disabled Oregonians seeking and maintaining employment.

It is the full intention of VR to utilize the SRC as a partner as required by Federal legislation. More importantly, we will take advantage of the historical and institutional knowledge that resides with the SRC. Additionally, VR strives to effectively capitalize on the passions, interests, and expertise of SRC members as we move forward.

INPUT 2:

During the past decade, the VR program has weathered both integration into the Oregon Department of Human Services and most recently, the mandate to work more collaboratively with, and to develop a four- year state plan within the Oregon Workforce Investment Board. The SRC is concerned that the VR program will not maintain its autonomy as a specialized service delivery program, both in the definition of the services provided to its consumers and in the utilization of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors who have received Master's level training in Rehabilitation Counseling. VR differs significantly from other workforce partners with regards to both consumer choice and the individualization of services each consumer will receive. Although we are charged with providing services that assist individuals with disabilities in acquiring and maintaining employment, we are not simply an employment service. Service provision must be in strict compliance with civil rights legislation enacted specifically to provide individuals with disabilities a greater chance at full integration into the community.

Recommendation(s):

- a. Communicate with the SRC on a regular basis about changes or threats to the integrity of the VR program as a result of increased collaboration with workforce partners who do not have the training in the field of rehabilitation.
- b. Provide the SRC with annual updates on the number of VR Counselors who have a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or a related field, those who have achieved a Bachelor's level in rehabilitation counseling or a related field, those who are working toward an advanced degree in rehabilitation counseling or a related field, and the number of VRC's who have current CRC status.
- c. Encourage and support local offices to host interns who have RSA tuition assistance for their Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling.

VR RESPONSE:

VR agrees that this is a time of great change regarding the Workforce System of which Vocational Rehabilitation is a core partner. The majority of changes that are required are related to access, partnership, and collaboration which strengthen the Rehabilitation Act as amended in WIOA. VR believes that we have been given an opportunity to evolve the current Workforce System so that equal and equitable services will become available to all Oregonians with disabilities, a goal we will continually strive for.

- a. With this in mind, it is imperative that VR work closely and in partnership with the SRC so that we evolve into an increasingly accessible Workforce System. The new Workforce System will still require specialized service delivery to Oregonians with disabilities and VR continues to fill this role in the area of disability and employment.

- b. VR agrees to continue to keep the SRC informed as to the progress of our staff in obtaining higher levels of education pertinent to the provision of VR services to Oregonians with disabilities. Please determine the cadence of when the SRC would like to receive this information and include it on the appropriate quarterly agenda.
- c. VR agrees to continue to offer opportunities to practicum students and interns in the field of Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling. This past year, VR has reinstated its stipend program for individuals from PSU and WOU who intern in our offices. In partnership with DHS, VR has streamlined the process for interns and practicum students to be eligible to work with our clients. Currently, VR Administration and represented staff from SEIU have formed a sanctioned work group. This group is working to develop options to continue to support and expand intern placement and oversight while remaining cognizant of workload impacts.

INPUT 3:

On October 1, 2015, VR implemented significant changes to the way that program staff and contracted vendors provide service to consumers. These changes required new contracting with employment providers that called for increased qualifications, changes in rate of payment and new reporting requirements. A draft of these changes, scheduled to be completed by July 2015, were reviewed for the first time with the SRC on May 1, 2105 at our quarterly meeting.

On May 22nd, the SRC sent VR a letter summarizing concerns and recommendations heard at public input and through council discussion. Many provided comments that the process needed to slow down; that stakeholder input needed to be sought in the development, not just the review of the new program services; that some rates are too low and don't reflect the increased demands for certification/training; and that the model is requiring too much paperwork which contractors are not paid to complete. VR failed to respond to this letter, thereby excluding the SRC from active partners in issues impacting services to consumers.

The council would like to recognize that VR took other steps to gather feedback from program staff and stakeholders and respond to general input, in writing, on their website. However, we are concerned about the general lack of consultation with your federally mandated policy partners, the State Rehabilitation Council.

Recommendation(s):

- a. Please address VR's lack of engagement with the SRC in the initial and on-going development and design of the new programs and contracts impacting services to consumers.
- b. Please engage with the SRC to address the concerns of stakeholders related to the changes in service since October 1, 2015 and to identify needed changes when applicable.

VR RESPONSE:

At the February 2015 SRC Quarterly meeting, Kirk Rhoades, the Director of the Office of Contracts and Procurement (OCP) attended and discussed the business and legal needs for VR to adjust its procurement process for obtaining job placement services. At that time the contract was set to expire in June 2015.

The Job Placement Contract process and updates were a part of the VR Director's report to the SRC Executive Committee in February, March, April, and May.

As part of the process of updating the contract and initiating a legally sufficient procurement method, VR convened an advisory group made up of contractors and VR staff that met in March and again in May. A member of the SRC Executive Committee was part of that advisory group.

In April, VR held two webinars to begin to vet the draft model of the proposed Job Placement process. One was geared toward contractors and one was geared toward staff. SRC members were invited to, and attended both of these webinars.

A public comment process was initiated after these webinars. Input from SRC members was collected as part of this process.

In late March it was obvious to VR Administration staff that we were not going to be able to make changes to the contract and get field staff and vendors trained in time to start the new contract in July. VR petitioned the OCP to extend the current contract beyond the five year limit in order to launch a solid product. OCP agreed and offered to extend the contract through September 2015. All Job Placement contracts were amended at this time. SRC members were given this update and SRC members who had current Job Placement contracts received the amendments.

At the May SRC Quarterly meeting the changes to the contract were presented to the SRC and discussed at length. Questions were fielded by VR staff including the comments that were later brought up again in the May 22, 2015 letter. At this SRC meeting the date for public input was extended two weeks to accommodate a request made by the SRC.

VR posted on our Public website in June 2015 a list of all comments received during the public comment period and our responses. Those responses were shared with the SRC, our vendor community, and the general public. Several changes to the proposed model and contract were made based on the feedback we received.

- a. VR does not feel that there was a lack of engagement of the SRC in the process of updating our Job Placement contract. At no point in the multiple conversations with the SRC between February and May did we intentionally exclude the SRC in the process and established timelines. VR recommends that the SRC create a protocol to communicate to the VR Exec team when further information and collaboration are required.
- b. VR will continue to provide updates to the SRC on the actions that the agency is taking regarding contracts and the procurement of services. The agency must act within the bounds of the law and the direction of OCP. The VR Planning and Procurement Workgroup is willing to share their notes and action plans as we develop effective protocols regarding the procurement of services. We will continue to engage with the SRC as appropriate in a manner that is free from conflict of interest or perceived conflicts of interest.

INPUT 4:

The council is concerned about the possibility of the VR program moving into an order of selection due to potential budget shortfall for the 2015-2017 biennium and the expected increase in demand for services from the IDD population, including youth in transition programs due to expectations of service established in Executive Order 15-01, and the new WIOA requirements to spend 15% of funds on youth in school.

Recommendation(s):

- a. Please communicate and work with the SRC on understanding of the threshold for moving to an active order of selection.
- b. Please work with the SRC to review and revise consumer criteria for placement into the order of selection.
- c. Please provide consistent feedback to the SRC regarding the new provisions in WIOA for Pre-Employment Transition Services and the new requirements to set aside 15% of the federal allotment and how VR will manage these requirements.

VR RESPONSE:

VR shares the SRC's concern regarding the increased demands on our system. In this environment of increased demand, reduced resources, and increasing service costs, hard decisions will have to be made. This may, in fact, include reinstating a waitlist.

- a. VR will continue to communicate and work with the SRC so that both entities are clear on the drivers that impact our ability to provide services to all eligible Oregonians with disabilities.

- b. If VR has to enter into a waitlist, Federal requirements will have to be adhered to regarding the prioritization of services. As we move towards this possibility, VR will work with the SRC regarding the criteria and prioritization of services. Both the SRC and VR will strategize in order to make sure we continue to have the best outcomes for Oregonians with disabilities.

- c. VR will provide consistent information to the SRC regarding the WIOA requirements for PETS and the 15% requirement, and the steps that the program is taking to meet this federal requirement. VR suggests that the SRC identify a proper cadence for this information and add it to the quarterly SRC meetings.

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;
- (2) The designated State unit will approve each proposed service before it is put into effect; and
- (3) Requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan will apply to the services approved under the waiver.

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.

YTP has two distinct but interconnected goals. The first is to improve post-school transition outcomes for youth with disabilities by preparing them for employment, postsecondary education or training, and independent living. The second is to increase capacity and foster positive systems change in schools and other agencies in assisting youth with disabilities in moving from school to work.

YTP's enhanced transition activities, services, and supports are initiated with youth while they are in high school and continue until one year after post-employment or until one year after youth exit YTP. Services and activities are coordinated by a collaborative team comprised of a school transition specialist, a VR vocational rehabilitation counselor, and students and their families. YTP activities, services and supports have included:

- Individualized planning with a focus on post-school goals and employment.
- Instruction on vocational, independent living and social skills.
- Career development activities.
- Collaboration with the local VR office to arrange for the provision of pre-employment transition services for all students with disabilities, in need of such services, without regard to the type of disability.
- Exposure and connections to paid employment.
- Information and referral to VR and other sources of vocational assistance.

- Follow-up support for one year after leaving the program.
- Refining the processes that schools use to provide VR with information about students in order to determine their eligibility and assist VR in identifying and addressing students' vocational goals and supports.
- YTP will be administered and overseen by VR's YTP Coordinator.
- The University of Oregon, College of Education, under a separate agreement with VR, will operate a team that provides training and technical assistance to participating school staff and VR field staff.
- The Oregon Department of Education also provides support and advice through its Secondary Transition Specialist.

YTP Cooperative Agreements for 2015 – 2017

Fifty-eight cooperative agreements have been executed with local school districts and educational service districts (representing 112 school districts, consortia of districts, and educational service districts). These agreements will operate local YTP for the July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2017 period. All of the proposed services outlined in these cooperative agreements have been approved by VR.

In instances involving multiple districts, the districts involved will additionally be required to have agreements with each other in order to ensure that the YTP program is appropriately and effectively carried out. A list of all districts that intend to participate in YTP can be found at the bottom of this Attachment.

Under the terms of the 2015-2017 YTP Cooperative Agreements, districts participating in YTP will be responsible for providing the 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 2015-2017 YTP Cooperative Agreements will:

- Specify that participating districts are to provide matching funds equal to one-third (1/3) of the grant awarded by VR to a district for carrying out the agreement. Moreover, the match must be from a district'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 under which VR operates, as long as the Order remains in effect.

**SCHOOL DISTRICTS, CONSORTIA AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DISTRICTS
THAT INTEND TO OPERATE YTP IN 2015-2017**

Greater Albany Public School District
718 7th Ave
Albany, OR 97321

Baker School District
Also representing: North Powder, Imbler, Union, Cove, and Elgin School Districts
2090 4th St.
Baker City, OR 97814

Bandon School District
455 9th St. SW
Bandon, OR 97411

Bend-La Pine Schools
520 NW Wall St.
Bend, OR 97701

Bethel School District
4640 Barger Drive
Eugene, OR 97402

Brookings Harbor School District
629 Easy St.
Brookings, OR 97415

Canby School District
1130 S Ivy Street
Canby, OR 97013

Central Linn School District
331 E. Blakely Ave.
Brownsville, OR 97327

Coquille School District
1366 N Gould
Coquille, OR 97423

Corvallis School District
1555 S.W. 35th St.
Corvallis, OR 97333

Dallas School District
111 SW Ash St.
Dallas, OR 97338

Douglas County School District 34

P.O. Box 390/749 W. River Drive
Elkton, OR 97436

Eugene School District
200 N. Monroe St.
Eugene, OR 97402

Gladstone School District
17789 Webster Rd.
Gladstone, OR 97027

Grant Union School District
401 N. Canyon City Blvd.
Canyon City, OR 97820

Harney School District
550 N. Court
Burns, Oregon 97720

Grants Pass School District
830 NE 9th St.
Grants Pass, OR 97526

Hillsboro School District
3083 NE 49th Place
Hillsboro, OR 97124

Hood River School District
1011 Eugene St.
Hood River, OR 97031

Jackson County School District #6
300 Ash St.
Central Point, OR 97503

Jefferson School District
Also representing: Crook County School District, Culver and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs
445 SE Bluff St
Madras, OR 97741

La Grande School District
1305 Willow St.
La Grande, OR 97850

Lane Education Service District
Representing: Cottage Grove, Crow-Applegate-Lorane, Fern Ridge, Lowell, Marcola, McKenzie,
Oakridge, Pleasant Hill, Junction City, Siuslaw and Creswell School Districts.
1200 Highway 99 N.
Eugene, OR 97402

Lebanon Community School District
485 S. 5th St.
Lebanon, OR 97355

Linn Benton Lincoln Education Service District
Representing: Alsea, Harrisburg, Monroe, Santiam Canyon and Scio School Districts
905 SE 4th Ave,
Albany, OR 97321

Malheur Education Service District
Representing: Adrian, Harper, Huntington, Jordon Valley, Nyssa, Ontario and Vale School Districts
363 "A" Street West
Vale, OR 97918

Molalla River School District
412 S. Sweigle Ave.
Molalla, OR 97038

Myrtle Point School District
413 C St.
Myrtle Point, OR 97458

North Clackamas School District
4444 SE Lake Rd
Milwaukie, OR 97222

North Santiam School District
757 W. Locust St.
Stayton, OR 97383

North Wasco School District
3632 W 10th St,
The Dalles, OR 97058

Northwest Regional Education Service District
Representing: Astoria, Jewell, Knappa, Seaside, and Warrenton-Hammond School Districts
3194 Marine Dr.
Astoria, OR 97103

Oregon City School District
14268 S Maple Ln Ct,
Oregon City, OR 97045

Portland Public Schools
6801 SE 60th Ave.
Portland, OR 97206

Philomath School District
535 S. 19th St.
Philomath, OR 97370

Rainier School District
28168 Old Rainier Rd.
Rainier, OR 97048
Redmond School District
145 SE Salmon Dr.
Redmond, OR 97756

Reynolds School District
1204 NE 201st Ave
Fairview, OR 97024

Salem/Keizer School District
2450 Lancaster Dr. NE 100,
Salem, OR 97305

Sweet Home School District
1920 Long St.
Sweet Home, OR 97386

Oregon Trail School District
36525 SE Industrial Way
P.O. Box 547
Sandy, OR 97055

Sherwood School District
23295 SW Main St,
Sherwood, OR 97140

Silver Falls School District
802 Schlador St.
Silverton, OR 97381

South Coast Regional Education Service District
Representing: Gold Beach, Marshfield, North Bend, and Pacific City School Districts
1350 Teakwood Avenue
Coos Bay, OR 97420

Southern Oregon Education Service District
Representing: Ashland, Armadillo Technical Institute, Butte Falls, Eagle Point, Medford, Prospect and
Rogue River School Districts
101 North Grape Street
Medford, OR 97501

Springfield School District
525 Mill Street
Springfield, OR 97477

St Helens School District
474 North 16th St.

St Helens, OR 97051

Three Rivers School District
8550 New Hope Rd.
Grants Pass, OR 97527

Tigard/Tualatin School District
6960 S.W. Sandburg St.
Tigard, OR 97223

Tillamook School District
Also Representing: Neah-Kah-Nie and Nestucca School Districts
2510 1st Street
Tillamook, OR 97141

Umatilla School District
1001 Sixth St.
Umatilla, OR 97882

Vernonia School District
1000 Missouri
Vernonia, OR 97064

Wallowa Education Service District
Representing: Enterprise, Joseph and Wallowa School Districts
107 S.W. First St.
Enterprise, OR 97828

West Linn/Wilsonville School District
22210 SW Stafford Rd
Tualatin, OR 97062

Willamette Education Service District
Representing: Amity, Dayton, Sheridan, Willamina, and Yamhill Carlton School Districts
2611 Pringle Rd SE,
Salem, OR 97302

Woodburn School District
965 N. Boones Ferry Rd.
Woodburn, OR 97071

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;
- (2) State programs carried out under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998;
- (3) Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture;
- (4) Non-educational agencies serving out-of-school youth; and
- (5) State use contracting 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.

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.

Coordination with Education Officials

Describe:

The designated State unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of 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 112 school districts in the state to run the Youth Transition Program (YTP) which 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 officials 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.

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).

(A) 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) 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/Transition Coordinator. This position is responsible for leading and coordinating YTP and more generally VR's transition efforts, including serving as VR's liaison to the Oregon Department of Education, the State Advisory Council for Special Education and its Transition Advisory Committee; the Oregon university system; and the state's secondary education system and schools on transition issues. The coordinator and other VR staff work closely with Oregon's community colleges and foster care, youth, and workforce programs on transition and related service coordination issues. On a related basis, 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 (www.ytporegon.org) 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;

Plan Development

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. However, VR remains in an Order of Selection. At the present, VR is serving all eligible individuals and is not utilizing an Order of Selection waitlist. But should it be necessary for VR to reinstitute a waitlist, 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. For more on this, see "YTP and Order of Selection" below and Attachment 4.11.c.3, 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.

