

# **State Plan for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and State Plan Supplement for the State Supported Employment Services Program Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired State Plan for Fiscal Year 2015 (submitted FY 2014)**

## **Preprint - Section 1: State Certifications**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

***Nebraska State Treasurer***

... has the authority under state law to receive, hold and disburse federal funds made available under this State Plan and its supplement.

1.8 The (enter title of state officer below)... ***Yes***

***Executive Director of Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired***

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

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

**State Plan Certified By**

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

Signed?***Yes***

Name of Signatory***Dr. Pearl Van Zandt***

Title of Signatory***Executive Director***

Date Signed (mm/dd/yyyy)***06/16/2014***

**Assurances Certified By**

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

**Section 1 Footnotes**

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

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

[3] All references in this plan to "designated state agency" or to "the state agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**(a) Conduct of public meetings.**

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

**(b) Notice requirements.**

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

**(c) Special consultation requirements.**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Preprint - Section 4: Administration of the State Plan

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

### (a) Designated state agency.

1. There is a state agency designated as the sole state agency to administer the State Plan or to supervise its administration in a political subdivision of the state by a sole local agency.
2. The designated state agency *is a state agency that is primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities (Option A was selected/Option B was not selected).*
3. In American Samoa, the designated state agency is the governor.

### (b) Designated state unit.

1. If the designated state agency is not primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities, in accordance with subparagraph 4.1(a)(2)(B) of this section, the state agency includes a vocational rehabilitation bureau, division or unit that:
  - A. is primarily concerned with vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities and is responsible for the administration of the designated state agency's vocational rehabilitation program under the State Plan;
  - B. has a full-time director;
  - C. has a staff, at least 90 percent of whom are employed full-time on the rehabilitation work of the organizational unit; and
  - D. is located at an organizational level and has an organizational status within the designated state agency comparable to that of other major organizational units of the designated state agency.
2. The name of the designated state vocational rehabilitation unit is

*Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired*

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

The State Plan must contain one of the following assurances.

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

1. is responsible under state law for operating or overseeing the operation of the vocational rehabilitation program in the state and is primarily concerned with the vocational rehabilitation or vocational and other rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities in accordance with subparagraph 4.1(a)(2)(A) of this section.
2. is consumer controlled by persons who:
  - A. are individuals with physical or mental impairments that substantially limit major life activities; and
  - B. represent individuals with a broad range of disabilities, unless the designated state unit under the direction of the commission is the state agency for individuals who are blind;
3. includes family members, advocates or other representatives of individuals with mental impairments; and
4. undertakes the functions set forth in Section 105(c)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(h)(4).

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

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

*(Option A was selected)*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If "Yes", the designated state agency:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. nonfederal share of the cost of these services is met from funds provided by a local public agency, including funds contributed to a local public agency by a private agency, organization or individual;
2. services are likely to promote the vocational rehabilitation of substantially larger numbers of individuals with disabilities or of individuals with disabilities with particular types of impairments; and
3. state, for purposes other than the establishment of a community rehabilitation program or the construction of a particular facility for community rehabilitation program purposes, requests in Attachment 4.7(b)(3) a waiver of the statewideness requirement in accordance with the following requirements:
  - A. identification of the types of services to be provided;
  - B. written assurance from the local public agency that it will make available to the state unit the nonfederal share of funds;
  - C. written assurance that state unit approval will be obtained for each proposed service before it is put into effect; and
  - D. written assurance that all other State Plan requirements, including a state's order of selection, will apply to all services approved under the waiver.

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. cooperation with and use of the services and facilities of the federal, state, and local agencies and programs, including programs carried out by the undersecretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture and state use contracting programs, to the extent that those agencies and programs are not carrying out activities through the statewide work force investment system;
2. coordination, in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 4.8(c) of this section, with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services;
3. establishment of cooperative agreements with private nonprofit vocational rehabilitation service providers, in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 5.10(b) of the State Plan; and,
4. efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other state agencies and entities with respect to the provision of supported employment and extended services for individuals with the most significant disabilities, in accordance with the requirements of subsection 6.5 of the supplement to this State Plan.

**(c) Coordination with education officials.**

1. Attachment 4.8(b)(2) describes the plans, policies and procedures for coordination between the designated state agency and education officials responsible for the public education of students with disabilities that are designed to facilitate the transition of the students who are individuals with disabilities from the receipt of educational services in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services under the responsibility of the designated state agency.
2. The State Plan description must:
  - A. provide for the development and approval of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with 34 CFR 361.45 as early as possible during the transition planning process but, at the latest, before each student determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services leaves the school setting or if the designated state unit is operating on an order of selection before each eligible student able to be served under the order leaves the school setting; and
  - B. include information on a formal interagency agreement with the state educational agency that, at a minimum, provides for:
    - i. consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to postschool activities, including vocational rehabilitation services;

- ii. transition planning by personnel of the designated state agency and the educational agency for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and completion of their individualized education programs under Section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;
- iii. roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services; and
- iv. procedures for outreach to students with disabilities as early as possible during the transition planning process and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

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

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

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

- 1. There is in the state a recipient(s) of a grant under Part C of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services for American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing on or near federal and state reservations. *No*
- 2. If "Yes", the designated state agency has entered into a formal cooperative agreement that meets the following requirements with each grant recipient in the state that receives funds under Part C of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act:
  - A. strategies for interagency referral and information sharing that will assist in eligibility determinations and the development of individualized plans for employment;
  - B. procedures for ensuring that American Indians who are individuals with disabilities and are living near a reservation or tribal service area are provided vocational rehabilitation services; and
  - C. provisions for sharing resources in cooperative studies and assessments, joint training activities, and other collaborative activities designed to improve the provision of services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities.