VR and the Department of Education also co-funds eight regional TNFs who cover the entire state.

(D) Procedures for outreach to, and identification of, students with disabilities who need transition services.

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.

One hundred twelve 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 has entered into a contract with Family & Community Together (FACT) Oregon the statewide Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) to train, inform parents, and provide outreach to identify students with disabilities that 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.

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 2015 we have sixteen agreements in place.

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 actively works to ensure that policies and services are aligned in a way that makes sense for transition age students as well as adults seeking services.

VR has a close relationships 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. VR initiated a new Job Placement Services contract in 2015. Now, joint certification and coordinated training makes 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 180 providers under contract in our new Job Placement Services Contract.

VR is establishing a system to identify areas of the state where capacity issues exist. Recruit of providers in these areas will be a priority moving forward. 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.

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; and
2. transition services, including pre-employment transition services, for students and youth with disabilities

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 Employment Outcome Professional II (EOPII) 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.

Transition services, including pre-employment transition services, for students and youth with disabilities:

- VR's Youth Transition Program Transition (YTP) is operating in over 112 school districts across the state to provide pre-employment transition services (PETS) which includes "work experience" and "career counseling."
- YTP Transition Specialists work directly with employers to:
 - Perform worksite assessments before student placement
 - Train students in workplace readiness
 - Provide screening and referral of appropriate youth
 - Identification of appropriate worksites and task
 - 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:
 - Pre-employment trainings with school staff to meet employer needs
 - Interest inventories with students
 - Trainings on developing partnership agreements
 - Trainings on job needs analysis
 - Marketing school based programs
 - Pre and post training evaluations for students involved in work experiences

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;
- (2) the State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities; and
- (3) the State agency responsible for providing mental health services.

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 agreement. VR does collaborate with the individual programs that administer the waivers.

VR and Oregon Department of Developmental Disability Services have refocused their work together over the last couple of years 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, 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 joint clients.

Over the last year 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
 - 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

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 2015, 37 community mental health programs and 35 out of 36 counties are providing IPS as of the end of 2015. With the inclusion of IPS into Oregon's OARs, evidence-based supported employment services continue to expand across Oregon.

Additionally, VR supports and collaborates with the Early Assessment and Support Alliance in assisting young people with psychiatric disabilities by assisting them in obtaining or maintaining employment (an evidence-based practice, which is effective in reducing the onset and symptoms of mental illness). In partnership with Portland State University, VR helped create a center for excellence that provides ongoing technical assistance to EASA programs throughout the state.

Going forward, VR will increase its focus supported employment outcomes, the quality of the outcomes, the skills of employment service providers and the capacity of community rehabilitation programs and providers.

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

2015-17 biennium (7/1/15-6/30/17), and the type and number of vacancies and projected vacancies over the next five years.

In the pool of 129 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRCs), VR has 16 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 intervention, 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.

In 2016 VR will be evaluating the VR programs training needs, the current delivery system for training, and the alignment of the overall training system with policy and regulatory concerns. The results of this evaluation will lead to recommendations regarding the restructuring of the VR training unit and will result in the development of an updated, responsive, and aligned training system.

In FFY 2015 VR served 15,754 Oregonians with disabilities; in FFY 2014, VR served 15,589 Oregonians with disabilities; In FFY 2014, the ratio of VRCs to clients served was 1 to 125; in FFY 2015, the ratio was 1 to 124.

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

Row	Job Title	Total positions	Current vacancies	Projected vacancies over the next 5 years
1	Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors	129	10	37
2	Human Service Assistants/Office Assistants	69	5	19

3	Field Services Managers	12	1	5
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(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;
- (ii) the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and
- (iii) the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

Oregon has two institutions of higher education with graduate programs in Rehabilitation Counseling: Western Oregon University (WOU) and Portland State University (PSU). PSU also offers a post-graduate certification in Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling.

Western Oregon University has two Rehabilitation Counseling degree options: The Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf (RCD) is one of only three deafness specialty programs in the United States, and the Rehabilitation Counselor (RC), which was authorized by the Oregon University system in 1991.

Portland State University (PSU) offers a Master of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling. Graduates are eligible to seek national certification from the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) as Certified Rehabilitation Counselors or state licensure by the Oregon Board of Licensed Professional Counselors and Therapists.

University	Current Enrollees	2015 Graduates	CRC and or LPC Upon Graduation
Western Oregon University	RC 23 RSD 7	RC 11 RCD 0	9
Portland State University	RC 36	RC 11	11

Two other university rehabilitation programs exist in the northwest region:

Western Washington University (WWU). Washington has one institution of higher education that offers graduate education in rehabilitation counseling, Western Washington University (WWU).

Additionally, the University of Idaho Counseling Program offers a 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.

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 2015 VR hosted four practicum students and six interns.

This last year, the VR executive team approved the reinstatement of the VR Director's Stipend Program. 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. For the 2015–2016 school year, we are forecasting a stipend cost of approximately \$80,356 for WOU students 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.

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.

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 to ensure that designated State unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:

- (1) standards that are consistent with any national or State-approved or – recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing VR services; and
- (2) the establishment and maintenance of education and experience requirements, 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 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), the Certified Insurance Rehabilitation Specialist (CIRS), 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 has had and 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.

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.

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

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. VR will no longer have the support of the RSA In-service training grants, inclusive of the Basic and Quality Award Grants, as these programs were eliminated with the end of the five-year grant in September 2015. Nevertheless, VR will continue to provide for 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 2016 VR will be undertaking a comprehensive evaluation of the programs training structure, delivery system, and training needs. The results of this evaluation will lead to recommendations of training unit restructure and the development of an updated training system. A plan will be developed and implemented.

VR will continue with our Enhancing Employment Outcomes Professional II training that is provided to our job placement vendors and our staff. This training focuses on a skills-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 will continue to coordinate training opportunities with other partners and partner staff. We believe that joint training opportunities foster a greater understanding of the service system as a whole, increase opportunities for better levels of partnership, and create common goals and understandings.

Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs

Describe how the designated State unit has personnel or obtains the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in 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 staff who are bilingual in the following languages: Spanish, Russian, Ukrainian and American Sign Language. 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 AT&T's language service and access to qualified interpreters. In addition, the office has developed and utilizes outreach and application materials in alternate language formats, including Spanish and Russian.

VR continues to contract and collaborate with the Latino Connection 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, Clackamas, Salem, and Woodburn which have large Latino 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 and consumers who need accommodations for training events with assistive listening devices and qualified interpreters.

In light of demographic changes due to immigration and refugee issues, the VR North Portland office is working with the Immigration and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO). This has allowed access to additional interpretation and translations services as needed.

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 and Transitions Services (PETS) this relationship will continue to grow. This commitment was demonstrated in 2015 when VR provided the following opportunities:

1. In the summer of 2015 VR and ODE conducted eight regional training's across the state for school staff, VR staff, community members and providers. These training's covered services available through VR (including changes in the WIOA) and IDEA services in Transition. ODE and VR intend to continue this series of professional development opportunities.
2. VR co-funds eight regional Transition Network Facilitators 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 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.
4. 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.

5. 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.

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;
 - (B) who are minorities;
 - (C) who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;
 - (D) who have been served through other components of the statewide workforce development system; and
 - (E) who are youth with disabilities and students with disabilities, including, as appropriate, their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition services.
- (2) Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State; and
- (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 .

VR is in the process of beginning our 2016 Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment.

In Federal Fiscal Year 2013, the Vocational Rehabilitation, the State Rehabilitation Council and the Interwork Institute of San Diego State University collaborated to develop a comprehensive assessment of the vocational rehabilitation needs of persons with disabilities residing in the state of Oregon. Interwork subsequently administered the assessment, gathered and analyzed the results and provided VR and SRC with written and in-person reports on its findings. The needs assessment process, results and findings are summarized below. The findings were considered and addressed by VR and SRC in reviewing, updating and refining VR's goals, priorities, strategies and activities.

The process that was developed for conducting the needs assessment involved four primary data-gathering approaches:

- Telephone, electronic, and mail surveys conducted with four stakeholder groups (individuals with disabilities, representatives of organizations that provide services to persons with disabilities, employers, and VR staff);
- Focus groups conducted with three stakeholder groups (individuals with disabilities, representatives of organizations that provide services to persons with disabilities, and VR staff);

- Key informant interviews conducted with individuals identified as knowledgeable about the needs of individuals with disabilities in the state, workforce dynamics in the state, or both; and,
- Analysis of existing demographic and case service data relevant to individuals with disabilities in the state of Oregon.

Through the data collection efforts, researchers solicited information from four primary stakeholder groups: (a) potential, actual, or former consumers of VR services located throughout the state; (b) representatives of organizations that provide services to individuals who are potential, actual, or former consumers of VR services; (c) VR staff; and (d) representatives of businesses. The approach was designed to capture input from a variety of perspectives in order to acquire a sense of the multi-faceted needs of persons with disabilities in the state. 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 VR staff members that participated in key informant interviews, focus groups and surveys serve individuals with disabilities representing a broad range of backgrounds and experiences. Efforts were made to solicit responses from businesses reflecting the opinions of employers representing a variety of industries.

Four hundred telephone interviews were completed with individuals with disabilities, 31 partner surveys were completed, 85 VR staff surveys were completed, and 98 business surveys were completed. A total of 80 persons participated in 12 focus group conducted in Eugene, Medford, Portland, and Redmond, while 25 individuals participated in the key informant interviews.

The following summary highlights some of the most commonly cited needs associated with achieving employment goals and accessing VR services derived from the surveys, focus groups, and key informant interviews.

Frequently Encountered Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals

Individuals with disabilities, representatives of partner organizations, and VR staff all identified the lack of available jobs as among the most frequently encountered barriers to achieving employment goals. Each of the respondent groups (individuals, partners, and VR staff) identified a different barrier most frequently, with individuals mentioning the need for more education and training, partners mentioning employers' perceptions of individuals with disabilities, and staff mentioning mental health issues.

Key informants identified the following as the top barriers to employment encountered by people with disabilities:

- Employers' concerns about risks associated with hiring individuals with disabilities,
- Employers' concerns about accommodating individuals with disabilities,
- Misperceptions about disabilities held by human services and education professionals,
- Lack of job preparation, and
- Lack of interpersonal or "soft" skills.

Frequently Encountered Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals for Individuals with Most Significant Disabilities

A question about barriers to achieving employment goals for individuals with most significant disabilities was asked of partner and VR staff respondents. Both partners and VR staff identified (a) employers' perceptions about employing persons with disabilities and (b) not having job skills among the most frequent barriers to achieving employment goals for persons with the most significant disabilities.

Key informant interview findings suggested that an additional barrier to employment for individuals with most significant disabilities may take the form of diminished expectations of work potential on the part of both employers and human service professionals. In addition, vocational rehabilitation staff may perceive these individuals as representing time-intensive cases and may be reluctant to provide the necessary services due to concerns about time demands.

Frequently Encountered Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals for Youth in Transition

Partners and VR staff members were asked about barriers to achieving employment goals for youth in transition. There was noteworthy agreement between partners and VR staff with respect to several of the most frequently cited barriers to achieving employment goals for youth in transition. Both groups identified not having job skills, a lack of education or training, and a lack of job search skills among the most frequent barriers to achieving employment goals for youth in transition.

The focus group research yielded data suggesting that there was a need to increase the emphasis upon and provision of transition services within the schools. The key informant interviews echoed this finding. Other transition needs identified through key informant interviews were improving transition services in rural areas, facilitating pursuit of higher education for transition students, providing job coaches in the high schools, providing work experiences while youth attend school, and increasing family awareness of disability and students' potential.

Frequently Encountered Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals for Consumers who are Racial or Ethnic Minorities

Partners and VR staff members were asked about barriers to achieving employment goals for consumers who are racial or ethnic minorities. There was a substantial degree of congruence between partners and VR staff with respect to the most frequent barriers to achieving employment goals for consumers who are racial or ethnic minorities. Language barriers were identified most commonly, followed by lack of education or training, lack of job skills, and employers' perceptions about hiring workers with disabilities.

The key informant interviews suggested that barriers encountered by individuals with disabilities from racial, cultural, or ethnic minority backgrounds included language and cultural barriers, as well as the lack of vocational rehabilitation outreach into communities where these individuals live.

Barriers to Accessing VR Services

Individuals with disabilities, partners, and VR staff were asked about barriers to accessing VR services. Partners and staff agreed that accessing training education services was prominent among the top barriers to accessing VR services. There was some agreement between individuals with disabilities, partners and VR staff that limited accessibility of VR via public transportation represented a barrier to accessing services.

Key informants identified specific populations that were encountering difficulties accessing VR services – individuals with developmental disabilities, transition age youth, individuals with significant disabilities, and individuals with disabilities who were homeless. The barriers described for these populations were related to eligibility determination, low employment expectations on the part of the counselors, and valid identification.

Employer Survey, Perceived Helpfulness of Employer Services

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.

The needs assessment is the result of a cooperative effort between Vocational Rehabilitation and the State Rehabilitation Council. These efforts solicited information concerning the needs of persons with disabilities from persons with disabilities, service providers, VR staff and businesses for the purpose of providing VR and the SRC with direction for addressing structure and resource demands. The needs assessment effort is based upon the contributions of approximately 700 individuals representing different stakeholder groups. Vocational Rehabilitation 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.

Annual Estimates

Describe:

- (1) The number of individuals in the State who are eligible for services.
- (2) The number of eligible individuals who will receive services under:

- (A) The VR Program;
- (B) The Supported Employment Program; and
- (C) each priority category, if 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
- (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.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES

According to the 2014 American Community Survey there are 316,222 individuals who experience disabilities in the State of Oregon who are 16 or older. It is projected that Oregon VR will serve 15,378 of those individuals during the next year.

Oregon VR's Title VI, Supported Employment Funds are \$277,083 for FFY 2016. At a current cost per case of approximately \$3,155 we will be able provide services to approximately 87 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.

State Goals and Priorities

The designated State unit must:

- (4) 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.
- (5) Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs.
- (6) Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas:
 - (A) the most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates;
 - (B) the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and
 - (C) other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107.

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 Unified State Plan at their February 2016 meeting after a final opportunity to add comments.

A comprehensive needs assessment was completed September 23, 2013, a survey was completed by the SRC April 2015 in regards to the VR programs Job Placement Services process and contract, regular case reviews are conducted by the Business and Finance Manager as well as Branch Managers. The results of these reports and activities were taken into account in the development of these goals, priorities, and strategies. The performance measures as defined by the WIOA, and activities necessary to meet the expected outcomes were also taken in to consideration.

VR put the Plan up for public comment in January and February.

The VR Plan was available to all interested parties through the VR internet site and the Oregon Workforce Investment Board (OWIB) website. Copies of the initial draft were sent out to an extensive list of interested parties, members of the SRC, members of the OWIB and to our traditional service delivery partners such as the Tribes, Mental Health providers etc.

Public hearings occurred in three locations during the month of February. LaGrande, Medford and Salem hosted these sessions with the local Manager in attendance. VR revived written feedback from our Workforce Partners, Tribal partners, Centers for Independent Living, and had

feedback from Mental Health Programs. Comment was received from individuals as well. All this feedback was reviewed and incorporated into the VR State Plan.

General feedback that was submitted to the Workforce Investment Division regarding the Unified State Plan was reviewed for feedback that was relevant to the VR program and integrated into the VR Plan as appropriate and necessary.

In addition to working toward the goals and strategies set forth for the entire Oregon Workforce System in the earlier sections of Unified Plan, listed below are a series of VR program specific goals, priorities, and strategies.

VR Goals/Priorities/Strategies:

1. Increase quality employment outcomes for all Oregonians with disabilities
 - 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
 - v. Work with Lean Coordinator to identify opportunities for greater efficiencies in service delivery and policy that can be addressed
 - 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
 - v. Convene cross agency workgroup to address the needs of underserved populations in the workforce system as a whole
 - d. Work with State and local partners to increase access to employment and employment services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities
 - i. Continue to meet the expectations outlined in Executive Order 15-01 and the Lane v. Brown settlement
 - 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
- 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
 - 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.
 - 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 and develop and implement recruitment and solicitation plans
- 3. Improve the performance of the VR program with respect to the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA.
 - 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 into 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 expansive employer engagement model that creates opportunities for work-based learning opportunities
 - i. Develop a common employer engagement plan, language, and focus that can be used statewide
 - ii. Implement a progressive employment model
 - iii. Create and train local VR employer engagement teams
 - iv. Work with partners on joint engagement opportunities
 - v. Engage with employers the need to meet the 503 federal hiring targets
 - vi. 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

Order of Selection. Describe:

1.) Whether the designated state unit will implement an Order of Selection. If so, describe

As of March 1, 2016, the Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation Program is no longer in an Order of Selection. We have been in a de facto Order of Selection, but have not had to “waitlist” any client since July 2010.

It is the intent at this time of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) to continue to serve any and all persons in Oregon who are eligible for vocational rehabilitation services.

Status of the Order of Selection

From January 15, 2009 through June 30, 2009, VR’s services were limited to individuals who had authorized individual plans for employment (IPEs). Beginning in July 2009, VR had sufficient resources to begin taking Priority One individuals off of the Order waitlist. Over the ensuing twelve months, VR was able to successively remove individuals from the waitlist, as prioritized. As of July 2010, VR had taken all individuals off the waitlist and there has been no waitlist since then.

This progress was achieved through use of a mix of ARRA funds, re-allocation dollars matched by state general funds over and above the amount required to match the state’s grant and Social Security reimbursement dollars. ARRA funds allowed VR to remove 2,654 individuals from the waitlist and 471 individuals to move directly into services. ARRA funds and re-allotment dollars are not available going forward.

The Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation Program has provided services to all eligible Oregonians since July 2010. Because of this continuing success, the decision was made take the Oregon Vocational rehabilitation Program out of the Order of Selection status. This was discussed and agreed to by the Rehabilitation Services administration and the decision was vetted with the State Rehabilitation Council and other stakeholders.

If circumstances change, and the Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation must consider reentry into an Order status, 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.

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.
- (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 four years; and
 - 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.

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

The Supported Employment Services 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.

In both cases, 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 \$277,083 for FFY 2016. At a current cost per case of approximately \$3,155 we will be able provide services to approximately 87 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.

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):

How the agency's strategies will be used to:

- (A) achieve goals and priorities by the State, consistent with the comprehensive needs assessment;
- (B) support innovation and expansion activities; and
- (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.

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.

As stated in that earlier attachment, the state's last comprehensive attachment was part of the discussion of what the goals, priorities, and strategies should accomplish. As VR looks to move forward the program understands that with tightening budgets and increased demands we must expand our services in a way that is equitable and innovative in order to be successful. That understanding was very important to establishing this state plan

The methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities:

- (1) Promote earlier engagement with Workforce partners for VR clients in the application process
- (2) Streamline referral and data collection from common referral agencies
- (3) Work with VR staff to streamline the Individual Plan for Employment process in order to get clients into plan more quickly
- (4) Use data to determine success rate of specific services and focus on their duplication
- (5) Work with LEAN Coordinator to identify opportunities for greater efficiencies in service delivery and policy that can be addressed

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) Expand training for staff on availability of AT and its uses
- (2) Work with Access Technologies Inc. to establish a communication plan to keep staff up-to-date on new technologies
- (3) Explore how to support FACT's training on AT to transition-aged students and their families
- (4) Encourage VR staff attending IEP's to explore the use of AT at an earlier age for students

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.

- (1) Establish quarterly review of caseloads to ensure equitable access and outcomes
- (2) Establish local plans for community outreach when underserved or underrepresented populations are identified
- (3) Partner with agencies that provide culturally specific service
- (4) Continue working with Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs to ensure access to joint case management and culturally appropriate services
- (5) Convene cross agency workgroup to address the needs of underserved populations in the workforce system as a whole

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 pre-employment transition services).

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

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 into 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

Strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce development system in assisting individuals with disabilities.

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

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.
- (2) The timing of transition to extended services.

VR's SE 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.

During FFY 15 VR revamped our pay for performance Job Placement Services Contracts that provides Job Placement, Job Coaching, and Retention services. VR currently has over 180 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 limitation that the client experiences. Tiers two and three focus on clients who require SE services in order to be successful in the labor market.

In FFY 2015, VR provided SE services to 2,160 individuals with significant disabilities, including persons with psychiatric disabilities, intellectual and/or developmental disabilities or traumatic brain injuries. During this same period, 452 individuals who received SE services entered into competitive integrated employment, and 1,215 individuals continued to participate in their SE IPEs.

In general, the quality of a VR SE plan is evaluated to ensure that it complies with defining criteria of SE:

- 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.

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 SE 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 SE services.

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 SE 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

TIMING OF THE 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.

Appendix 4: Oregon Commission for the Blind State Plan

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan ⁵⁰ must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA:

- (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;
 - (2) the Designated State unit's response to the Council's input and recommendations; and
 - (3) the designated State unit's explanations for rejecting any of the Council's input or recommendations.

Agency response (a):

Although the Oregon Commission for the Blind does not operate under the direction of the State Rehabilitation Counsel, as a board-driven agency/commission, we are utilizing this section of the state plan to share feedback received during our public input period and our FFY 2015 customer satisfaction survey.

The Oregon Commission for the Blind (OCB) received feedback for the FFY 2015 State Plan with public feedback concluding January 20, 2016. Options for feedback were: in-person hearing, phone-teleconference, postal mail and electronic/email. This allowed individuals to participate throughout the state in a format that worked best for their situation and also insured that person with barriers to transportation could also participate in the process.

Below is a summary of the feedback provided by our valued clients, partners and stakeholders:

What services at OCB have been the most helpful to you?

- Receiving financial support from OCB while working towards my graduate degree was extremely helpful and very much appreciated. It gave me the opportunity to focus and excel in my studies and not worry more about the financial implications of doing such.

- Having the opportunity to sit down with OCB’s adaptable technology resources proved helpful for me to understand what technological advances may have been made recently which could help me with my day-to-day functions, my studies, and considerations for adaptive equipment which may prove helpful for me and an employer (reasonable accommodations).
- The Living with blindness class provides other people to talk to who can relate.
- Mobility training provides increased independence.
- Funding for a tutor for a statistics class allowed personal development/ongoing education.
- Referrals to TriMet and Talking Books and Art Museum Thursday events make for a fuller life.
- The end of term luncheon allows clients to meet other clients’ families and celebrate accomplishments.
- The OCB connection with the Portland Art Museum allowed one client to be invited to show his work there later this year.
- Instruction in Smartphone use, keyboard operation, and text messaging will allow client to develop a business plan and facilitate communication with customers.
- Mobility training in use of cane and public transportation allows client to travel between OCB and home outside the Portland metro area. Mobility training also provides the freedom to do grocery shopping, shoulder more of the burden of raising children, and share housework. Mobility has opened up the world for client.
- Image enhancing devices help client to do his carving—which is his employment goal.
- Cooking class increased sense of self-reliance and capability.
- All the training experienced at OCB so far has been helpful.
- Orientation and mobility has given a sense of freedom.
- Technological training counteracts functional illiteracy resulting from blindness and allows people to get back in touch with the world.
- A class on how to dine with dignity while blind improved quality of life.
- Finds the community at OCB to be supportive, “a little like dropping into heaven.”

What services need to be developed to better meet the needs of persons with vision loss who are seeking to gain or retain employment?

- I believe that OCB rehabilitation counselors need to be more “in tune” with the needs of both their clients and employers in the greater Portland area. When a client graduates from a program or university, OCB’s counselors should be MORE proactive in working with the clients to learn more about their skillsets and match those to an employer where possible.
- More collaboration with local post-secondary educational institutions, e.g. training for tutors or professors on how to work with students with vision impairment.

- More money for tutors.
- More time with other students, e.g. mobility training in a group setting as opposed to one-on-one.
- More support for caregivers, e.g. a training and support group.
- Outreach, since little is offered on North Coast where client may need to move. Client just three weeks into program, so more overwhelmed about what all is available rather than what is not.
- Past client says tech center student-to-instructor ratio too high.
- Current client responds that it's actually almost one-to-one instruction with little wait time. His needs have been so well serviced that he finds little to critique.

What services that are not currently offered at OCB would be helpful for Oregonians with vision loss who are seeking to gain or retain employment?

- Use of the creative arts, such as music therapy, a writing class or a drama club.
- Regular ongoing social activities.
- A self-advocacy class.
- Too new in the program to answer this.

We are always looking for new and innovative ways to get the word out about our services. What are your suggestions for reaching clients, partners and employers who could benefit from our rehabilitation services?

- Place more emphasis on partnering with nonprofits that work to match people with disabilities with employers. OCB could reach out to various employers to learn trends and needs of the workforce and utilize that information to seek out candidates with low-vision or blind and train them for those positions.
- Consider more collaboration with hospitals and clients' primary care physicians.
- Local student councils advertising the OCB.
- Suggests a class about managing personal education and medical issues.
- Astoria services don't seem to be available.
- For the iPhone a single short class would sometimes be more helpful than an entire course.
- OCB is "Oregon's best-kept secret." Client had no idea of all that was available. He has the impression that OCB field staff is almost overwhelmed with the workload, given how much he, as one client requires.
- Client is unsure how to communicate to the wider world how much is being accomplished at OCB.
- When asked how he found OCB, one client said it was due to a friend's recommendation, after which he contacted the Salem office initially and a counselor there provided details of services available. When asked how OCB could have reached him directly if he hadn't

had the friend who referred him, the client replied that nobody at his hospital mentioned OCB during treatment of client's head trauma and resulting in blindness. The client doesn't think OCB is on hospital's radar.

- An OCB counselor showed up in the hospital after one client's traumatic brain injury and talked to the client and his family and was the only way they knew about OCB services.

Other Comments

- Client is thankful to be involved with OCB services. She strongly believes in the therapeutic benefit of creative outlets and social opportunities/group settings in general and thinks it would apply here as well. But she feels that individual learning is good too.
- A client's care provider stated that 99% of OCB staff are encouraging and knowledgeable, and the students too.
- OCB staff are like cheerleaders and help clients adapt skills they already have to accomplish what they want to achieve and to be independent and self-sufficient, in a spirit of respect.
- One client reports that living in the OCB apartments provides a living laboratory for what he is learning at OCB and says he hasn't been this excited in a long time.
- Client says, even young people facing a long life with vision impairment can still live vital productive lives based on what they learn here.
- If someone really wants to get back to work, everyone at OCB works to make that happen.

The agency conducts an anonymous satisfaction survey for VR customers who were closed in the federal fiscal year. Surveys for FFY 2015 were completed online or by phone.

Of the 160) agency participants contacted, 88 (or 55%) responded.

Survey respondents were given the opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions at the end of the survey. The majority of comments expressed gratitude for the services received, either from the agency or from specific staff. 90 percent of participants rated the following categories either "good or "excellent."

- How do you rate the overall helpfulness of the Commission for the Blind's staff? (95.4%)
- The services I received from OCB helped me to improve my independent living skills. (97.1%)
- The services I received from OCB helped to prepare me for employment. (97.2%)
- How do you rate the overall quality of services provided to you by the Commission for the Blind? (91.9%)

Sample of Customer Satisfaction Comments for FFY 2015 Survey:

- Braille and mobility were 10's! Woodworking was a 10 too

- Everyone on the staff should be aware that they are valued and well appreciated
- Small Device and Braille classes were super valuable for me (an outstanding teacher), but they need more because she is only one person
- There is a bottleneck for these tech services and I was disappointed my time had to end
- My counselor seemed over-extended and I had to advocate for things for myself, but she was responsive and quick to respond when I did ask for things--She was very positive and constructive, but I wonder what happens to people who don't advocate for themselves like I do
- I appreciate Tech Instructor's efforts with me and I know others get great value from the course.
- I found the front desk always positive and constructive
- Cooking was excellent
- Everybody was actually awesome Very helpful Everything was wonderful and everyone was so nice
- Got all the services I wanted, but the wait was too long because the staff was swamped
- I am able to do my job because of VRC and Instructor--Top-notch group of people who are good at their jobs
- I am very thankful for all they did for me It would be helpful if there was a database of resources and groups available
- I feel that more should be done by staff to support the counseling and training needs of clients who are in the Portland metro area but who are not attending the center classes
- It was very helpful to get equipment, but then the homemaker program was discontinued which was disappointing
- The voice over technology is hugely important
- Front desk is outstanding
- The people I did work with were wonderfully great
they could be more proactive with local businesses to help people get jobs
- More business plans and loans for things like franchises for self-employment
- More counseling/therapy and social interactions, but my experience has been absolutely great both the people and services
- More workshops at field offices
- The assessments were wonderful. I rave about the people I worked with
- The mobility instructors need to be trained under sleep shade
- Maybe Living With Blindness classes for employed people?
- They provided me everything I needed. OCB was the best cold call I ever made.
- My counselor's caring and professionalism were great
- Just very excellent, though they should offer golf lessons
- I tell people that this was the best year of my life--It has changed my life forever.
- Great people, I tell everyone about OCB Those people work so hard to make sure you have everything you need.

OCB Response to Feedback:

We greatly value the feedback provided by our clients/partners/stakeholders. We plan to look into all viable options for addressing issues mentioned above and for implementing suggestions for improving services/outreach. Some particular areas of interest from the above feedback that OCB plans to take action on as soon as possible over the next year include:

Outreach to hospitals/Primary Care Physicians: While OCB has generally focused outreach on professionals/facilities that directly relate to vision loss, we realize that we could perhaps do better at outreaching to the broader medical community. The agency will be actively seeking out new venues for sharing OCB services to these entities throughout Oregon.

Higher Education and Related Services: OCB regularly works with higher education in order to provide training/education/resources to our VR clients. We recognize that these services and associated systems can be challenging to navigate and we will continue to look for new, innovative ways to engage/ educate about our services and help clients and education providers to work together toward positive outcomes.

OCB Outreach/Services in Rural Areas of Oregon: Although our services are state-wide, we do recognize the challenge of providing comprehensive services and outreach efforts to more remote and low-populated areas of the state. We are committed to identifying those areas that need more targeted and regular outreach and to insuring we reach potential clients throughout Oregon so they know about the services we can provide locally as well as the options for receiving services/skills building via our training center in Portland.

Outreach to Nonprofits and Partners: OCB has done regular outreach to nonprofits and partners throughout Oregon, however given new staff and the emergence of new partners throughout the state, we think this is a perfect time to begin updating partner contacts and doing targeted and regular outreach to past and new partners who have a direct impact on services and employment options for our clients throughout Oregon.

- (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;
 - (2) the designated State unit will approve each proposed service before it is put into effect; and

- (3) requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan will apply to the services approved under the waiver.

Agency response (b):

The Oregon Commission for the Blind does request a waiver of statewideness for our transition program that serves transition aged youth who are blind or who have conditions likely to lead to legal blindness that are in high school and beginning the planning process of exiting school and entering into PreEmployment Transition Services. Although our transition services are provided statewide through transition counselors employed by the agency, we also have agreements in regions around the state that enhance the services available in those areas.

We currently have interagency/intergovernmental agreements with three (3) school districts and/or regional programs that serve students who are visually impaired throughout the state.

Currently we have agreements with Portland Public Schools, Northwest Regional Education Service District and Greater Albany Public Schools. These agreements are used to receive non-federal funds from the school district/regional education programs that are used by the agency as match for federal funds. These agreements stipulate that the entity will provide specific PreEmployment Transition Services outlined in the agreement to eligible students. Each of the interagency/intergovernmental agreements includes assurances that all State Plan requirements apply, including Order of Selection.

- (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;
- (2) State programs carried out under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998;
- (3) Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture;
- (4) Non-educational agencies serving out-of-school youth; and
- (5) State use contracting programs.

Agency response (c):

The Oregon Commission for the Blind (OCB) is committed to collaborating with stakeholders as an essential aspect of assisting people with disabilities to successfully become employed. This ongoing effort maximizes resources and addresses the quality of life issues that can enhance the ability of a person with a disability to obtain and maintain employment. We have active collaboration with the following organizations and agencies (and formal memorandums of understanding (MOUs) where noted).

The agency recognizes that the major leading causes of blindness are diabetes and age related macular degeneration. For this reason, the agency maintains regular communication with the

medical community and senior centers throughout the state. Staff regularly engages with these organizations in order to outreach to potential referral sources and clients and to provide education on blindness related issues.

The agency is actively engaged with the National Federation of the Blind of Oregon and the American Council of the Blind of Oregon. Both consumer groups have been very helpful in offering scholarships to clients as well as providing mentoring and educational opportunities to clients. Both organizations also hold positions on the agency's board and are very active in setting agency policies and priorities.

The agency actively partners with Centers for Independent Living (CIL) around the state. OCB refers clients for related services to support their independent living goals and individualized plans for employment. We also often receive referrals from these CILs and work in collaboration with CILs to improve outcomes for our mutual clients.

The OCB actively engages with and partners with the Washington State School for the Blind (WSSB), school districts/regional programs, teachers of the visually impaired, and families of students with vision loss in order to insure the youth are supported throughout their transition from high school to college/employment.

The OCB engages with Northwest Association for Blind Athletes (NWABA) in order to provide clients with exposure to social and environmental experiences that prepare them for dealing with challenges and opportunities in both independent living and work.

The OCB collaborates with Public Institutions of Higher Education. **OCB** and Oregon's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (OVRs) have entered into a formal agreement with the Public Institutions of Higher Education in Oregon. This agreement facilitates collaboration for our participants with disabilities who are attending Higher Education schools in the state of Oregon.

The OCB engages with tribal vocational rehabilitation programs in order to better serve our mutual clients.

The OCB regularly collaborates with the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC). The Helen Keller National Center is a resource for OCB on Deaf-Blind resources and can provide contracted services to OCB participants as well as trainings for OCB staff for working effectively with clients who are Deaf Blind. We have a MOU with HKNC that outlines on-going engagement and collaboration strategies.