**4.9 Methods of administration. (Section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act; 34 CFR 361.12, .19 and .51(a) and (b))**

**(a) In general.**

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

**(b) Employment of individuals with disabilities.**

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

**(c) Facilities.**

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

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

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

**(a) Data system on personnel and personnel development.**

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

1. Qualified personnel needs.
  - A. The number of personnel who are employed by the state agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;
  - B. The number of personnel currently needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services, broken down by personnel category; and
  - C. Projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services in the state in five years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

2. Personnel development.

- A. A list of the institutions of higher education in the state that are preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals, by type of program;
- B. The number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and
- C. The number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

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

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

**(c) Personnel standards.**

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

- 1. standards that are consistent with any national- or state-approved or recognized certification, licensing, registration, or, in the absence of these requirements, other comparable requirements (including state personnel requirements) that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing vocational rehabilitation services.
- 2. To the extent that existing standards are not based on the highest requirements in the state applicable to a particular profession or discipline, the steps the state is currently taking and the steps the state plans to take in accordance with the written plan to retrain or hire personnel within the designated state unit to meet standards that are based on the highest requirements in the state, including measures to notify designated state unit personnel, the institutions of higher education identified in subparagraph (a)(2), and other public agencies of these steps and the time lines for taking each step.
- 3. The written plan required by subparagraph (c)(2) describes the following:
  - A. specific strategies for retraining, recruiting and hiring personnel;

- B. the specific time period by which all state unit personnel will meet the standards required by subparagraph (c)(1);
- C. procedures for evaluating the designated state unit's progress in hiring or retraining personnel to meet applicable personnel standards within the established time period; and
- D. the identification of initial minimum qualifications that the designated state unit will require of newly hired personnel when the state unit is unable to hire new personnel who meet the established personnel standards and the identification of a plan for training such individuals to meet the applicable standards within the time period established for all state unit personnel to meet the established personnel standards.

**(d) Staff development.**

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

1. A system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated state unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement and rehabilitation technology.
2. Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination to designated state unit professionals and paraprofessionals significant knowledge from research and other sources.

**(e) Personnel to address individual communication needs.**

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

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

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

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

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

**(a) Comprehensive statewide assessment.**

1. Attachment 4.11(a) documents the results of a comprehensive, statewide assessment, jointly conducted every three years by the designated state unit and the State Rehabilitation Council (if the state has such a council). The assessment describes:
  - A. the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the state, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of:
    - i. individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;
    - ii. individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program carried out under this State Plan; and
    - iii. individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide work force investment system.
  - B. The need to establish, develop or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state.
2. For any year in which the state updates the assessments, the designated state unit submits to the commissioner a report containing information regarding updates to the assessments.

**(b) Annual estimates.**

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

1. number of individuals in the state who are eligible for services under the plan;
2. number of eligible individuals who will receive services provided with funds provided under Part B of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and under Part B of Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act, including, if the designated state agency uses an order of selection in accordance with subparagraph 5.3(b)(2) of this State Plan, estimates of the number of individuals to be served under each priority category within the order; and
3. costs of the services described in subparagraph (b)(1), including, if the designated state agency uses an order of selection, the service costs for each priority category within the order.

**(c) Goals and priorities.**

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

2. The designated state agency submits to the commissioner a report containing information regarding any revisions in the goals and priorities for any year the state revises the goals and priorities.
3. Order of selection.  
If the state agency implements an order of selection, consistent with subparagraph 5.3(b)(2) of the State Plan, Attachment 4.11(c)(3):
  - A. shows the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services;
  - B. provides a justification for the order; and
  - C. identifies the service and outcome goals, and the time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
4. Goals and plans for distribution of Title VI, Part B, funds.  
Attachment 4.11(c)(4) specifies, consistent with subsection 6.4 of the State Plan supplement, the state's goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of funds received under Section 622 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services.

**(d) Strategies.**

1. Attachment 4.11(d) describes the strategies, including:
  - A. the methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities, including how a broad range of assistive technology services and assistive technology devices will be provided to those individuals at each stage of the rehabilitation process and how those services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities on a statewide basis;
  - B. outreach procedures to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities in accordance with subsection 6.6 of the State Plan supplement, and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program;
  - C. as applicable, the plan of the state for establishing, developing or improving community rehabilitation programs;
  - D. strategies to improve the performance of the state with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators established pursuant to Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act; and
  - E. strategies for assisting other components of the statewide work force investment system in assisting individuals with disabilities.

2. Attachment 4.11 (d) describes how the designated state agency uses these strategies to:
  - A. address the needs identified in the assessment conducted under paragraph 4.11(a) and achieve the goals and priorities identified in the State Plan attachments under paragraph 4.11(c);
  - B. support the innovation and expansion activities identified in subparagraph 4.12(a)(1) and (2) of the plan; and
  - C. overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and State Supported Employment Services Program.

**(e) Evaluation and reports of progress.**

1. The designated state unit and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state unit has a council, jointly submits to the commissioner an annual report on the results of an evaluation of the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program and the progress made in improving the effectiveness of the program from the previous year.
2. Attachment 4.11(e)(2):
  - A. provides an evaluation of the extent to which the goals identified in Attachment 4.11(c)(1) and, if applicable, Attachment 4.11(c)(3) were achieved;
  - B. identifies the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals and priorities;
  - C. describes the factors that impeded their achievement, to the extent they were not achieved;
  - D. assesses the performance of the state on the standards and indicators established pursuant to Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act; and
  - E. provides a report consistent with paragraph 4.12(c) of the plan on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion activities were utilized in the preceding year.

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

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

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

priorities of the state identified in Attachments 4.11(c)(1) and, if applicable, Attachment 4.11(c)(3); and

2. support of the funding for the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has such a council, consistent with the resource plan prepared under Section 105(d)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.17(i), and the funding of the Statewide Independent Living Council, consistent with the resource plan prepared under Section 705(e)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 364.21(i).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(b) If No:

1. Individuals with the most significant disabilities, in accordance with criteria established by the state, are selected first for vocational rehabilitation services before other individuals with disabilities.
2. Attachment 4.11(c)(3):
  - A. shows the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services;
  - B. provides a justification for the order of selection; and
  - C. identifies the state's service and outcome goals and the time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.