The agency regularly and actively engages with businesses around the state through involvement

with local Chambers of Commerce. Although these are not formally connected to the workforce system, these are important connections in order to maximize the placement opportunities for OCB clients.

On a national level, the agency utilizes American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) for technical assistance and training when appropriate.

Agency staff serves on advisory committees to agencies that provide services to our consumers (e.g. Talking Book and Braille Services, the State Independent Living Counsel, etc.).

(d) Coordination with Education Officials. Describe:

- (1) 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.
- (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;
 - (B) transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs;
 - (C) roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;
 - (D) procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

Agency response (d):

The Agency has a long history of successful coordination with education officials in order to enhance the service delivery for transition aged students in Oregon. OCB collaborates with a number of partners to coordinate strategic activities to insure positive outcomes for students with vision loss.

There is active information sharing and coordinated planning between OCB and regional programs, OVRS, education and health care organizations throughout the state. Partners join in planning outreach efforts, coordinate referral of potentially eligible youth for VR, and implement process improvements for assessment & training statewide in the areas of daily living skills, orientation and mobility/cane travel, communication skills, technology, vocational aptitudes, interpersonal/social skills, and academic preparation for transition-age youth.

Ages 16 – 21

OCB's application for vocational rehabilitation services begins around age 16 (occasionally age 15, in circumstances where students have not yet, but will, turn 16 prior to entering our Summer Work Experience Program), and requires the development of an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) for all students within 90 days of eligibility, which matches the timeline for adult services.

OCB's primary services while a student is in high school are outreach, assessment, information & referral, counseling & guidance, and pre-employment transition services in order to prepare for successful transition into post-secondary higher education and career activities.

OCB authorizes and pays for any services needed to establish a transition student's eligibility for OCB services, and funds services outside the scope of the school district's FAPE (free appropriate public education) responsibility. The OCB collaborates with educational staff and families to ensure youth who are blind have early exposure to pre-employment transition services such as career exploration, job shadowing and paid work experiences, and extra-curricular opportunities to more fully develop self-advocacy and independent living skills.

- OCB transition counselors conduct outreach and ongoing consultation statewide to teachers of the visually impaired, students, families and others in the education community.

At around age 16, students who are blind, Deaf/blind, and visually impaired become eligible to apply for individualized vocational rehabilitation services. Case management activities are coordinated by the agency's VR Counselors to provide pre-employment transition services. OCB also coordinates closely with local school districts and regional Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs), to identify students who are blind and visually impaired that are eligible for VR services.

OCB is able to develop relationships with youth who are blind/visually impaired and parents, providing a vocational context within IEP and 504 Planning & Implementation Team discussions and ensuring an important link to identifying the individualized skills needing to be addressed in order for the youth to be prepared for adult life after graduation.

OCB transition counselors provide youth with counseling/services/programs to aid in preparation for transitioning to post-high school/college/employment. Individuals who are blind/low vision who have early exposure to adaptive skills training, vocational exploration and active socialization have a head start to becoming functional, employed and fully integrated adults. The OCB knows not all learning can take place in the classroom, and therefore offers Summer Work Experience Programs (SWEP) to complement the learning that is available through the public

education system. These pre-employment transition programs serve to give each participant a safe environment to discover their vocational aptitudes, develop confidence in adaptive skills and encourage self-advocacy and independence. These pre-employment transition programs (offered in the Summer) are a key to the agency's success in quality of employment outcomes for students with vision loss.

OCB offers a five-week entry and a six-week more advanced program each Summer. Each program offers paid employment experiences based on student interests, experience and ability. The residential living component of the program provides students the opportunity to refine their daily living skills often for their first time away from home and without parental supports: students plan, purchase and prepare their meals; manage their finances; develop/enhance time-management skills; and maintain a clean and organized living environment in a dorm setting. They also develop and practice independent travel skills and navigation and the use of public transportation by travelling to work and other locations (e.g. grocery stores, banks, restaurants, etc.). Community speakers and student-planned activities encourage deeper integration into the community and refine skills in self-advocacy and independent living.

Additional Pre-employment Transition Activities

While OCB has had a long history of providing strong vocational counseling & guidance and progressive core pre-employment transition services and activities for students with visual disabilities, the costs for these activities as they exist will not come close to meeting the required 15% set aside of the federal grant. OCB's goal is to expand upon our existing pre-employment and work experience programs by increasing capacity for the existing programs and developing new opportunities for pre-employment workshops, peer mentorship, and career and work experiences throughout the year.

Our challenges will include identifying appropriate service providers and educational partners that will be able to serve our small, low-incidence population with the specialized skills and tools they require. We will seek to identify and implement appropriate curricula and activities that meet the required five pre-employment transition services. We will be in discussion with educational staff and families to explore how to effectively allocate time for successful completion of rigorous academic requirements, practice of essential adaptive skills, and beneficial work experiences. The agency is looking at options for spending a portion of its required set-aside Pre-Employment Transition Service dollars on activities described as nine optional activities in order to build capacity.

- (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.

Agency response (e):

National Federation of the Blind of Oregon (NFBO) & Oregon Council of the Blind (OCB)

– The agency collaborates and shares information with consumer groups with a focus on vision loss in Oregon to promote opportunities for our participants, partner around shared issues related to blindness, and to solicit input for consumer priorities and expectations in service provision. The agency actively encourages and supports agency participants who are new to blindness and staff in attending state consumer conventions in order to broaden exposure to issues of blindness and consumer perspectives.

Southern Oregon Goodwill Industries - OCB has formed a long-term partnership with Goodwill in Eugene and Southern Oregon. Goodwill provides Job Connection and Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) services.

The National Employment Team (NET) – OCB has an active relationship and partnership in the activities of the NET, connecting agency participant talent to businesses that understand the importance of inclusion of people with disabilities into their workforce.

Blindskills, Inc: OCB has an on-going partnership with Blindskills, which distributes information to young people and their families through a nationally distributed magazine. Subscribers learn about how successful persons with vision loss accomplish their work, participate in recreational activities and enjoy engaged and fulfilling lives. OCB also uses Blindskills, Inc. for community resources and blindness related supports for clients.

Incight: OCB works in active partnership with Incight, a non-profit that supports and empowers key life aspects of education, employment, and independence. Incight offers programs that provide resources to help people with disabilities realize their potential and encourage the community at large to consider greater inclusion. Their aim is to create a culture of inclusion by leading an important conversation about disability in our community. We work with Incight to fulfill our mutual visions which includes: creating workplaces free of stigma surrounding disability, developing support systems for students to access all necessary resources to successfully complete college, encouraging recreational opportunities for athletes of all abilities, and ensuring a safe forum for people who want to learn more about support and options available to persons with disabilities. Incight provides preparation and networking services for our job seekers for events such as Live Resume, Meet Business and the annual Tapping Fresh Talent Career Expo.

Easter Seals, Latino Connection Program: OCB works collaboratively with the Latino Connection program, which provides training/education to Latino and non-native English speaking participants focusing on employment. Their program consists of bilingual English-Spanish staff members who utilize program resources to support translation and interpretation service to persons who do not speak English as their first language and to assist them in their

training and job placement efforts they serve Latino job seekers with disabilities in Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas, Marion and Polk Counties.

- (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.

Agency response (f):

OCB provides Supported Employment services to individuals with disabilities co-occurring with visual impairment that make long-term supports necessary for the individual's success in maintaining integrated and competitive employment, including developmental disabilities, traumatic brain injury (TBI) and disabilities due to mental health.

OCB believes that all individuals are capable of integrated and competitive work with the right supports in place, and the state has over the years reduced options for sub-minimum wage employment. The new regulations requiring the agency to provide pre-employment transition services for youth with disability before certification for sub-minimum wage work is expected to have little impact on the agency, as this is the direction the state has been moving towards. A challenge for supported employment is that the comparable benefit resources available in Oregon State to provide extended long-term support services are limited. OCB works in collaboration with all available resources and partners on cases that have co-occurring disabling conditions that make long-term supports necessary. The OCB continues to work with employers and other natural supports to identify funding for long-term support services.

In Oregon, the Department of Human Services provides funding for extended services for individuals with the most significant disabilities. This funding is routed through County Developmental Disability Agencies via a client's Case Manager, and is contracted for each individual through Brokerages. These agencies work with the individuals and their social support systems to develop a plan for ongoing supports, which can be used for a variety of purposes, one of which are long term employment supports.

Training and post employment services that will lead to supported employment are provided by OCB. Once the individual is transitioned from agency vocational rehabilitation support, another agency or resource provides extended services. Services we provide include: the provision of skilled job coaches who accompany the worker for intensive on the job training, systematic training, job development, follow up services, regular observation or supervision at the training site, rehabilitation technology, and other services needed to support the individual in successful employment.

Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs)

OCB contracts with private, for- and not-for-profit vocational rehabilitation service providers for general and supported employment services. The most commonly purchased CRP services include: vocational evaluation, trial work experience, job placement and job retention.

Community Rehabilitation Program providers are qualified through an Request for Application (RFA) process. All vendor staff must pass a federal background check and be vetted through our application process.

OCB also uses this RFA process for vendors who provide services such as Rehabilitation Teaching, Orientation & Mobility and Assistive Technology training. Prior to permitting direct-unsupervised access with agency participants, including supported employment participants, all vendors/providers of services are required to complete and pass background checks. In requiring both the technical qualification process and the criminal background check of providers, OCB has taken the necessary steps to ensure that when agency participants choose to utilize community providers, they can count on safety and quality services for our clients.

- (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; and
 - (2) Transition services, including pre-employment transition services, for students and youth with disabilities.

Agency response (g):

OCB will work in coordination with a broad base of employer connections to continue to build working and collaborative relationships, initiatives and coordinated WIOA partner strategies.

OCB has strong connections to business diversity and inclusion initiatives and will continue to leverage these initiatives to include OCB agency participants and job seekers with disabilities. OCB will utilize these connections to expand strategies to include pre-employment transition services, for students and youth with disabilities.

OCB will continue to be a strong and active partner with WIOA workforce engagement strategies and initiatives to leverage our expertise and knowledge to support inclusion of job seekers and transition youth, with disabilities, in full participation with all WIOA programs and services.

OCB will continue to offer value-added services to the business community, including:

- Workplace disability and competency's training

- Technology assessments
- Job site assessments for accommodations
- Customer service training for business interaction with individuals with disabilities OCB will engage in a multi-prong approach and will include the following strategies:
- Leverage the VR National Employment Team structure to connect job seekers and transition youth with business
- Work in strong partnership with One Stop business services teams throughout the state to ensure OCB expertise and individuals with disabilities are included in WIOA and One Stop business engagement efforts
- OCB will develop appropriate internal business engagement strategies that will assist the agency in scaling to the statewide and local business engagement efforts
- OCB will leverage existing and underutilized employer connections from our current and past employment outcomes and develop an intentional engagement strategy for establishing stronger relationships and working toward continued employment supports as well as engaging in transition youth initiatives
- OCB will continue to work with businesses to establish rich experiences for career exploration and work experiences and develop collaborative working relationships with other community partners to engage youth throughout the state

- (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;
 - (2) the State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities; and
 - (3) the State agency responsible for providing mental health services.

Agency response (h):

OCB collaborates with the Department of Human Services (DHS), Seniors and People with Disabilities (SPD), as well as Developmental Disability Services (DDS) and brokerages throughout the state of Oregon.

State Medicaid Plan

OCB plans to look into options for more collaboration, coordination of services, and mutual understanding of scope and role of Medicaid in promoting success for individuals who require long-term employment supports and provide options for vocational services under an Order of Selection scenario.

Divisions of Developmental Disabilities

OCB is committed to collaboration with DHS, DDS and brokerages throughout Oregon in order to prioritize long-term supports for employed individuals, and for detailing means for collaboration, coordination of services, and mutual understanding of scope and role of each agency in promoting success for individuals who require long-term employment supports.

Mental Health Services

OCB is committed to collaborating with mental health services throughout Oregon in order to insure collaboration, coordination of services, and mutual understanding of scope and role of each agency in promoting success for individuals who require long-term employment supports.

- (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
 - (2) 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:
 - (A) 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;
 - (B) the number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and
 - (C) projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the State agency to provide 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.
 - (3) 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:
 - (A) a list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program;
 - (B) the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and
 - (C) the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

- (4) *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.
- (5) *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 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; and
 - (B) the establishment and maintenance of education and experience requirements, to ensure that the personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.
- (6) *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) 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
 - (B) procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to designated State unit professionals and paraprofessionals.
- (7) *Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs.* Describe how the designated State unit has personnel or obtains the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in appropriate modes of communication with or in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability.
- (8) *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.

Agency response (i): Qualified Personnel Needs & Personnel Development

Overview of Personnel Structure

OCB is committed to working as a team to insure positive outcomes for our clients.

Objectives of the Commission for the Blind Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

Our comprehensive personnel development system is designed to:

- Address recruitment and retention of qualified rehabilitation professionals
- Establish/maintain personnel standards for vocational rehabilitation counselors
- Analyze needs of existing staff
- Provide for succession planning
- Provide leadership development and capacity building

Environmental factors

The agency's plan is based on the following factors:

- Number and type of personnel that are employed by the agency

The agency has a total of 11 vocational rehabilitation counselors.

- a) 9 are caseload-carrying positions
- b) 1 is a counselor who specializes in working with employers to enhance employment outcomes
- c) 1 is a career exploration counselor in our training center

- The ratio of counselors to clients

The ratio of clients served to caseload carrying counselors in FFY 15 was 87:1.

The agency hired two (2) new Counselors in FFY 15. We project at least one retirement in the next five years. Based on past experience, we project that two (2) more will leave the field in the next five years. We have been successful in being able to recruit and retain vocational rehabilitation counselors and expect this trend to continue. The agency anticipates that it will serve 800 individuals in FFY 16. We expect that by FFY 17, we will serve 820 individuals based on our historical trends. The agency believes that we will be able to serve all eligible individuals with the current number of vocational rehabilitation counselors on staff in 2016. We are confident we will also be able to serve all eligible clients over the next five years (given our successful retention and recruitment methods historically)

Staff Development & Plan for recruitment

Western Oregon State University (WOU) and Portland State University (PSU) are the only two graduate programs in the state of Oregon that provide VR professionals with masters level training/education.

WOU currently has twenty-three (23) students in the Masters of Rehabilitation Counseling program and seven (7) in the Masters of Rehabilitation Counseling for the Deaf program: thirty (30) students total. Eighteen (18) of the thirty (30) students are RSA scholarship recipients.

PSU currently has thirty-six (36) students enrolled in their Masters of Rehabilitation Counseling program. Fifteen (15) are either RSA or employer sponsored. In 2015 WOU graduated eleven (11) VR Counselors and PSU graduated twelve (12) VR Counselors.

In FFY 15 OCB supervised one (1) PSU internship and subsequently hired that intern. OCB is supervising two (2) PSU internships in FFY 15. All OCB counseling staff meets the state/agency's CSPD standards as they have all either earned a Degree in Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling or a related field or possess a valid Certified Rehabilitation credential/certificate.

OCB plans to continue to hire qualified Masters in Rehab Counseling or CRC certified VR counselors wherever possible. We recognize that the lower standards through WIOA may impact the agency's ability to meet the internal CSPD standards, and we will continue to monitor availability and continued quality of candidates with that certification. We are hopeful we can maintain the high caliber of professionalism that the CRC and Masters level training provides our counseling staff. The OCB actively coordinates with WOU and PSU for recruitment of talent. The agency maintains a broad recruitment mailing and website posting list, which we use to advertise vacant vocational rehabilitation positions. Recruitment information is also posted on Oregon state's job posting website and on several other web sites and list-serves that support rehabilitation professionals.

Institutions:

Western Oregon State University

Students enrolled: 30

Employees sponsored by employer/RSA: 6

Graduates sponsored by agency/RSA: 9

Graduates from the previous year: 11

Portland State University

Students enrolled: 36

Employees sponsored by employer/RSA: 15

Graduates sponsored by agency/RSA: 10

Graduates from the previous year: 12

Recruitment Challenges

The agency promotes a positive atmosphere, and makes every effort to provide staff with clear and consistent communications regarding performance expectations, agency decisions and agency initiatives.

Recruitment of a diverse staff is important for the agency – we want our staff to be representative of the customer base and communities we serve. Five OCB staff are fluent in ASL, including four VR Counseling staff that are able to directly communicate with deaf blind participants. The agency’s biggest recruitment challenge stems from the fact that Oregon has limited local training programs for both Rehabilitation Teachers and Orientation & Mobility Specialists.

We have options for development of our own Rehab Teacher /Orientation & Mobility staff through internal staff training & development, and we have taken advantage of this option for training/promoting staff in order to meet agency needs.