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

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

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

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

1. assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs by qualified personnel, including, if appropriate, an assessment by personnel skilled in rehabilitation technology;
2. counseling and guidance, including information and support services to assist an individual in exercising informed choice consistent with the provisions of Section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act;
3. referral and other services to secure needed services from other agencies, including other components of the statewide work force investment system, through agreements developed under Section 101(a)(11) of the Rehabilitation Act, if such services are not available under this State Plan;
4. job-related services, including job search and placement assistance, job retention services, follow-up services, and follow-along services;
5. rehabilitation technology, including telecommunications, sensory and other technological aids and devices; and
6. post-employment services consisting of the services listed under subparagraphs (1) through (5) of this paragraph.

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

1. progress of the individual toward achieving the employment outcome identified in the individualized plan for employment;
2. an immediate job placement; or

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**(c) There is compliance with the requirements in 34 CFR 361.62(b) that ensure the use of the construction authority will not reduce the efforts of the designated state agency in providing other vocational rehabilitation services other than the establishment of facilities for community rehabilitation programs.**

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

**(a) Contracts with for-profit organizations.**

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

**(b) Cooperative agreements with private nonprofit organizations.**

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

# **Preprint - Section 6: Program Administration**

## **Section 6: Program Administration**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Attachment 4.8(b)(4) describes the efforts of the designated state agency to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other state agencies and other appropriate entities to assist in the provision of supported employment services and other public or nonprofit agencies or organizations within the state, employers, natural supports, and other entities with respect to the provision of extended services.

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

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

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

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

## **Preprint - Section 7: Financial Administration**

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

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

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

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

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

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

# **Preprint - Section 8: Provision of Supported Employment Services**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**(b) The individualized plan for employment:**

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

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

## **Attachment 4.2(c) Input of State Rehabilitation Council**

This agency is an independent commission.

This screen has never been updated.

## **Attachment 4.7(b)(3) Request for Waiver of Statewideness**

This agency **has not** requested a waiver of statewideness.

This screen has never been updated.

## **Attachment 4.8(b)(1) Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Investment 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 investment system with respect to

- Federal, state, and local agencies and programs;
- if applicable, Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture; and
- if applicable, state use contracting programs.

Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCBVI) works across the state of Nebraska to establish interagency cooperation with, and utilization of the services of all relevant entities, including entities which are not within the Workforce Investment System. NCBVI administrative personnel communicate and cooperate with representatives of the statewide or corporate level of such entities. Counseling and other staff of our District and area rehabilitation offices do so in their areas. There are no State Use Contracting programs in Nebraska.

In each office, NCBVI staff members identify and network with a wide range of agencies in both the public and the private sectors. Doing so serves multiple purposes. We become well-versed in the resources and opportunities available to blind consumers across Nebraska. We are able to make our services known to those same entities, to educate them about the tremendous resource available to them from blind and visually impaired community members. Because many agency clients have multiple disabilities, we network with a variety of organizations, including Independent Living Centers and the Assistive Technology Program. In some cases, NCBVI Counselors participate with local Chambers of Commerce, Lions Clubs, Rotary Clubs, Commissions or Area Agencies on Aging, Community Networking Councils, and related organizations.

The United States Rural Development Agency (RDA) administers programs related to self-employment, business opportunities, housing, and other community economic development activities. NCBVI collaborates by providing information to counseling staff about the RDA programs which might benefit their clients. We also provide information to RDA representatives about our work to assist blind and visually impaired Nebraskans to access funds available for developing self-employment and business opportunities.

We are working to assure that all the programs of the RDA in Nebraska are made available to our clients. We also are available to provide training about NCBVI services, and about blindness, to RDA personnel. With this training they are able to provide reciprocal referrals to persons participating in their programs who might be eligible for services from NCBVI.

NCBVI offices are located in six locations; NCBVI staff work in all communities across the State of Nebraska. We go to where the referrals and clients live, to provide the rehabilitation

services specific to each individual. In each area and statewide, we work with the local, state, and regional resources available. These include, but are not limited to small business, women's and minority business initiatives, community commercial, recreational and educational programs, religious entities (churches, synagogues, mosques), and whatever private or public organizations are available and relevant to helping blind Nebraskans achieve their employment goals.

The State Use Contracting program is not applicable to NCBVI.

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## **Attachment 4.8(b)(2) 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 vocational rehabilitation services, including provisions for the development and approval of an individualized plan for employment before each student determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services leaves the school setting or, if the designated state unit is operating on an order of selection, before each eligible student able to be served under the order leaves the school setting.
- Provide 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;
  - transition planning by personnel of the designated state agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and completion of their individualized education programs;
  - roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining state lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;
  - procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

Consistent with requirements of the Workforce Investment Act, NCBVI coordinates with entities within the WIA system, including teachers of the visually impaired and education officials, to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the vocational rehabilitation service system. We have developed a number of strategies to address the seamless transition from school to work for blind students. The most formal is an ongoing Cooperative Agreement, signed and updated periodically if changes are indicated. The formal agreement was signed in 2013; there are no substantive changes since then regarding roles of the partners or stipulations of the agreement.

The agreement delineates the responsibilities of the Commission (NCBVI), the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) Special Populations Division, the Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired (NCECBVI), and school districts and Educational Service Units across Nebraska.

Specifically, included in the agreement are provisions for consultations and technical assistance, transition planning, coordinating the IEP and the IPE for roles and responsibilities amongst key individuals, and financial responsibilities, and procedures for outreach. The purpose is to coordinate and promote the cooperation of the programs and services available to students who are blind, deaf-blind and visually impaired during the transition process.