Staff Training & Development

OCB’s Training Plan for Rehabilitation describes how the agency assesses and prioritizes ongoing training needs through input from the following sources:

1. Staff training needs: Staff training needs are evaluated annually during performance reviews and the agency actively supports staff development in order to insure personal/professional growth for each of our valued employees. Specific development and/or training needs are identified for each employee, by the employee and supervisor, and are addressed throughout the following year.
2. External factors: Results of audits, evaluations, state and federal compliance reviews, and agency case reviews identify critical areas that need to be addressed through staff training and provide the basis for our biannual and annual VR Program Trainings.
3. Changes to work: Implementation of new policies or procedures; new work tools implemented, changes the agency effects on the work provide new needs for training.
4. Planned change: Strategic Plan priorities and objectives requiring training as part of implementation.

The executive Team and training coordinator plan the agency’s annual training agenda and prioritize the training needs of agency employees.

Specific training needs of counseling staff and other VR professionals are primarily being met through the utilization of training resources within the agency/state with occasional support being secured through national workshops and conferences.

The agency conducts credit earning workshops in rehabilitation at least once a year (during all-staff training) and for VRCs, two (2) times a year (VRC Spring training and all-staff). The agency’s involvement with the Region X Technical Assistance Center through the University of

Washington continues as the region's VR agencies have developed a membership dues system in order to continue to enhance staff and management development through their training services. OCB will continue to utilize internal training as well as regional training resources including: TACE at the University of Washington, the general VR agency's trainings/in-services and private organizations and agencies for various rehabilitation related topics. OCB has a designated staff person to facilitate securing staff CEUs for various internal and/or external trainings.

In FFY15, specific training needs of our counseling staff and other VR professionals were primarily met through the utilization of training resources within the region and by working closely with the Technical Assistance Continuing Education (TACE). In support of the professional development of our staff, the last year of the RSA In-service Training Grant was fully utilized to strengthen staff ability to provide quality services to participants with significant disabilities. The agency is aware of the Job Driven VR Technical Assistance and National Transition Technical Assistance grant opportunities, and the agency has made use of the universal technical assistance opportunities through the webinars. We hope in future to apply for more intensive technical assistance in order to help cover staff development needs with the ending of the In-Service Training Grant.

Staff attend out-of-state trainings and conferences, such as the annual California State University at Northridge Adaptive Technology (CSUN) Conference, International American Education & Rehabilitation (AER) Conference, Helen Keller Technology Training, Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) & National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB), and we are looking into the option of sending staff to the Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation Conference (CANAR).

OCB supports Rehabilitation Teacher/Orientation & Mobility staff in securing the required continuing education CEUs to maintain their certification. We have supported staff in developing and securing formalized training in areas of Low Vision assessment, updated Orientation & Mobility concepts, and ethics. The agency Rehab Teachers meet via phone each month to provide peer training and share resources (more extensive training and resource sharing occurs annually at all-staff).

While currently there are no credential requirements for the agency's Adaptive Technology Specialists, it is an agency responsibility to ensure staff maintains up-to-date training and competence in assessment and training of adaptive tools as technology rapidly changes. The agency has provided the option for annual attendance for AT Specialists to an out-of-state technology conference (usually CSUN), and regularly provides staff time for vendors to demonstrate new products and staff to provide peer training on devices.

AT staff are committed to reading technology and industry journals and reporting new information on adaptive technology devices to their peers. The team regularly invites AT vendors to demonstrate and loan updated technologies.

Personnel to address individual communication needs

State and agency policies, procedures and community resources ensure that applicants and recipients of program services who have limited English speaking ability are provided with the appropriate mode of communication to fully benefit from public VR services.

Some of our staff members speak diverse languages such as Spanish and American Sign Language. Where it makes sense to do so, staff is able to communicate directly with customers and community members in their native or preferred language. Five (5) staff speaks ASL and one (1) speaks Spanish. Where it does not make sense to rely on staff language skills, or where we do not have access to those skills, agency staff access community resources to communicate with diverse populations. Individuals who are Deaf-Blind or Hard-of-Hearing/Blind may communicate with staff via voice relay service. American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters are utilized when needed for in-person meetings, trainings or events.

OCB continues to employ personnel who are familiar and confident in the use of an array of communication modes to fully benefit the recipients of the program based on the preferred method of communication of the customer.

Coordination of professional development under IDEA

Agency staff who work with transition-age youth coordinate transition activities throughout Oregon to teachers of the visually impaired and other Special Education personnel. These staff work with regional staff to ensure customers receive services and information necessary to facilitate a smooth transition from high school to adult services. Based on assessments and training provided by OCB, OCB staff provide recommendations and information to regional programs, parents and students about vocational rehabilitation services including availability, referral, and eligibility requirements that support a coordinated transition plan from high school to post-school services.

Consultation is also provided as early as necessary to special education staff regarding IEP planning and development. OCB staff shares data and reports relevant to program development and planning.

(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;
 - (B) who are minorities;

- (C) who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;
 - (D) who have been served through other components of the statewide workforce development system; and
 - (E) who are youth with disabilities and students with disabilities, including, as appropriate, their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition services.
- (2) Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State; and
 - (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.

Agency response (j):

Sources of Data

OCB utilized data derived from our 2014 comprehensive needs assessment and we have built on that date through client surveys, employee feedback, partners, Commission Board members, client forums, school/regional representatives and other community members.

The agency sponsored a public forum in January 2016; this was both in-person and via phone allowing for statewide input from Oregon State residents and agency participants to solicit discussion, engagement and feedback on issues related to the content of the state plan.

Analysis of customer satisfaction surveys and performance data show that OCB provides high quality services and positive outcomes for our clients. OCB places emphasis on careers that provide living wages and benefits, within a competitive and integrated context. The agency is committed to building on this excellence in quality services and outcomes.

State and agency-secured audits conducted in 2014 and 2015 have provided data that the agency is following policy & procedure, and has addressed identified areas of concern.

HKNC in partnership with OCB conducted a Comprehensive Needs Assessment in 2014.

Meetings were held throughout Oregon with stake-holders/clients/community partner agencies soliciting feedback and suggestions related to statewide Deaf-Blind issues and needs. This resulted in additional training for OCB staff around Deaf/Blind services, a 5-day training provided to Deaf/Blind clients and their caregivers and a MOU between OCB and HKNC.

Assessment Data Results:

OCB has been able to provide the full range of VR services to all eligible individuals, including those experiencing the most significant disabilities, as OCB has not been required to be in an order of selection to date.

The agency continues to work to increase numbers of customer participation in vocational rehabilitation services.

The agency has identified communities that appear to be underserved by our agency based on our Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA).

Conclusions and Recommendations as a Result of the CNA:

The Commission completed the required CNA in the spring of 2014. Areas of note follow.

VR Services Needs of Individuals with the Most Significant/complex Disabilities, including Supported Employment Services

Number of Persons Served by Oregon Commission for the Blind with the Most Significant Disabilities and Outcomes Achieved

As a general definition, blindness is considered one of the most significant disabilities. As such, 100% of those the Commission serves have a significant disability. However, within this framework, the Commission defines those with the most significant disabilities as having at least three functional limitations and requiring two or more substantial types of services provided over an extended period of time.

The Commission provides VR services for individuals with significant disabilities. In 2013 in the VR program, 100% of individuals entering competitive employment had a significant disability.

% of persons achieving competitive employment who were employed at application % of persons achieving a successful closure who had a significant disability Change in Weekly Earnings – competitively employed at application and exit

- Individuals with significant disabilities 2013: 48%
- 5-yr average: 49% 2013: 100%
- 5-yr average: 99% 2013: \$204.80
- 5-yr average: \$216.27
-

Number of Persons Served who Receive SSI/SSDI

Another factor that may indicate significant disability is receipt of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). In order to receive SSI or SSDI an individual must prove that he or she is unable to work. The RSA longitudinal study of the vocational rehabilitation services program found that individuals accepted for services were more likely to exit the program prior to receiving VR services if they were receiving SSI or SSDI at entry. The following chart describes the percentage of people receiving public financial assistance at program entry and the associated outcome.

Outcome % of participants who were receiving SSI/SSDI at application*

- Exited VR before services began 55%

- Exited VR without an employment outcome, after services 60%
- Exited VR with a noncompetitive employment outcome 62%
- Exited VR with a competitive employment outcome 46%
-

**Note: Commission data is cumulative 2009-2013.*

While receipt of SSI/SSDI indicates significance of disability, it can also impact employment for an individual, based on the need to maintain benefits and especially health insurance benefits that are income-dependent. The Commission addresses this consumer need through providing benefits planning services.

Commission Services for Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities

The Commission is reaching those with the most significant disabilities through outreach and by providing individualized services.

Outreach

The Commission performs outreach through public speaking and networking with organizations serving those with the most significant disabilities including OVRs, SPD, Independent Living Centers, County Mental Health departments, local brokerages, employers, school districts, doctors, and consumer groups. For individuals managing mental illness, case managers refer individuals from community mental health clinics, Department of Human Services or county service agencies.

Services Provided

Services are individualized and based on the needs of the person. When providing services, Commission staff is sensitive to other disabilities, acknowledging that people learn differently. Staff is professionally trained to design and implement creative ways to teach skills. The emphasis is on providing comprehensive services, bringing in other partners, and being holistic in planning.

The Commission takes part in cooperative planning sessions for individuals with the most complex disabilities, along with the individual and other partner agencies that are providing services.

In order to assure that individuals are stable and successful in work, the Commission does not impose limits on duration or extent of services. Staff will keep cases open longer than the minimum, when needed by the individual.

The Commission provides post-employment services if the disability changes, the technology on the job has changed, or there is new software and the person needs training on the new software.

Employment

The Commission considers a variety of employment options for those with the most barriers to employment. This individualized approach to finding employment means that VR counselors consider multiple factors and possibilities including home-based employment, transportation, and a person's individual abilities and interests. The Commission staff also provide on-site job assessments. These assessments often result in providing suggestions to employers about changes in the work environment that could lead to a more successful outcome for both the individual and the employer.

Supported Employment

For individuals who need ongoing assistance in order to maintain a job, the Commission works with a variety of partners to provide supported employment. As a result, supported employment often requires more direct collaboration with community partners. The partners develop a team and plan of action including who is going to provide ongoing support. The goal for individuals is to be able to work in the community earning at least minimum wage.

Staff uses a variety of job search techniques for individuals requiring supported employment, including job carving and tailoring jobs to the individual. Job opportunities are developed as needed, based on each person's resources and strengths. Staff make recommendations for employers, purchases specialized equipment, or adapts equipment so that it works for the individual.

A vital strategy for supported employment is the use of Job Coaches. Particularly for individuals with the most complex disabilities, a place-and-train model in which individuals spend time training on the job tends to lead to success. The Commission hires Job Coaches to work alongside the individual until he or she learns the job. Job Coaches may work constantly alongside the person or check-in a few times a day or weekly as needed. Generally, when Job Coaches are needed for the long term they are funded through the local county. Counties provide supported employment for those people who need support for the life of the job. In order to establish support, the Commission partners with the State's developmental disabilities programs in order to facilitate the initiation of the process.

Over the past five years 2009-2013, only 9 people have completed services through entering or remaining in supported employment; this is a small proportion of the individuals the Commission serves.

Supported employment is provided in the following ways:

- Youth take part in the transitional program and summer work experience.

- All counselors serve clients in their service areas who need supported employment services.

The Commission actively explores self-employment options for individuals with the most significant and complex disabilities. Frequently self-employment involves partnership with other organizations.

Feedback on VR Needs and Services for Individuals who are Blind and Experience the Most Significant Disabilities

Survey respondents provided feedback regarding the Commission’s services for individuals who are blind and experience the most significant disabilities. The feedback indicated that people experiencing multiple, significant disabilities often need support from multiple providers. This requires a great deal of coordination and oversight of service delivery.

Recommendations/Comments from the survey:

Outreach:

- “The Commission could really increase service outreach and clarify what their services are.”

Specialized skills:

- “This population may need services provided by a SLP to help with communication devices and organizational tools.”

Partnering:

- “In any cases the additional disability may cause more issues than the visual impairment and I am not sure that OCB is the right agency to provide the service. I can see where a partnership with another agency is very important and much more appropriate when it comes to meeting the needs of individual clients.”
- “The Customer Service issues can occur when there are multiple people trying to work on the team but are unaware of the client’s complete list of team players.”

Number of Individuals who are Legally Blind and Racial or Ethnic Minorities

Oregon’s racial or ethnic minority population is just over 22%. The Commission provides services to individuals regardless of race or ethnicity, and makes distinct efforts to outreach to members of minority groups, provide culturally appropriate services, and assure that all individuals are able to reach their vocational goals.

The following data uses Census divisions for race and ethnicity including White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaskan Native (AIAN), Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (NHPI), and Hispanic. The Census contains a category for individuals of two or more races; the Oregon Commission for the Blind's process allows individuals to select more than one race (e.g. an individual can identify as both Black and Native American).

Members of minority groups do not experience vision loss equitably.

The data below is from The National Eye Institute and Prevent Blindness America which provides analysis of Census data on individuals over age 40 for white, black, Hispanic, and "other" individuals as well as national-level data from The National Eye Institute on prevalence of rates of vision impairment by race.

Oregon Population age 40 and older with blindness or low vision National Data
Total Number Percent of all individuals with vision impairment Prevalence of All Vision Impaired by Race - 2010

- White 53,524: 93%; 0.033
- Black 468: 1%; 0.022
- Hispanic 1,427: 2%; 0.020
- Other 2,004: 3%; 0.020
- Total 57,423: 100%; 0.029

This data shows a significant variation from Oregon's overall population. Overall, just over 32% of Oregonians are individuals of color, whereas the National Eye Institute's analysis of Census data showed that only 6% of Oregonians with vision loss are individuals of color.

Commission Service Statistics for Individuals Who Are Racial or Ethnic Minorities*

The data below provides a breakout by race and ethnicity in four categories: Oregon's overall population (based on 2012 U.S. Census data); National Eye Institute reports on Oregon Census data (as described above); the Oregon Commission for the Blind Registry (for those with a race or ethnicity listed); and Commission service statistics.

Oregon Population National Eye Institute Registry OCB enrolled 2009-2013

- White, not Hispanic: 77.8%; 93%; 90%; 89%
- Black or African American: 2.0%; 1%; 3%; 5%
- American Indian or Alaskan Native: 1.8%; 2%; 3%
- Asian: 4.0%; 3%; 4%
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander: 0.4%; 0%; 1%
- Two+ races*: 3.5% --
- Hispanic: 12.2%; 2%; 4%; 8%

**Note: Individuals may select more than one race when enrolling at the Oregon Commission for the Blind, so this data does not represent an unduplicated count of individuals.*

The data above indicates that the Commission is serving individuals of color at rates comparable to that expected, with a need to increase services for Hispanic/Latino individuals. Compared to the overall population, Whites and Black or African Americans are slightly overrepresented in OCB programs, while American Indians, Asians, and Hispanics are underrepresented. Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders are represented on the Registry at the same rate as in the general population. However, based on Census data as reported by the National Eye Institute, the Commission enrolls individuals of color at greater than their rate in Oregon's population of persons who are visually impaired.

Another way to consider the data is the percentage of those exiting the program achieving an employment outcome. In terms of employment outcomes or other exits from Commission services, there are four alternatives. Individual may:

1. Enroll and then exit before receiving any services
2. Start receiving services but leave before achieving an employment outcome
3. Successfully exit services with a noncompetitive employment outcome
4. Successfully exit services with a competitive employment outcome

The following data compares the percentage of clients enrolled to the percentage by exit type, sorted by racial and ethnic self-identification. Data is averaged over a five-year period and shows that clients exit the program in all categories in relatively close ratios as their total enrollment by race/ethnicity.

Annual Average Number enrolled 2009 - 2013 Exited VR before Services Began Exited VR without an employment outcome, after services Exited VR - noncompetitive employment outcome Exited VR - competitive employment outcome

- White 620: 89%; 80%; 82%; 85%; 85%;
- Black or AA: 34.5%; 4%; 8%; 3%; 4%
- American Indian: 24.3%; 6%; 1%; 4%; 1%
- Asian: 25.4%; 1%; 2%; 3%; 4%
- Pacific Island: 7.1%; 1%; 0%; 0.6%; 1%
- Hispanic: 53.8%; 8%; 7%; 5%; 6%
- Total: 100%; 100%; 100%; 100%; 100%

The following data provides percentages of individuals who received services and were successfully closed, the difference in weekly earnings from application to closure, and the average number of services received by each client. The data indicates that Black or African

American clients are less likely to achieve a successful closure. There are also large variations in weekly earnings. However, because weekly earnings are based on so few individuals for some racial and ethnic groups, having one or two individuals earning significantly more or less than they did at program entry can skew the data.

Of people receiving services, percent who achieved a successful closure Of competitively employed at closure, difference in weekly earnings from application* Average of Services.