NDE is responsible for assuring that a free, appropriate public education, in accordance with federal and state laws, rules and regulations, to children with disabilities from date of diagnosis to age 21 or graduation. Local school districts and Educational Service Units operate under the

structure of NDE and are responsible to fund the education of children with disabilities who are in that particular district. This may include direct provision of educational services in the district itself or at the NCECBVI.

The Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCBVI) collaborates with individuals and entities statewide related to education and transition needs of students who are blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired. Our connections for this purpose include Director of the Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired (NCECBVI); WinAHEAD (Western Iowa and Nebraska Association on Higher Education and Disabilities); the Parent Training Institute (PTI); teachers for the visually impaired (TVIs); representatives from Nebraska Department of Education, Deaf-Blind Project and other entities for low incidence populations and special education; and officials and teachers with the Local Education Associations (LEAs). In Nebraska this means school districts, educational service units, local educators and team administrators, as well as families of students who are blind and the youth themselves.

On a statewide basis, we utilize a tool developed a few years ago, to assure that children with visual impairments, including multiple disabilities, are provided the best opportunities for education and for transition into adulthood and the world of work. *Opening Doors: A Transition Guide*, provides a continuum of transitional services, recommended practices protocol for all the entities involved, descriptions and prescribed roles of each entity for children in different age groupings (from birth to adulthood). Training has been provided in various settings and will continue to occur as needed.

*Opening Doors* was developed using a facilitated process involving many stakeholders, including service providers, parents, and consumers. It serves to inform all involved about other components of the system, allow stakeholders to better understand each other, and to establish positive working relationships amongst the individuals and entities involved; including outreach to and referral of students with disabilities who are eligible for rehabilitation services.

Staff members of our agency collaborate with educators, parents, and other service providers on an ongoing basis, to assure that children who are blind and have additional disabilities, will receive high quality education and rehabilitation services in all parts of Nebraska. The NCBVI Executive Director is a member of the State of Nebraska Board of Education's Transition Advisory Committee. We collaborate with the Deaf-Blind Project, Parent Training Institute, WinAHEAD, Centers for Independent Living across the state, the Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired, and other entities providing services for children and youth in transition. Particularly in the Omaha and Lincoln School Districts, which have the highest populations and the most students experiencing vision impairments, NCBVI Counselors are systematic in outreach efforts to Teachers of the Visually Impaired. We meet with them in groups, present at TVI training events, and communicate individually with the educators.

NCBVI counselors attend Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings at school districts throughout the State of Nebraska when appropriate. NCBVI counselors initiate the process of developing Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE) when the young student and the IEP

Team exhibit interest in participating in our group programs for blind youth. This occurs at least by age 16 and sometimes by age 14, as established by IDEA and the Rehabilitation Act. For Transition aged blind students who have not participated in NCBVI's transition programs, new policies have been written to ensure that the IPE is written before the student graduates or ages out of educational services. The Counselor attending IEP meetings will initiate the process for application of vocational rehabilitation services and development of the IPE well before the student leaves the school setting.

During the NCBVI 2013 Annual State Staff Meeting, a training session was provided to all field counselors on the IEP process. The presenter, from Nebraska Department of Education/Special Populations, provided specific training on the role of our vocational rehabilitation counselors in the IEP process and implementation; working with educators, families, and students in the public school system. Time was allowed for discussion and questions. The presenter encouraged counselors to communicate with her department and educators statewide as we work with school age persons in Nebraska. Follow up sessions were provided during 2014 at the office and district levels, to allow for more discussion of specific situations.

Ongoing communication amongst NCBVI, educators, parents, and students, are an important strength to the overall transition efforts in Nebraska. NCBVI counselors and administrators will continue a process of educating educators and service providers about the services we provide to children who are blind.

Students of NCECBVI and those attending school in their local school districts also have the opportunity to participate in specialized NCBVI programs for children and youth. We invite educators to also attend and observe our programs for students. NCBVI youth programs are offered each year, to the extent that funding is available and current clients need the program or services.

The impact of the events is clear in terms of self-confidence, blindness skills, and elevated expectations. We can see qualitatively that many if not most adults who have attended such programs in previous years, are active, competent members of the workforce and their communities. NCBVI has developed a data management system which will enable us to track the results quantitatively as well, in future years. Our current results show that of 33 Transition Clients who attended our intensive training center, in addition to our transition programs, 22 became employed (18 full time and 4 part time), 2 achieved homemaker goals, 3 are still students. Only 3 are not working; another three are unknown.

Project Independence (PI) is a five day summer program for pre-transition age students. PI provides counseling on attitudes about blindness, self-esteem building, recreational and social experiences. It enables students to develop and to utilize relevant skills in conjunction with the discussions and activities. The opportunity to be with other blind and visually impaired children is a vital factor to the success of the program participants.

Winnerfest retreats are offered once or twice per school year, from Thursday evening through Saturday noon. Transition aged students from across the state participate in the opportunity for fellowship with blind and visually impaired peers. The curriculum focuses on personal

achievement, goal setting, and communication skills. Through videos, role play activities and group discussion, young people explore a variety of topics relative to their everyday lives and to their career aspirations. Participants have the opportunity to learn from and with each other about how to be competent and successful in all aspects of their lives.

WAGES (Work and Gain Experience in the Summer) is a summer employment program for students as they approach high school graduation. WAGES provides students with work experience, peer interaction, and the opportunity to enhance pre-vocational and independent living skills. Participants are trained in job-readiness skills, perform actual jobs with businesses in the community, and practice the behaviors needed to maintain employment. WAGES also enhances entities within the workforce system, particularly those participating employers who learn the value of employees who are blind or visually impaired.

Project SEARCH is a joint effort between Voc Rehab (NE-G) and NCBVI, along with school districts, hospitals and other businesses in several communities. Project SEARCH is designed to benefit people with developmental disabilities in transition. The program has been highly successful helping youth to gain job skills, including the soft skills important in the work world, and helping employers to learn about the work ethics and commitment available to them by hiring people with disabilities. We expect that their experience with youth carries into better opportunities for our clients of all ages.