- Whites 76%; \$229.36; 7.28
 - Black or African American 57%; \$125.24; 7.38
 - American Indian, Alaskan Native 83%; \$58.67; 6.78
 - Asian 85%; \$152.07; 6.82
 - Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander 100%; \$46.33; 6.2
 - Hispanics 71%; \$289.11; 8.48
- *Note: Difference in weekly earnings shows how much weekly earnings increased from the baseline at program application to the final amount earned at exit from the program. The average hourly wage for individuals entering competitive employment after completing the Commission's VR program is \$19.25.*

Feedback on VR Needs and Services for Individuals who are Blind and Racial or Ethnic Minorities

Survey respondents provided feedback regarding the Commission's services for individuals who are blind and members of ethnic or racial minority groups. Very little feedback was provided in this area, and those respondents who did comment indicated that they felt the Commission provided services equitably for all individuals.

Recommendations/Comments from the survey:

Be more culturally responsive:

- "Oregonians do not generally know about the services offered at OCB. OCB does not make itself accessible to individuals who function as part of a non-majority cultural group (such as providing services to the entire family, consulting with elders first)."

Have more and more varied outreach:

- "Marketing in neighborhood community centers might be helpful. Spanish tends to be more of a spoken rather than written language, although there are more educated people in the PDX area with Spanish as their 1st language than in many service areas. Please include other culture groups in outreach - Russian communities, for example."

Services for Individuals Who Are Hispanic/Latino

The Commission recognizes that one of Oregon's fastest growing cultural groups is individuals of Hispanic/Latino descent. As such, the Commission engages in several activities specifically targeted to this group:

- Brochures are translated into Spanish.
- Interpreters are available when needed.
- Two VR counselors are fluent in Spanish.
- When staff position openings occur, the Commission encourages bilingual individuals to apply.
- Outreach is provided at events that have the potential to reach a large number of Hispanic individuals. These include Hispanic community outreach events (several of which are attended annually throughout the state) and professional development conferences.
- The Commission is a member of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

The survey asked specifically for suggestions for improving services for Hispanic/Latino individuals.

Survey respondents identified the most important outreach methods as providing access to translators (95.2% of respondents) and educational materials in Spanish (90.4% of respondents). Additionally, the majority of respondents (81.8%) felt that the Commission should engage in marketing outreach to schools in areas with a large Hispanic/Latino population.

Additional suggestions provided by survey respondents included the following:

Immigration status:

- "The Hispanic community is quite large in Southern Oregon, but immigration status can prevent accessing services."
- "I would prefer that the individual be verified as living here legally before any taxpayer funded services are provided."

Outreach to specific locations:

- "Be aware of locations: Latino people may be in specific geographic areas within a community, and not integrated into the community."
- "Marketing outreach to Hispanic/Latino churches, community centers, health centers, stores and even restaurants."
- "Reaching out to schools is really important, because if the kids hear about it and they have a parent who is visually impaired they will be able to relay that information."

Services for individuals who are legally blind who have been un-served or underserved by the VR program

The CNA survey asked respondents to identify any additional groups of individuals who may be un-served or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program. While most respondents did not identify any groups those that were identified include the following:

- Individuals with language or cultural barriers (4 respondents)
- Individuals with additional disabilities and/or addiction issues (3 respondents)
- Older adults;
- Rural inhabitants with few resources (1 respondent)
- Newly blind individuals (1 respondent)
- Youth without a career goal (1 respondent)
- Individuals needing significant services (1 respondent)
- Individuals with unique circumstances (i.e. skills, interests, medical conditions) (1 respondent)

Individuals with progressive vision loss (e.g. those not yet legally blind)

Individuals with progressive vision loss, but not yet legally blind, are typically not eligible for VR services based on federal requirements. Consequently these individuals are not eligible to receive Commission VR services.

Two respondents mentioned this as a serious gap in services:

- “I’m hearing reports from people living with progressive vision loss that have contacted the Commission that they do not yet qualify for services and will have to wait. Some were put on a 6-week waiting list to even find that out. This is rapidly becoming a large segment of the blind/VI community as we baby boomers age.”
- “Include them in their services. For example, we have a student that isn’t qualifying because her vision isn’t reduced enough. She is losing her vision but hasn’t lost enough, so there is a conflict of urgency. The person is in crisis because she is losing her vision, but she is being told it’s not bad enough. All that happens not in person, but by a phone call and a review of an eye report. Meeting with someone and making a personal connection would be better.”

These responses suggest that additional outreach to providers to clarify funding requirements may be helpful. In addition, outreach to individuals with progressive vision loss can be improved in order to increase the number of eligible individuals who access the Commission’s services.

The Commission does seek to reach individuals with progressive vision loss so they know they have a resource for help once they do meet federal eligibility requirements for services.

Interview and survey respondents were asked for suggestions for reaching individuals with progressive vision loss.

Suggestions:

- 12 people suggested outreach to medical locations (doctor’s offices, eye clinics, etc.)
- Other suggestions for outreach include Centers for Independent Living, DHS venues, teachers, ESD, senior service centers

Two additional detailed comments were provided:

- “Outreach forums. I’ve hosted numerous vision forums at my organization. Important to establish good communication at other agencies so people know there are good options. Have hosted Options for Success event with OCB for the last 7 years and tools like that are very powerful. With changes happening so rapidly in assistive technology area, it’s hard for folks to stay abreast of new technologies. It’s information and an inspiration thing that there is always hope.”
- “Increased connection with OVRs, who often provide services for individuals with diabetes (a medical condition that eventually leads to visual impairment and blindness). Increased connection with clinics that serve economically disadvantaged Oregonians where diabetes is a frequent diagnosis (Virginia Garcia clinic, for instance). Increased referrals of individuals with diagnosis of RP or other retinal dysfunctions, with outreach and a support group that accepts new members each fall (when the days are shorter).”

Services for individuals who are legally blind served through the statewide workforce investment system (other than the VR program)

Description of statewide system

Oregon’s statewide workforce investment system includes Workforce Investment Act funded One Stops, Oregon Department of Human Services – Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and businesses.

Because the Commission is a small agency it partners with Oregon Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services to represent the interests of individuals who are blind in other components of the statewide workforce investment system. The Commission has a cooperative agreement with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services to represent the Commission’s interests on the local boards. The Commission also participates in several task forces.

At the state level, the Commission is involved in several projects and focus groups. Commission Executive Director, Dacia Johnson, sits on the Oregon Workforce Policy Cabinet and provides input regarding the needs of people with disabilities.

Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation Services (OVR)

OVR provides VR services for individuals whose disability is other than blindness. OVR and the Commission have a cooperative agreement by which the Commission provides services for individuals whose primary vocational rehabilitation needs are vision related. Commission staff works closely with OVR. The Commission provides resources and consultation to OVR regarding technology, low vision, and low vision aids.

WorkSource Oregon American Job Centers (One Stops)

One Stops provide general employment and training services and are located throughout the state. Each One Stop is set up to meet local needs and partnerships vary. OVR and the Employment Department are mandated One Stops partners.

The WorkSource system track self-reported numbers of individuals served both with a disability and without a disability that represents a barrier to employment. However the type of disability is not tracked, and as such, there is no way to determine how many individuals who are legally blind are served through the WorkSource Oregon system.

The Commission is committed to ensuring that clients who are blind are able to participate in the integrated service delivery model. The Commission is seeking to provide leadership to the workforce system in its efforts to ensure equal access for individuals who are legally blind to One Stops and other workforce programs.

Dacia Johnson, Commission Executive Director, sits on the State Workforce Policy Cabinet. In addition the Commission offers local workforce partners the following:

- Training on visual impairment and blindness and program accessibility;
- Development of nondiscriminatory policies and procedures; and
- Technical assistance on the provision of reasonable accommodations and assistive technology for individuals who are blind.

The Commission's VR counselors maintain workforce partner relations through identifying contacts in each of the One Stops. Counselors make a commitment to regularly contact these individuals and provide information about the Commission and how to access services.

The One Stops generally have adaptive computer programs available. However, individuals must have expertise in using ZoomText or JAWS before being able to use the One Stop computers. In practice, this often means a person who is newly blinded comes to the Commission for rehabilitation training before looking for employment through the Employment Department.

If a person only needs help to secure a job, that person ideally will be able to access services at a One Stop. For example, a client who has gone through Commission programs, gained skills

using adaptive computer programs and been successfully employed may want to advance their career by attaining a new job. In this case, the individual should be able to use the WorkSource system. However, if there are VR needs – adjustment and adaptive skills – individuals could receive those services through the Commission. The workforce system can be a valuable partner through its contacts with employers.

Having a Commission client with adaptive skills work with the One Stop staff is often an opportunity to educate Commission partners about working with people who are blind, especially in those cases where the One Stop staff's approach is to start by referring the person back to the Commission for services. Commission staff have spent time working with Employment Department staff in order to educate them about the vast array of jobs that can be done by someone with low, or no, vision. Through this process Employment Department staff increase their ability to visualize jobs and accommodations for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

In general, the Commission has most frequently partnered with the rural One Stops. When there are education opportunities for partners the Commission takes part in those events.

Business

The Commission recognizes that in order to maximize the employment opportunities for individuals who are blind, there must be businesses that are interested in hiring qualified candidates who are blind. The Commission has a Business Relation Specialist who works with businesses around the state to provide education, technical consultation, and networking with qualified candidates who are seeking employment.

Needs and Barriers related to statewide system

The online survey requested partner and staff feedback regarding the experiences of Oregonians who are legally blind using the workforce system.

- Five survey respondents provided suggestions for improvements regarding technology:
 - ✓ Have increased technology available;
 - ✓ Make sure that One Stop employees are knowledgeable about accessible technology and Commission services; and
 - ✓ Have Commission staff train One Stop employees around accessibility.
- Two respondents suggested increased levels of job search assistance at the One Stop centers.
- Three respondents said that One Stops should not provide services to individuals with vision loss; that the Commission should serve them instead.
- One respondent suggested connecting Vocational Counselors with One Stop systems.
- One person said they were satisfied with services the One Stops provided.

To establish, develop, or improve Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) within the State

The State of Oregon does not have CRPs specific to serving individuals who are blind. Oregon is a relatively small state in terms of population, and the population that is blind is a small demographic group within that population. As such the numbers do not support a sustainable business model for ongoing external programs.

The Commission does use CRPs for specialized placement and job coaching functions specific to the CRPs expertise in those employment areas. In addition, there are specialized programs that provide services related to vision loss such as the Devers and Casey Eye Clinics, and the Blinded Veterans Association.

Because there are not specific blindness-related CRPs, the Commission works closely with agencies, organizations, and individuals throughout Oregon to make sure that individuals who are blind or visually impaired receive appropriate services, and that other organizations are able to either refer individuals to the Commission for service or to gain information needed from Commission staff in order to serve the individuals effectively and appropriately.

The Commission works with partners both to meet individual client needs and to share information. Staff gathers resources and develops relationships so that clients can access needed services that are provided by partner organizations. Frequent partnerships are for mental health services, adaptive technology beyond those relevant to blindness and one-on-one job task analysis and training.

The Commission also works with partners to share information on blindness. Staff connects with partners to help them learn about technology and available resources. Commission staff also helps partners adapt their services to make them accessible.

Few survey respondents made comments in this area. Four people suggested increased partnering between OCB and these programs, in order to improve services, to increase CRP expertise on assistive technology, and to provide better referrals. Additionally, one person suggested improving CRP ability to support individuals building self-advocacy skills and ability to advocate for themselves in terms of accommodations.

The summary/conclusions of the CNA are as follows:

The Commission's programs are meeting the vocational rehabilitation needs of Oregonians who are legally blind.

The Commission's VR program works to increase the employment of Oregonians who are legally blind through individualized activities designed to support entry or re-entry into employment. In 2013, the Commission served 713 individuals in the vocational rehabilitation program. Over the last five years, for those completing the Commission's program and achieving an employment outcome, 67% entered competitive employment. Consumer feedback verifies the strength of the Commission's programs. 100 per cent of Commission clients achieving an employment goal were satisfied with the outcome of training received at the Commission.

As a result of feedback and subsequent data analysis the following is recommended:

Initial Assessment process

- Ensure that partners and potential clients understand the process and clients, who are not yet eligible, feel connected and have options prior to beginning services.
- Ensure that options for careers and training are explored and information is provided about career options in high demand and high wage occupations.
- Look for ways to shorten the wait time for the initial assessment at the training center.

Partnering with other Agencies

- To the extent possible, provide training for other organizations that may serve the same individuals. These include Oregon Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Independent Living Centers, and others. This is an opportunity to connect individuals to services beyond those that the Commission is able to provide.
- Ensure that services are coordinated: work closely with other providers to ensure individuals with multiple disabilities don't "fall through the cracks," provide training so other service providers fully understand why their clients are not yet able to begin services and how to help clients in the interim.

Services for Individuals who are Racial or Ethnic Minorities

- Black or African American individuals are less likely to achieve a successful closure than individuals from other ethnic groups (57% compared to 71% for Hispanics and 76% for Whites). This discrepancy did not occur in previous CNAs, and may not be indicative of a long-term trend, however more investigation into the causes for this discrepancy is recommended.
- Continue activities to outreach to Oregon's Hispanic and Latino communities. Consider implementing some of the survey respondents' outreach strategies: e.g. more one-on-one/in person contact with this population.

Where other disability expertise is needed, we readily collaborate with partner agencies such as OVRs, Centers for Independent Living, Department of Human Services, and the like. When an

applicant is not legally blind or does not have a condition leading to legal blindness, therefore does not meet eligibility for OCB services, information & referral to OVR/Workforce Development Partners is provided as appropriate.

The agency served 785 individuals in the VR program in FFY 2015 and had 129 successful closures. The average hourly wage for clients successfully closed in FFY 2015 was \$17.00. For ages 21 and under the average wage was \$9.40 an hour. For ages 22-25 the average wage was \$13.54 an hour. Finally, for ages 55 and above, wages average were \$20.62 an hour.

Agency Participant Satisfaction Survey

The agency conducts an anonymous satisfaction survey for VR customers who were closed in the federal fiscal year. Surveys for FFY 2015 were completed online or by phone.

Of the 160) agency participants contacted, 88 (or 55%) responded.

Survey respondents were given the opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions at the end of the survey. The majority of comments expressed gratitude for the services received, either from the agency or from specific staff. 90 percent of participants rated the following categories either “good or “excellent.”

- How do you rate the overall helpfulness of the Commission for the Blind’s staff? (95.4%)
- The services I received from OCB helped me to improve my independent living skills. (97.1%)
- The services I received from OCB helped to prepare me for employment. (97.2%)
- How do you rate the overall quality of services provided to you by the Commission for the Blind? (91.9%)

(k) **Annual Estimates.** Describe:

- (1) The number of individuals in the State who are eligible for services.
- (2) The number of eligible individuals who will receive services under:
 - (A) The VR Program;
 - (B) The Supported Employment Program; and
 - (C) each priority category, if 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
- (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.

Agency response (k):

The Oregon Commission for the Blind projects that we will be able to serve all eligible individuals who enter the vocational rehabilitation program and will not be required to enter into an Order of Selection in FY 16.

The State of Oregon continues to experience higher unemployment rate than the national average. The agency continues to see an increase in the number of individuals who are blind who have lost their job and are requiring assistance with returning to the workforce. We have also experienced an increase in the competition for job openings, including entry level occupations.

The Oregon Commission for the Blind serves individuals who are legally blind or have progressive eye conditions that are likely to lead to legal blindness and are experiencing functional limitations and barriers to employment as a result. In Oregon, it is estimated that over 19,000 residents are legally blind, and could potentially be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services from the Commission for the Blind. The agency serves between 8-10% of these individuals each year.

The agency served thirty-four (34) total supported employment clients in FFY 15. Two (2) supported employment cases were closed with successful employment outcomes. In FY 16 we hope to serve 40 individuals and have at least (ten (10) successful outcomes.

For FY 16, we expect to see an increase in the total number served in the VR program, serving around eight hundred (800) individuals. We have put an emphasis on increasing the number of applications by caseload. Counselors regularly meet with clients to evaluate their rehabilitation programs and their progress to date. For clients who are not making progress toward a rehabilitation outcome and are no longer interested in employment, we are requesting these individuals' cases be closed as appropriate. Our goal is to free up our counselors to be able to focus on those individuals in the system that are motivated and committed to the rehabilitation process. As a result, we expect to serve 800 new and existing clients, and 40 clients in the Supported Employment Program, with a projected cost of \$1,881,234.00.

Our employment outcomes went up from seventy-nine (79) successful closures in FFY 14 to one hundred twenty9 successful closures in FFY 15. Like other states, Oregon has a high unemployment rate. Nevertheless, the agency is optimistic that our emphasis on increasing applications and employment outcomes will allow us to keep our successful outcomes high. Because we stopped the home maker status option in FFY 15, our closures were unusually high. OCB counselors were given by end of FFY 15 to finish providing services and close home maker cases) which resulted in a dramatic increase of closures for the year. In FFY 16, we hope to have ninety (90 successful employment outcomes).

We are expecting that our trend in the future will be an increase in applicants in the VR program. The Commission for the Blind has an Outreach plan for the agency that targets potential clients, employers, referral sources, and workforce partners. Part of the plan included outreaching to minority communities. Our goal is to increase the total number of clients served from minority backgrounds in FFY 16 and beyond.