NCBVI staff members work with local Workforce Investment Boards and Youth Councils to inform them of the program and to develop the job opportunities for the young blind participants.

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## **Attachment 4.8(b)(3) Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations**

Describe the manner in which the designated state agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit vocational rehabilitation service providers.

Most private non-profit vocational rehabilitation service providers in Nebraska do not specifically serve persons who are blind or visually impaired. Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCBVI) does work cooperatively with such entities when specific client needs and interests dictate. In such cases, agreements are developed for the provision of relevant services.

Outlook Nebraska, Inc. (ONI) of Omaha is a private nonprofit providing employment and training that allow blind and visually impaired persons to achieve personal and career goals. NCBVI works cooperatively with ONI, Goodwill, and other service providers to serve mutual clients or consumers. In addition to services specific to individuals, we collaborate on other projects. We have worked with ONI in providing cane travel instruction to all their employees. We worked with each of three work shifts to demonstrate appropriate cane technique and staff walked all through their work area, break area utilizing canes (Two Point Touch, Shore lining, Pencil Grip, Sighted Guide). It is possible that this will be an annual training event. We work with ONI blind employees on various aspects of the benefits of earning SGA and/or receiving Social Security benefits.

Another collaborative project in 2013 was to develop public information materials about 'vision resources' in our area. The Coalition of Vision Resources: the partners are NCBVI, Outlook Nebraska, Radio Talking Book of Nebraska, Nebraska Library Commission and Talking Book and Braille Services, Lion's Clubs, Nebraska Academy of Eye Physicians and Surgeons, Nebraska Optometric Association, and the Weigel Williamson Center for Visual Rehabilitation.

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## **Attachment 4.8(b)(4) Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services**

Describe the efforts of the designated state agency to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other state agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide the following services to individuals with the most significant disabilities:

- supported employment services; and
- extended services.

NCBVI uses the milestone approach in the provision of supported employment services to individuals with developmental disabilities in accordance with the model used by Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), the general state rehabilitation agency charged with providing rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities other than blindness. The similarity in the provision of supported employment services offered by NCBVI and VRS is designed to promote one standard for service delivery and facilitate greater ease of cooperation with other state agencies and providers of supported employment services.

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services-Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) serves long-range support of persons with developmental disabilities. Each blind and visually impaired individual with a developmental disability has a case service coordinator employed by DDD. The case service coordinator is responsible for developing an Individualized Program Plan (IPP) for mutual clients served by NCBVI and DDD. The IPP reflects financial support of services provided to mutual clients, including supported employment services. Typically, DDD and NCBVI establish separate contractual agreements with supported employment service providers for support of clients on the job. DDD pays for hourly rates charged by the supported employment service provider; NCBVI provides incentive payments at specific intervals (start of job search, start of employment, 30 days following the start of employment, stabilization, and 90, 180, and 270 days following stabilization). This arrangement is in accordance with the milestones model used by VRS.

The Deputy Director of Independent Living Services works with rehabilitation counselors to provide assistance, if needed, with new referrals requiring supported employment services. Over several months, beginning in February 2014, refresher training was provided at the district level to all field counselors specific to supported employment. The Deputy Director also followed-up with DDD to make sure the case service coordinator in local field offices operated by DDD know about NCBVI and the services offered to mutual clients.

There is no long-range source of state funding in Nebraska for supported employment services provided to blind and visually impaired adults not identified as developmentally disabled. Most often, these consumers include those with other disabilities such as brain injury or mental illness. In such cases, NCBVI may enter into contractual arrangements with supported employment providers if sources of long-range support can be identified. These sources of ongoing funding may take the form of PASS plans or personal assets.

NCBVI collaborated with the Department of Education, Special Education and VRS in the development of policies and procedures more clearly delineating the responsibilities of the different agencies and institutions involved and the scope and nature of services available to younger persons with disabilities in transition from school. The Collaborative Agreement between NCBVI, Department of Education – Special Populations, and the Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired, applies to persons who are likely to require supported employment services in the future, as well as those students without this need.

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# Attachment 4.10 Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

## Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

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

- the number of personnel who are employed by the state agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;
- the number of personnel currently needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services, broken down by personnel category; and
- projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services in the state in 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.

NCBVI staffing complement totals forty-five point seven five (45.75) FTEs; forty-five full-time staff persons and one permanent part-time. Ten are vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors; three Field supervisors, who carry a VR caseload and one Center supervisor; thirteen are rehabilitation teachers (orientation counselors); three are program specialists in technology, one in older blind services, one in business enterprises; five positions are vocational rehabilitation technicians.

There are also nine administrative/business personnel (8.75 FTE). Administrative/business includes the executive director, two deputy directors, one business manager, one technology manager, one personnel officer, two administrative assistants, a staff assistant and a part-time accounting clerk.

The Nebraska Business Enterprise (NBE) program consists of a Team: one Program Specialist (FT), one Accounting Clerk (PT), and part of the time of the VR Deputy Director and two people in the Business Office. These positions are all included in the total agency staffing, mentioned above.

All NCBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors do meet the state standard by having achieved the status of Certified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for the Blind (CVRCB). Fifteen staff members hold graduate degrees of a Masters or higher, including one Ph.D., one J.D., and one person with two Masters' degrees.

### Staffing Levels and Projections

We project the total number of persons served by vocational rehabilitation (all statuses, from applicant through full services) during FY 2015 to total 900. The ratio of applicants and eligible

individuals served to personnel will be 19.68 to 1. The current staffing level does enable NCBVI to provide core services to customers. Generally, the number of individuals served each year does not change a great deal.

When numbers of referrals increase, we work to find ways to effectively streamline our processes to enable us to continue meeting customer needs. Budgetary considerations and state regulations which limit personnel per agency prevent us from changing our staffing to any great extent. We do, of course, monitor services to assure that all core services are provided and that all active Individualized Plans for Employment are carried out in full. Policy and procedures are in place to implement Order of Selection should it ever be imminent. As stated, though, to date we are able to manage the number of personnel who will be needed by the Commission to provide vocational rehabilitation services to all eligible individuals.

During the next five years, we project that the number of individuals served including those with significant disabilities, will neither increase nor decrease significantly from the current level.

Potential position vacancies during the next five years, based on potential retirement age and age of the individual, as follows: two (2) Orientation Counselors, three (3) Voc Rehab Technicians, the Executive Director, one (1) Deputy Director, and the Business Manager.

Several who could retire have indicated that they do not plan to do so any time soon, so the projections might not occur. Retirement plans for all staff are reviewed periodically, especially since it is common for people in our area to work beyond the age they are eligible to retire.

The plan is to hire new persons to replace any who retire or leave for other reasons. Positions will be considered at the time with overall needs. The process will be manageable without major effort. When any vacancy occurs, we assess client needs statewide, to determine whether to change the staffing patterns. We may decide to move any vacant position to a different location in the State or to put the resources toward a different position.

Row	Job Title	Total positions	Current vacancies	Projected vacancies over the next 5 years
1	Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors	10	0	0

2	Vocational Rehabilitation Technicians	5	0	3
3	Orientation Counselors (Rehab Teachers)	13	0	2
4	Program Specialists (Technology, OIB, BEP)	5	0	0
5	Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisors	4	0	0
6	Deputy Directors	2	0	1
7	Business, Personnel, Other	6	0	1
8	Executive Director	1	0	1
9		0	0	0
10		0	0	0

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

- a list of the institutions of higher education in the state that are preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals, by type of program;
- the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and
- the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

There are no institutions of higher education in Nebraska that are preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals. The State law mandating standards for Certified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for the Blind (CVRCB) enables NCBVI to hire, train and maintain qualified staff. This is especially important because there is no Master’s degree program in Rehabilitation Counseling within Nebraska. It is extremely rare that candidates for positions with NCBVI have a CRC, and rarely do applicants have a Master’s Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling specifically. There are no institutions of higher education in Nebraska receiving funds under Title III of the Rehabilitation Act, to prepare vocational rehabilitation professionals in the disciplines designated in the Act [29 usc 771(b)(1)(B)].

Row	Institutions	Students enrolled	Employees sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates from the previous year
1	None	0	0	0	0
2		0	0	0	0
3		0	0	0	0

4		0	0	0	0
5		0	0	0	0

**Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel**

Describe the development (updated on an annual basis) and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the Coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated state unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

Currently, there are no vacancies for pre-existing vocational rehabilitation personnel at Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. When vacancies occur within our VR positions, NCBVI recruits through local and statewide newspapers, State of Nebraska Personnel services, consumer organizations of blind persons, University graduate programs beyond our immediate geographic area, and related list-serves.

As stated above, there are no institutions of higher education in Nebraska receiving funds under Title III of the Rehabilitation Act, to prepare vocational rehabilitation professionals in the disciplines designated in the Act [29 usc 771(b)(1)(B)]. Nor are there any colleges or universities offering academic programs in vocational rehabilitation at the Baccalaureate or Graduate degree levels. Therefore, there is no coordination or facilitation of recruitment, preparation or retention efforts between the Commission and colleges or universities within Nebraska.

There are however, some such graduate programs in the Midwest. NCBVI has contacted the university placement offices of nine institutions. All have indicated that they will post any job openings that we transmit to them. We now do send our hire announcements to those universities on a routine basis. The goal is to recruit recent graduates to apply for open positions with NCBVI.

**Non-Discriminatory Plan**

NCBVI always strives to be non-discriminatory in hiring, retention, and promotion of staff from minority backgrounds and with disabilities. To recruit qualified personnel including those from minority backgrounds and those with disabilities, NCBVI follows federal Affirmative Action guidelines. We recruit via national consumer groups of blind individuals. When advertising position openings, we now include, as part of the job description and skills desired, having

experience or strength dealing with minorities. To prepare and retain all personnel, including those from minority backgrounds and those with disabilities, the initial training and the ongoing training plan are individualized according to each person's specific training needs and also encompasses training issues that will maximize the agency's effectiveness and efficiency.

## **Personnel Standards**

Describe the state agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards 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, in the absence of these requirements, other comparable requirements (including state personnel requirements) that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing vocational rehabilitation services; and
2. to the extent that existing standards are not based on the highest requirements in the state applicable to a particular profession or discipline, the steps the state is currently taking and the steps the State Plans to take in accordance with the written plan to retrain or hire personnel within the designated state unit to meet standards that are based on the highest requirements in the state, including measures to notify designated state unit personnel, institutions of higher education, and other public agencies of these steps and the timelines for taking each step.

Be sure to include the following:

- specific strategies for retraining, recruiting, and hiring personnel;
- the specific time period by which all state unit personnel will meet the standards;
- procedures for evaluating the designated state unit's progress in hiring or retraining personnel to meet applicable personnel standards within the established time period;
- the identification of initial minimum qualifications that the designated state unit will require of newly hired personnel when the state unit is unable to hire new personnel who meet the established personnel standards;
- the identification of a plan for training newly hired personnel who do not meet the established standards to meet the applicable standards within the time period established for all state unit personnel to meet the established personnel standards.

Nebraska statute requires a State Certification for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors for the Blind. This law is the highest standard in Nebraska for the discipline of rehabilitation counseling for the blind. All the NCBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors meet the state standard by having achieved the status of Certified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for the Blind. Fifteen staff members (five of whom are VR Counselors) also hold graduate degrees of a Masters or higher.