(1) **State Goals and Priorities.** The designated State unit must:

- (1) 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.
- (2) Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs.
- (3) Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas:
 - (A) the most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates;
 - (B) the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and
 - (C) other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107.

Agency response (1):

The agency's goals and priorities have been identified and discussed in collaboration with the agency's Commission board. The goals and priorities were developed in two distinct processes: through both interactions with WIOA core partner programs toward implementation of the new partnerships and legislation through WIOA; and also through the agency/board's Strategic Planning.

The first set of goals and priorities for the agency to be accomplished in the next four year scope of this state plan is the successful implementation of systems, processes and relationships that bring the agency and state towards meeting the intent of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

The second set of goals and priorities developed through the Strategic planning process align with many elements towards implementation of the WIOA concepts, and concentrate on increasing the agency's timeliness of services and Independent living/employment outcomes.

Goal 1: Successfully implement intent of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act into agency work and processes

Sub-goal 1.1: Continue to emphasize the State's Strategy of High Skills/High Wages focus for agency participants

Sub-goal 1.2: Ensure equal access for blind, low vision and deaf blind individuals to be able to benefit from the array of services available through the state's workforce system

Sub-goal 1.3: Engage with state and local community businesses in ways that best work for business, and better prepare agency participants for success by ensuring they have the skills that meet business needs.

Sub-goal 1.4: Implement creative and meaningful changes to agency processes and services in order to best meet intent of WIOA around services to youth.

Goal 2: Increase agency outreach and effectiveness of services to individuals and communities that would benefit from vocational rehabilitation services

Sub-goal 2.1: Increase effectiveness and cultural competency for agency staff.

**Note: In the 2014 CNA, African American individuals were noted to be less likely to achieve a successful closure than individuals from other ethnic groups (57% compared to 71% for Hispanics and 76% for Whites). This discrepancy did not occur in previous CNAs, and may not be indicative of a long-term trend, however more investigation into the causes for this discrepancy is recommended.*

Goal 3: Enhance and maintain OCB capacity & expertise in serving Oregonians who are blind/visually impaired

Sub-goal 3.1: Enhance awareness among all staff of context, issues, and skills of blindness

Sub-goal 3.2: Improve systems for universal accessibility, both internally within the agency and externally among partners

Sub-goal 3.3: Refine and maintain systems for knowledge transfer and leadership development

Goal 4: Enhance the vocational aspects of vocational rehabilitation within agency processes

Sub-goal 4.1: Integrate employment into a unified customer experience at all phases of the vocational rehabilitation process

Sub-goal 4.2: Build employer-desired core soft skills (critical thinking, decision making, etc.) throughout skill development and training processes

(m) **Order of Selection.** Describe:

- (1) The order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided VR services.
- (2) The justification for the order.
- (3) The service and outcome goals.
- (4) The time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.

- (5) How individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities; and
- (6) 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.

Agency response (m):

The purpose of an order of selection for services is to establish an equitable and organized system which, when resources are not sufficient to meet the demand for services, gives priority to those eligible vocational rehabilitation participants who require immediate services to maintain employment or who meet the definition of most significantly disabled. OCB was not in order of selection in FFYI 15 and is currently not in order of selection in FFY 16.

When the order of selection for services is in effect, eligible individuals will be assigned to one of four priority categories:

1. First priority: New eligible participants who meet the definition of significantly disabled and have an immediate need for equipment or services to maintain employment;
2. Second priority: Follow-along services to those individuals who meet the definition of significantly disabled, and are recent post-secondary graduates who were being served through pre-employment transition service dollars, in order to not interrupt service provision;
3. Third priority: New eligible participants who meet the definition of most significantly disabled but who do not have an immediate need for equipment or services to maintain employment;
4. Fourth Priority: New eligible participants who do not meet the definition of most significantly disabled, and do not have an immediate need for equipment or services to maintain current employment.

The Executive director shall decide when to implement an order of selection for services, if necessary, and will determine which priority categories will be open or closed for the development of new individualized plans for employment. In the event sufficient funds or other resources become available to serve all eligible individuals, the executive director will revoke the order of priority.

Eligible individuals can develop and carry out an individualized plan for employment based on:

- a) The priority of the category to which they are assigned;
- b) Whether or not that category is open for development of new plans; and
- c) The order in which they applied for vocational rehabilitation services as indicated by the date of application.

Participants will be placed in the highest priority category for which they are qualified. The date of application will be used whenever it is determined that a waiting list is required for a category.

Participants will be notified in writing of their category status when they are notified of their eligibility, as well as of the conditions pertaining to that category:

- a) Whether the category is open or closed.
- b) Their position on any existing waiting list.

The only services to individuals in a closed order of selection for services category will be information and referral services. These individuals will not receive counseling and guidance, assessment and training, placement, or other vocational rehabilitation services until their category is reopened and they come off the waiting list.

Participants will be notified of the right to appeal the category decision and of their responsibility to notify the department if their situation changes in a way that may affect their priority category placement.

Individuals who are receiving services under an individualized plan for employment at the time an order of selection for services is implemented will continue to receive services as planned. They are not subject to the order of selection for services and are not a category within that order.

The order of selection for services will not affect the provision of services needed to determine eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services.

Criteria for non-significant disability, significant disability or most significant disability:

1. An individual with a non-significant disability is an individual who:
 - (a) Has no more than one functional limitation related to employment; and
 - (b) Requires no more than one substantial type of services.
2. An individual with a significant disability is an individual who:
 - a) Has at least two functional limitations related to employment; and
 - b) Requires one or more substantial types of services provided over an extended period of time.
3. An individual with a most significant disability is an individual who:
 - a) Has at least three functional limitations related to employment; and
 - b) Requires two or more substantial types of services provided over an extended period of 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.

- (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
 - (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.

Agency response (n):

All of our Vocational Rehabilitation staff are educated in the provision of supported employment services and understand the issues related to eligibility, vocational assessment, and creating vocational plans that address the need for on-going long-term support services.

OCB has identified and is in process of securing additional qualified providers in local areas across the state to provide specialized Supported Employment services (assessment, skill building, job development, job coaching and retention services). Much of the Title VI Part B funding is utilized for performance-based job development & coaching services provided by CRPs to support individuals who require long-term supports in able to work in integrated and competitive settings.

OCB provides training and technical assistance related to issues of blindness to all providers who express an interest in working with individuals who have the potential to achieve an employment outcome through Supported Employment.

The Oregon Commission for the Blind uses its Title VI, Part B funds to provide supported employment services to eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities for whom competitive employment in an integrated setting is their current vocational goal. These clients, because of the nature of their disability, often require extensive services in order to be successful. Specialized placement assistance, lengthened training periods and planning for ongoing support is required in order for clients to be successful. All of the funds are used for individual case costs.

Our approach for supported employment services is as follows: If an individual's goal is to pursue an employment outcome in an integrated setting, an IPE will be developed in accordance with the individual's strengths, interests, resources, priorities, and informed choice. Services are purchased on a fee-for-service basis from providers within the community. Careful job analysis and intensive one to one training are provided.

The following is the Oregon Commission for the Blind's plan for distribution of our supported employment resources. The program utilizes the Title VI, Part B funds for case service funds for individuals with the most significant disabilities who require additional supports and long term support planning by a comprehensive rehabilitation team.

1. The target population is divided into three segments:

2. Individuals who are deaf-blind
3. Individuals with developmental disabilities in addition to blindness
4. Individuals with other significant disabilities such as traumatic brain injury in addition to blindness

The full scope of services authorized for supported employment is provided to clients. Each client is evaluated individually to determine his or her eligibility and potential to engage in supported employment. Eligibility determinations are funded through the 110 program.

Supplemental assessments to determine potential for supported employment will be authorized with Title VI B funds. The supplemental assessment may be provided when a reassessment of the suitability of the placement is warranted, or when there is a change in the individual's medical condition.

If the assessment shows that the individual will require ongoing support to sustain acceptable work performance and maintain employment, supported employment is included in the services to be provided in the IPE. The IPE includes collaboration and funding from other agencies or organizations that assist by providing the ongoing support services required. All services provided by the Commission for the Blind are time limited unless the eligible individual and the counselor jointly agree that additional time is required to reach the IPE goal and the individual is progressing toward that goal.

The following services may be provided:

1. Supplemental assessments.
2. Job development and placement.
3. Supported employment services needed to support individuals with the most significant Disabilities such as:
 - a) Intensive on the job skills training and other training to achieve and maintain job stability
 - b) Follow up services to reinforce and stabilize the job placement
 - c) Discrete post employment services following transition that are unavailable from an extended services provider and that are necessary to maintain the job placement
 - d) Specialized technology devices and training

Training and post employment services that will lead to supported employment are provided by this agency. The necessary extended support is provided by other agencies. Services we provide include: the provision of skilled job coaches who accompany the worker for intensive on the job training, systematic training, job development, follow up services, regular observation or supervision of the individual at the training site, rehabilitation technology, and other services needed to support the client in employment.

Ongoing supports may be provided by the agency from the time of job placement until the transition to ongoing support. These are services that are needed to support and maintain the individuals with the most significant disabilities in supported employment. Ongoing support services may consist of:

1. Specialized assessments
2. Skilled job trainers at the work site
3. Job development and placement
4. Social skills training
5. Regular observation or supervision of the individual
6. Follow up services such as regular contact with the employer, the individual, etc., to reinforce and stabilize the job placement
7. Facilitation of natural supports at the work site

Once the individual is transitioned from agency vocational rehabilitation support, another agency or resource provides the ongoing support services.

IN FFY 15 the agency served thirty-four (34) total supported employment clients and two (2) were closed with successful employment outcomes. In FFY 16 we hope to serve Forty (40) individuals and have ten (10) successful outcomes.

For clients with developmental disabilities, vocational rehabilitation counselors may coordinate with a program in Oregon that serves individuals with developmental disabilities. If the client is eligible, this program is the most likely resource for ongoing support for individuals who are legally blind in addition to developmental disabilities. This system uses brokerages that identify and coordinate services for the client.

Our goals for the program for FFY 16 include:

1. Coordinate the Summer Work Experience Program for students who require ongoing supports in partnership with the Department of Education
2. Partner with the education team that will support students who are leaving secondary school programs to develop a transition plan for school to work
3. Continue to outreach to the deaf-blind community
4. Coordinate with community resources to maximize comparable benefits and improve services for our clients
5. Maintain and/or grow the number of individuals served in the program and focus on positive outcomes in integrated settings with supports

Results from Comprehensive Needs Assessment

The Oregon Commission for the Blind completed a Comprehensive Needs Assessment in FFY 14. This assessment provided highly positive feedback on the Commission's services, based on serving a representative demographic of Oregon's population, on the outcomes individuals achieved, and on feedback from partnering entities.

Conclusions and Recommendations for State Plan

- The Oregon Commission for the Blind's programs are meeting the vocational rehabilitation needs of Oregonians who are legally blind.
- The Oregon Commission for the Blind's VR program works to increase the employment of Oregonians who are legally blind through individualized activities designed to support entry or re-entry into employment. In 2013, the Commission served 713 individuals in the VR program, or approximately 1.8% of the working age population identified as having a visual disability in the 2011 American Community Survey.

Overall Vocational Rehabilitation services

- The Commission has a history of outperforming the national average in terms of the number of individuals with vision loss entering competitive employment. For those individuals with vision loss who achieved an employment outcome, 77% in 2013 achieved competitive employment, which is particularly notable given the current economic recession and Oregon's extremely high levels of unemployment. Consumer feedback verifies the strength of the Commission's programs: of Commission clients achieving an employment goal, 100% were satisfied with the outcome of training received at the Commission.
- Suggestions for improving the vocational rehabilitation program in general included providing more outreach to a variety of community entities including employers and, within budget limitations, increasing staff capacity. It is also suggested that we evaluate activity schedules to assure efficient use of resources.

Vocational Rehabilitation services for individuals with the most significant disabilities, including supported employment services

- The Commission provides vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with significant disabilities. In 2013, for those who exited the program having achieved employment, 100% had a significant disability; the five-year average is 99%.

Suggestions for improving services to individuals with the most significant disabilities focused on increasing partnering and visibility with other agencies, and providing more job search assistance and employer outreach.

- (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.
- (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.
- (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 un-served or underserved by the VR program.
- (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 pre-employment transition services).
- (5) If applicable, plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs within the State.
- (6) Strategies to improve the performance of the State with respect to the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA.
- (7) Strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce development system in assisting individuals with disabilities.
- (8) How the agency's strategies will be used to:
 - (A) achieve goals and priorities by the State, consistent with the comprehensive needs assessment;
 - (B) support innovation and expansion activities; and
 - (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.

Agency response (o):

The OCB has developed the following strategies for accomplishing the agency goals as identified through interaction with the agency's Commission board, WIOA core partners, staff, agency participants and community stakeholders.

Goal 1: Successfully implement intent of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act into agency work and processes

Sub-goal 1.1: Continue to emphasize the State's Strategy of High Skills/High Wages focus for agency participants

Strategy 1.1: The OCB will leverage its existing success towards contributing to the State's strategy of High skills/High wages, and will create new pathways to greater self-sufficiency for OCB participants through deeper collaboration among core and partner programs.

The OCB will continue to provide comprehensive, participant-centered, individualized vocational and blindness rehabilitation services.

The OCB will continue to provide highly professional and informed counseling and guidance services to assist the participant through issues of adjustment to disability, vocational and skill gap-assessment, career matching, and integration into the workplace. The OCB will continue to make use of client-centered tools, such as Motivational Interviewing, to assist the participant to identify the pathways of change that fit best for the individual.

The OCB will continue to provide services that assist individuals experiencing vision loss to retain employment, and continue to assist individuals who require supports to expand their work circumstances through promotional opportunities.

The OCB will continue to provide the highest quality blindness rehabilitation skills assessment and training, which are essential to creating an equal footing among non-disabled peers and within the community and workplace.

The OCB will continue to provide cutting-edge adaptive skills assessment, tools and training that are critical to developing the technical access, efficiencies and competencies that meet business workforce needs.

The OCB will continue to provide vocational and academic training and paid work experience opportunities that bring the participant the technical and professional skills needed by business, broaden the participant perspective on workplace culture and expectations, and help a workplace recognize the talents of persons who experience blindness through active demonstration of value to the business.

The OCB will continue to partner among agency staff, the participant, and employer to provide on-site workplace evaluations for accessibility recommendations and tools.

The OCB will continue to refine its message and outreach methods to inform potential eligible participants, businesses and partners of our comprehensive services.

The OCB will continue to refine facilitation of services for historically underserved communities such as non-native-English speaking communities, co-occurring disabilities such as mental & behavioral health, and youth.

Under the Combined State Plan, the OCB expects the new relationship among core group and partner programs to genuinely address the development of pathways for access that

allow blind, low vision and deaf blind individuals to also engage in the workforce activities that enhance and increase their opportunities towards High Skills/High Wages and quality of life. Future success of equal participation in these workforce activities will depend on the WIOA partners' active awareness and belief that individuals who are blind are viable participants within the workforce, and that the OCB is a valuable collaborator among workforce partners. Access and navigation issues must be addressed with highest priority among all partner programs.

The OCB expects participants who are blind, low vision and deaf blind to become fully engaged in the array of workforce services. OCB expects our counseling staff to be active and equal partners among the regional and local workforce partners, where the talents of agency participants can be more effectively matched with business needs through sharing of employment strategies and real time labor market information.

OCB expects partner programs to identify shared core-participant job readiness skill needs, and to work with all partners to develop common-need trainings - and share presentation efforts where applicable – to strengthen the skill sets of our agency participants through access to all. OCB expects that the new partnership will make our staff and agency participants more informed beneficiaries of relevant targeted workforce vocational training and apprenticeship opportunities towards gaining higher skills that match an individual's aptitude despite visual disability, and thereby securing higher wages and greater self-sufficiencies.

Sub-goal 1.2: Ensure equal access for blind, low vision and deaf blind individuals to be able to benefit from the array of services available through the state's workforce system
Strategy 1.2: The OCB views access and technology as one of the highest priorities for the success of our agency participants to connect to and benefit from core group and partner program services which prepare and provide a pathway to them meeting the workforce needs of business.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act makes accessibility a more prominent expectation for workforce partners, and the OCB will champion universal accessibility among the core group and partner programs, in particular for potential beneficiaries of the workforce systems who are blind, low vision or deaf blind.

Sub-goal 1.3: Engage with state and local community businesses in ways that best work for business, and better prepare agency participants for success by ensuring they have the skills that meet business needs.

Strategy 1.3: The OCB will work towards the State's strategy of increased Business Engagement by developing the agency's array of services that businesses may require or

desire of us, thereby facilitating the employment of qualified individuals who are blind, low vision or deaf blind. The agency will deepen collaboration with core and partner programs in order to better connect our participants who are blind to the skills training and business connections that work best for their aptitudes and for meeting business needs throughout the state.

OCB offers an array of services for business, which includes many components. One component is to increase awareness among business of the agency's range of services, in order to provide an easy pathway for business to retain a talented employee whose work performance may be impacted due to a change in vision.