Certified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for the Blind (CVRCB) is defined as a person who is certified to practice vocational rehabilitation counseling for blind persons and holds a certificate issued by NCBVI. Vocational rehabilitation counseling for the blind is defined as the process implemented by a person who operates a comprehensive and coordinated program designed to assist blind persons to gain or maintain remunerative employment, to enlarge economic opportunities for blind persons, to increase the available occupational range and diversity for blind persons, and to stimulate other efforts that aid blind persons in becoming self-supporting.

The qualifications to be a certified vocational rehabilitation counselor for the blind in Nebraska are: (a) to have a bachelor's degree from an appropriate educational program approved by the NCBVI Executive Director; (b) to have completed six hundred (600) hours of immersion training under sleep shades (for persons with any functional vision) at the Nebraska Center for the Blind (operated by NCBVI); and (c) to have completed appropriate continued education training credits as approved by the NCBVI Executive Director.

The plan for training newly hired personnel who do not meet the established standards is as follows. New hires for VR Counselor positions must have the bachelor's degree (a) before hire. Training in the immersion setting (b), begins on the first day of employment. It continues for 600 hours of their employment, that is roughly four (4) months of work time. The time period allowed is sometimes extended if there are interruptions to the training, such as leave needed for illness, vacation, or sometimes meetings that must be attended, etc. The continuing education credits (c) are accrued over time and are reviewed every three years to qualify for certification renewal.

Intensive systematic immersion training of six hundred (600) hours is provided by NCBVI for all newly hired counselors, followed by three months of training specific to the individual's new position. This training provides an orientation to the agency understanding of blindness and the strategy of service delivery that grows out of that understanding. The training includes reading and discussion of many articles and documents in the blindness field, and skills training in non-visual techniques and technologies through hands-on experiences. When possible, paraprofessional or support personnel receive four to six weeks of intensive pre-service training.

Following Center Training, newly hired rehabilitation personnel continue with two to three months involving on-the-job training activities for specific job duties including agency policies and procedures, accessing local resources, sensitivity training, social security, vocational counseling techniques, consumer group information, etc. The topics covered include a wide range of policies and procedures, counseling techniques, teaching modalities, etc.

Each Certified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for the Blind shall, in the period since his or her certificate was issued or last renewed, complete continuing competency requirements as set forth by NCBVI under the Executive Director's approval.

Annually, each employee and supervisor review performance and plan for individualized training. The goals include activities to enhance abilities in blindness skills, to refresh and deepen understanding of philosophical concepts, to expand professional knowledge within the

field of rehabilitation counseling for the blind, and opportunities for training specific to rehabilitation counseling for specific positions. Discussions of philosophical issues are held in local offices and by the Administrative Team in Central office. Employees are also encouraged to spend time with other staff to learn new practices and to stimulate ongoing improvement.

## **Staff Development**

Describe the state agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that all personnel employed by the designated state unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:

1. a system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated state unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology; and
2. procedures for the acquisition and dissemination to designated state unit professionals and paraprofessionals significant knowledge from research and other sources.

Supervisors have provided data regarding their subordinates' education, including degrees held. As mentioned above, the CVRCB Certification requirement is a Bachelor's degree approved by the Executive Director, and 600 hours of intensive training at the NCBVI Nebraska Center for the Blind. We encourage VR Counselors to pursue additional academic work. NCBVI has six offices across the State of Nebraska. Some of these locales are many hours away from colleges or universities with graduate programs relevant to this endeavor. Distance learning is an option for some parts of a degree program, but may not fulfill all requirements for such a program.

Many activities are conducted in the team setting. This enables mentoring of staff less experienced by those with more expertise in a particular area. Individual staff members may also schedule time with others to expand their own knowledge, skills and experience in areas needing to be strengthened.

One example that is proving to be highly productive is training in Motivational Interviewing (MI). With support from TACE, as well as agency funds, work units have each scheduled sessions with MI trainers, to develop, expand and fine tune the MI skills of NCBVI Counselors. The training continued in 2014. Another project began in 2014 and continuing into 2015 is life coaching group and individual sessions which are helping staff strengthen their professional and personal skills as well as strengthening the teams within the agency.

NCBVI coordinates efforts with institutions of higher education, organized consumer groups and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain qualified personnel, including personnel from minority backgrounds, and personnel who are individuals with disabilities. We work to ensure that all personnel are adequately trained and prepared to meet standards that are based on the highest requirements in the State and to become certified in accordance with State Law. NCBVI also works to ensure the availability of personnel internally (or from external resources) who are, to the maximum extent feasible, trained to communicate in the native language or mode

of communication of an applicant or eligible individual. Ongoing staff development activities will ensure that all NCBVI personnel receive appropriate and adequate training.

Funds from several segments of the NCBVI budget are committed to developing personnel, including funding training from the Nebraska Center for the Blind, as well as tuition and related expenses for expanding the capacities of NCBVI staff. The In-Service Training Grant assists in accomplishing CSPD Objectives. It will be utilized to increase the skills and competencies of all staff, particularly in areas such as job development and job placement that directly relate to goals and priorities of the Workforce Investment Act and other issues related to delivery of vocational rehabilitation services in general, and for the blind, in particular.

Ongoing training is made available to all staff on relevant and timely topics. Retaining qualified personnel is particularly important because of the investment we make with the intensive Center Training as well as our willingness to reimburse tuition for course work.