Another aspect is the ability to fulfill business recruitment needs through connecting the business with the talents of job-ready and skilled agency participants, and to offer the ability to create individualized and low-risk opportunities for the business so that a participant can best demonstrate their ability and potential value to the workplace. The OCB provides guidance on issues of disability in the workplace, including education around the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act; information on how to benefit from federal and local incentives for hiring of individuals with disabilities, and offers supports to the business for successfully meeting required mandates for hiring of individuals with disabilities.

OCB is committed to offering workplace accommodation recommendations and supports, and education and guidance on making the workplace a disability-friendly and inclusive environment. OCB connects businesses to disability-related resources, training and/or education. OCB engages businesses in identifying supply chain needs, and will assist in establishing entrepreneurs and small businesses that might best fulfill that supply chain need.

Due to the small size of OCB customer base and agency staffing in comparison to other workforce partner programs, the agency and its eligible participants will benefit from the broader infrastructure that state plan partners develop and nurture towards increased business engagement.

We recognize that OCB alone cannot fully provide the amount of skilled talent business requires, and the OCB as a separate entity cannot efficiently engage business statewide. OCB will rely on active inclusion of its staff in the One-Stop teams, and depend on the accessibility of workforce programs for agency participants, in order to meet the broader engagement of business in a manner that works best for business – through a seamless single point of contact. OCB counselors develop relationships with local business

partners, and will guide those relationships (as applicable) into the greater workforce system in order to best fulfill the business needs.

Sub-goal 1.4: Implement creative and meaningful changes to agency processes and services in order to best meet intent of WIOA around services to youth.

Strategy 1.4: The OCB will leverage existing success towards contributing to the State's strategy to providing meaningful and impactful service to the transition population, and will create new pathways for youth to gain essential experience and momentum towards the world of work.

The OCB will continue to provide its array of services/programs and paid work experiences to students and youth with vision loss/blindness. OCB will continue to organize and manage our two paid summer work experience programs (in Salem and Portland) for eligible students age 16+, and will expand the program and staffing to provide more paid work experience and pre-employment transition service opportunities throughout the year.

The OCB will continue to nurture the relationships with business that support these work opportunities for youth who are blind.

The OCB will continue to build relationships and participate in IEP meetings with school districts, teachers of the visually impaired, students and families throughout the state.

The OCB will explore methods for supporting work experience for students with visual disability more locally across the state and more broadly throughout the year outside of summer.

The OCB is also exploring new methods for providing pre-employment transition services to students with visual disability, focusing in particular upon the adaptive and soft skills necessary to succeed in an adult workplace.

Goal 2: Increase agency outreach and effectiveness of services to individuals and communities that would benefit from vocational rehabilitation services

Sub-goal 2.1: Increase effectiveness and cultural competency of OCB staff

Strategy 2.1: This strategy is to address the agency's need to better address the needs of underserved populations, and to address the community feedback that the agency needs to have a stronger presence within the community.

The agency wants to ensure all levels of internal staff understand and can speak publicly to all aspects of the agency, understanding that any moment can be an opportunity for outreach.

The agency is analyzing its current tools for outreach for how well the message reads to intended audience – does language describe programs in silos and ways that internal staff might understand, or does it speak more to the services we offer that a potential applicant or business person will find relevant to their needs? Are there concepts that are culturally more relevant and that should be highlighted, whether conveying the message in English or a second language? How best to reach a younger generation of potential VR participants, what messages will motivate the fullest participation? Are there methods for outreach that are more effective? What aspects of social media should the agency expand to enhance its education and outreach outcomes?

Goal 3: Enhance and maintain OCB capacity & expertise in serving Oregonians with vision loss

Sub-goal 3.1: Enhance awareness among all staff of context, issues, and skills of blindness

Strategy 3.1: This strategy is to ensure that all layers of the agency meets the level of skill and expertise that best serves blind, low vision and deaf blind residents of Oregon.

Supporting a participant to effectively navigate through to the adjustment to blindness, self-advocacy and independence necessary to achieve and maintain a vocational goal requires full understanding that an individual who experiences blindness/low vision, given the right tools, training and aptitude, can live independently and be successfully employed. All agency staff must understand fully that success in integrated, competitive employment is achievable for each and every participant who becomes eligible for services.

That level of knowledge and belief requires experience and awareness of the blindness community, interaction with an array of role models, and confidence in adaptive techniques of blindness for independence. Not all new hires to the agency have a background in blindness services, but all staff - no matter their role – will have the organizational expectation and support for deep, on-going interaction and active listening of arenas & issues important to the blindness community.

One of OCB's strengths is its specialized skill and expertise. An important aspect of blindness adaptive skills is the use of technology as aids; the pace of change in technology requires special attention and diligence of agency staff in order to provide relevant training and services to participants. The specialized skills of blindness need to be adaptable to an array of participant needs.

Broad experience and consistent practice of skill sets without relying on vision are critical elements for practitioners to best assist a participant in finding the methods that

are most effective for the individual. The agency supports peer-training opportunities among staff to share new methods, ideas and tools and hone expertise.

Awareness of and addressing potential co-occurring disabilities are critical to the success of the agency participant in the workplace. Agency staff need to be trained and confident in identifying other obstacles, and be experienced with the community to be able to identify and connect with appropriate partners to address/mitigate identified barriers.

Sub-goal 3.2: Improve systems for universal accessibility, both internally within the agency and externally among partners

Strategy 3.2: This strategy addresses the primary issue that keeps agency participants from fully engaging in the workforce partner systems, employment, and the greater community: accessibility of electronic data. It also acknowledges the unique and pivotal role that OCB as an agency can play in enacting change towards a broader understanding and implementation of programmatic and systems accessibility.

Internally, the OCB will be analyzing its own systems for continued accessibility and usability. The OCB will ensure methods of access to agency data for those new to vision loss and who do not yet have the adapted tools to read print or electronic data. The OCB will continue to identify and resolve any internal access issues, and will develop systems of internal supports to continue to manage access issues. The OCB will continue to make accessibility a requirement in all agency electronic software and hardware procurements, and to ensure the manufacturer is fully responsible for a fix if access or usability fails at any point in the life of the product.

Externally, the OCB will champion full programmatic and information accessibility for individuals who are blind, low vision and deaf blind among all core WIOA, business and community partners. The OCB will consistently offer information as to the benefits of making access an organizational essential priority, and provide supports to get partner organizations and businesses on the path towards accessibility. OCB will continue to expect access for its agency participants to the full array of services available through the workforce system, and view the most critical change through implementation of WIOA to be the focus and achievement of greater accessibility to WIOA partner programs and services.

The OCB will continue to provide referral /tech supports to other state agencies and programs around improving accessibility. Information and supports around issues of access are a critical service the agency offers to businesses.

The OCB will continue to provide excellent blindness skills training to agency participants so they have the skills to troubleshoot access issues as they arise in a workplace, and are able to effectively self-advocate for their needs.

The OCB will partner with other officials, agencies, consumer groups, organizations and individuals wherever possible to promote greater access in the workplace and community for individuals who are blind, low vision and deaf blind.

Sub-goal 3.3: Refine and maintain systems for knowledge transfer and leadership development

Strategy 3.3: This strategy addresses the need to systematize processes to ensure the smoothest transition of staff, in order to have the least interruption of services to the agency's participants and community partners.

The agency wants to ensure the smoothest operations possible despite changes in the workforce. Development of staff through sharing of knowledge, job shadowing and cross-training will be emphasized for identified positions. The agency will continue to double-fill positions where a vacancy is planned in order to allow the incumbent to provide the new hire with their specialized training and experience.

Goal 4: Enhance the vocational aspects of vocational rehabilitation within agency processes

Sub-goal 4.1: Integrate employment into a unified customer experience at all phases of the vocational rehabilitation process

Strategy 4.1: This strategy addresses the need to better balance both aspects of the agency's mandate in providing vocational rehabilitation services, and to enhance the vocational aspects of the agency's services.

The agency will continue its strong comprehensive and individualized vocational work, and will enhance those efforts by nurturing an agency culture where vocational activity is possible, supported and encouraged at any and every stage of the vocational rehabilitation process. Vocational-related concepts can be integrated into all agency processes, from the moment a potential participant enters the door to the day he/she exits.

The agency recognizes that it has had to duplicate many pre-vocational services that have been provided to the general public by the One-Stop Job Development Centers simply because One-Stop programs have not been fully accessible for individuals who are blind, low vision or deaf blind. If access issues are successfully addressed by the WIOA partners, there will be many programs, services and workshops that our agency participant base could make use of more naturally through the One-Stop systems, and get

better connected to the array of businesses and job opportunities that are available to the general public.

If the agency can successfully shift some current processes to the greater workforce system – contingent on successful accessibility changes within the One-Stops - the agency can focus on serving a greater number of clients with even more robust services that relate directly to blindness.

Sub-goal 4.2: Build employer-desired core soft skills (critical thinking, decision making, etc.) throughout skill development process

Strategy 4.2: This strategy is to address the business-identified skill gaps in the workforce, and to better prepare our agency participants in improving their marketability and value for business.

The agency recognizes both that businesses have identified soft skills as the biggest barrier to employment, and that acquiring these skills as an adult likely requires a challenging path of behavioral change. There is impetus for the agency to address these skills as early as possible, as consistently as possible, and as seamlessly as possible in all the interactions with participants. Youth workshops and activities will always have some component of soft skills training included. Counseling and services will emphasize supporting self-determination through informed choice.

Curriculum that emphasizes or folds in soft skills training and feedback will be identified, implemented and refined over time. An assessment of soft skills will be utilized in order to assist in determining next steps needed to move toward readiness for employment.

(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.
 - (B) Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.
- (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.
 - (B) Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.
- (3) The VR program's performance on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA.

(4) How the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized.

Agency response (p):

Goal 1: Increase the number of clients served. We want to focus on increasing the number clients served which has a direct impact on successful employment outcomes. We would like to increase our number served by 5% from 785 to 724. We recognize that in order to meet the second goal and priority, we will need to have an increased pool of new applicants.

Progress: The agency increased numbers served and employment outcomes in FFY 2015, however increasing our numbers still remains a priority. The agency firmly believes that in order to maintain or improve our number of employment outcomes, we need to have new clients coming to the agency for assistance with obtaining or maintaining employment.

Goal 2: Increase the number of employment outcomes in the VR program.

Progress: For FY 15, the agency had 129 employment outcomes which is way higher than previous years. This increase was largely due to the home maker status being discontinued as of September 2015. We are committed to continuing to focus on this area while understanding that our numbers are likely to decrease from this unusually high number.

Goal 3: Maintain and monitor the client services procurement process. This has been part of the agency's efforts to improve and strengthen the agency's business practices.

Progress: The agency began implementation for procurement for client services in FY 11 and it was fully implemented the beginning of FY 12. This means that all specialized rehabilitation services are now being provided through qualified vendors under personal services contracts that are generated from an open competitive recruitment process. We are actively reviewing/monitoring these vendors for compliance and reviewing/processing new applications as they arrive.

The agency continues to monitor this RFA process and our number of qualified vendors continues to increase—which has a direct and positive impact on client outcomes.

Goal 4: Make the necessary changes to the agency programs that are essential in order to respond to the needs of transition aged youth who are not able to receive independent living skills training and support through educational sources. We have continued to focus our efforts on public education and community outreach regarding the impact of specialized services for persons who are blind or visually impaired.

Progress: The agency has been partnering with the Regional Programs for the Visually Impaired throughout the state to assist youth in acquiring the independent living skills

and PreEmployment Transition Services necessary to move forward successfully in their transition plans. We have been able to work in partnership with Department of Education funds to assist targeted youth in attending programs available through the Washington School for the Blind. This means that the agency is providing vocational related services while students are advancing their independent living and PreEmployment skills in a supervised setting on the campus of the Washington School for the Blind.

We continue to offer specialized PreEmployment Transition Services/work experience opportunities for transition aged youth in Oregon. This includes continuing to offer Summer Work Experience Programs for individuals with significant support needs in the area of independent living and employment and for those transition aged youth who are able to live, travel and work independently.

Progress on Goals for Title VI Part B Program

Goal 1: Coordinate the Summer Work Experience Program for students who require ongoing supports in partnership with the Department of Education

Progress: In FFY 15, the agency held one Summer Work Experience Program at the Campus of the Oregon School for the Deaf. The reports following the program were incorporated into the planning for the individualized education programs of the students who returned to school. In 2-13 the Salem program was expanded from a strictly supported employment model to a program that is fully integrated: serving both students who are able to live/work independently as well as those needing additional supports.

This innovation allows us to utilize the extensive staff and larger facility in Salem in order to provide all students entering the Summer Work Experience Program (SWEP) with a more comprehensive assessment and training experience. This further allows us the ability to provide regional programs with information they need to inform the education and training needed for these students during the academic year. In FFY 15 we also provided SWEP on the campus of Portland State University for students who lived in the Ondine dorm and worked in and around Portland.

The Portland model is now the second step for students within the program. Salem is the first step (with additional supports built in to their experience) and Portland is the next step (allowing students who are able/ready to attend another summer the ability to fully implement their skills in an even more independent setting).

Goal 2: Partner with the education team that will support students who are leaving secondary school programs to develop a transition plan for school to work

Progress: The agency attended individualized transition plan meetings for all students exiting the schools in order to provide seamless services to students exiting the school system.

Goal 3: Continue to outreach to the deaf-blind community

Progress: The agency is involved in a community coalition of stakeholders who are committed to serving individuals who are deaf blind. The agency's deaf-blind specialist and deaf-blind transition specialist are both involved in this effort.

Goal 4: Coordinate with community resources to maximize comparable benefits and improve services for our clients

Progress: The agency has been able to network with community support services through the Office of Developmental Disability Services of the state to identify ongoing support services for individuals with significant disabilities who require supported employment services.

Goal 5: Maintain the number of individuals served in the program and increase our outcomes in integrated settings with supports

Progress: The agency served 34 supported employment clients in FFY 15. Two supported employment cases were closed successfully. The agency's 2014 Comprehensive Needs Assessment indicated that the agency's overall efforts to serve individuals in Oregon from minority backgrounds was good but could use some strengthening and we are committed to increasing our outreach to minority populations.

Goal 6: Maximizing out of the box technology as a rehabilitation teaching tool

Progress: Rehabilitation Instructors for the Blind employed by the agency continued utilizing Apple and android Devices as adaptive teaching tools in FFY 15. This is exciting off the shelf technology that has built in adaptive features and affordable applications that can be purchased to identify paper currency, take notes, plan meals/shopping, organize/manage tasks for independent living, provide GPS location services, etc.

Goal 7: Business and Community Engagement

Progress: The agency is a member of the Portland Business Alliance. This allows the agency Business Relations Coordinator to be actively engaged with this organization. This has resulted in the Coordinator being able to make connections with several businesses and potential employers on a regular basis.

Goal 8: Night of Networking- OHSU

Progress: The agency was a community sponsor for a networking event that was hosted by the largest healthcare organization in the state, Oregon Health and Sciences University. This was an opportunity for individuals with disabilities to network and casually interact with business and human resource professionals from the community and within the health care industry.

Goal 9: Connecting Communities

Progress: The agency is a member of a coalition of community and public organizations who have come together to draw attention to and pool resources around systems change and awareness for individuals with disabilities.

Goal 10: Coordination and Planning with Independent Living

Progress: The Oregon Commission for the Blind has a partnership with the State Independent Living Council to ensure that the strategic planning and coordination of independent living services and priorities in Oregon include the interests of individuals who are blind.

(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.
- (2) The timing of transition to extended services.

Agency response (q):

In FFY2015, 2 fifteen (15) working-aged individuals with co-occurring disabilities of Cognitive Impairments were successfully employed in integrated and competitive jobs with the average wage for status 26, SE clients: \$10.39 per hour.

**VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES
CERTIFICATIONS**

States must provide written and signed certifications that:	
1.	The Oregon Commission for the Blind is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by WIOA, ⁵¹ and its supplement under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act ⁵² ;
2.	As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the Oregon Commission for the Blind ⁵³ agrees to operate and administer the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan ⁵⁴ , the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations ⁵⁵ , policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of VR services and the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;
3.	As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated State agency agrees to operate and administer the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan ⁵⁶ , the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations ⁵⁷ , policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under title VI are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;
4.	The designated State agency and/or the designated State unit has the authority under State law to perform the functions of the State regarding the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement;

Public Law 113-128.

⁵² Unless otherwise stated, "Rehabilitation Act" means the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA, signed into law on July 22, 2014.

⁵³ All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

⁵⁴ No funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act .

⁵⁵ Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76, 77, 79, 81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3485; and the State VR Services Program regulations.

⁵⁶ No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

⁵⁷ Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 6.

5.	The State legally may carry out each provision of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement.
6.	All provisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement are consistent with State law.
7.	The Oregon Commission for the Blind Executive Director has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement;
8.	The Oregon Commission for the Blind Executive Director has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services;
9.	The agency that submits the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement.

ASSURANCES

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act.