Topics of focused training sessions may include, but are not limited to:

1. laws and regulations, including the Rehabilitation Act, Randolph-Sheppard, the Workforce Investment Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and others,
2. methods to help clients of all ages achieve successful employment in high-quality positions with benefits and opportunities for advancement,
3. using data to measure the success of concentrated efforts for achieving goals of high quality employment outcomes,
4. providing effective services to transition-aged persons who are blind or visually impaired, including approaches to outreach and service delivery;
5. ways to work effectively with the increasing number of older individuals who are losing vision but still want or need to be a part of the workforce,
6. serving persons with multiple disabilities, especially deaf-blindness,
7. serving persons from diverse ethnic backgrounds, including minority health,
8. exploring sending staff members to minority and Spanish conferences at the national level,
9. access technology, including non-visual and low vision options,
10. maximizing effectiveness in the group training or counseling setting,
11. Social Security information, including benefits counseling and PASS plan development,
12. supported employment,

13. workplace policies,
14. positive philosophical understandings of blindness,
15. diversity awareness and sensitivity training, especially to working with people from poverty, and
16. additional relevant issues, e.g. transportation, crisis management, etc.

The long-range plan for ongoing development of staff is based upon needs identified by our annual processes for comprehensive statewide needs assessment. The plan is updated and kept current with ideas or issues identified from ongoing client satisfaction surveys, employee requests for additional training on specific topics, analyses of agency performance on the RSA Standards and Indicators, and internal data collection from the NCBVI data management system. It is also a result of priorities established by the Workforce Investment Act and the 1998 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act.

### **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 the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability or in appropriate modes of communication with applicants or eligible individuals.

NCBVI has several employees across the State of Nebraska with at least some bilingual skills in English and Spanish. We contract as needed to obtain services from individuals who are able to communicate in the native language of applicants or clients who have limited English speaking ability or in appropriate modes of communication. Contracts have included, but are not limited to American Sign Language, including Tactile Signing for Deaf-Blind individuals, Spanish, French, Turkish, Arabic, Vietnamese, Burmese, Karen, Swahili and others according to the needs of applicants and eligible individuals. We expect to have a need for interpretation of Russian during 2015.

### **Coordination of Personnel Development Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act**

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 Improvement Act.

NCBVI coordinates with the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in several ways. NCBVI and a team of

educators and other stakeholders established a Protocol for educators and NCBVI counselors, for providing high quality services to blind and visually impaired children and youth in Nebraska. The handbook is titled *Opening Doors: A Transition Guide*. This tool serves as a vehicle for educating parents and families, service providers, educators, and others about the best way for children from birth through transition age, to obtain the education and rehabilitation services that will move them into adulthood successfully.

NCBVI provides information to educators and to VR personnel about training opportunities relevant to personnel development in the fields of both education and vocational rehabilitation. A series of personnel training sessions relating to the handbook were held in a coordinated effort between NCBVI and personnel covered by IDEA. In FFY 2015, NCBVI Counselors will continue to provide the tool, and instructions as needed, statewide to educators, parents, and other persons involved with educating blind and visually impaired school students within Nebraska.

Additional joint personnel development efforts will be held when specific issues of mutual concern are identified. For example, teachers of blind children from the public school system may provide presentations to NCBVI at Staff Meetings. Commission Staff are also available to give presentations or hold discussions with educators in their geographic areas.

NCBVI staff members provide presentations to training sessions of the school system, university and college classes, and other opportunities which arise. We will continue to explore ways to assure success in education and quality employment. One avenue will be collaborating with the WinAHEAD organization (Western Iowa and Nebraska Association on Higher Education and Disabilities). On an ongoing basis, the primary emphasis will be individual communication between NCBVI counselors and parents, teachers and others in the education system.

This screen was last updated on Jun 16 2014 11:18AM by Pearl Van Zandt

## **Attachment 4.11(a) Statewide Assessment**

Provide an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the state, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of:

- individuals with most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;
- individuals with disabilities who are minorities;
- individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program; and
- individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system.

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

Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCBVI) is the Designated State Agency responsible under State law for operating the vocational rehabilitation program for the blind in Nebraska. A governing board of persons who are blind or visually impaired (appointed by the Governor of the State of Nebraska) serves to assure the agency is consumer-controlled. NCBVI undertakes the functions set forth in section 105(c)(4) of the Act, to review and analyze the effectiveness of services and consumer satisfaction with services provided by the Commission, vocational rehabilitation services provided by other states, public and private entities, and employment outcomes achieved by eligible individuals receiving vocational rehabilitation services from NCBVI, to assure high quality, career track employment outcomes, with health and other employment benefits, wages comparable to state wages for non-disabled persons, and equity for persons of minority status.

### **Formal Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA)**

During FFY 2013, we established a contract for a formal Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, to cover the period of 2011 through 2013. We worked with the National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision (NRTC), Mississippi State University Research Unit. The assessment includes surveys of blind clients who were closed either in status 26 or 28, members of NCBVI staff, and employers who have had experience with NCBVI staff and clients. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with other key informants. In addition, existing data from various sources was analyzed, such as the RSA-911 data for NCBVI, American Community Survey data, and Bureau of Labor Statistics labor and economic forecasts. Data gathering began in March 2013 and continued through August 2013. Analysis was conducted primarily during the final quarter of Fiscal year 2013. The full report was provided to NCBVI early in fiscal year 2014.

We plan to contract for a triennial assessment again in the upcoming period. The next Statewide Assessment will cover the period of FY 2015 through FY 2018.

Throughout the rest of FFY 2014, the agency is working to understand and assess the study's results. Steps are being taken to move forward on the recommendations of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment.

Serving consumers with multiple disabilities is a need that grows in complexity and numbers. The agency will work to increase staff members' expertise in a variety of disabilities, including deaf-blindness, brain injury, and others. In addition, it is important to partner with other entities which specialize in serving persons with specific disabilities other than blindness. There is a need to increase competitive employment outcomes for clients with multiple disabilities. We will review caseloads to identify clients with multiple disabilities and develop strategies to more effectively provide the services needed by those individuals.

The population of Nebraska is not tremendously diverse in terms of race and ethnicity, but diversity has been increasing. The agency has a Minority Outreach Plan to assure that contacts are made systematically in every area of the State. As a result of the CSNA, we see that there is a need to analyze the work being done. It is important to make the contacts with diverse populations which are meaningful, to effectively reach persons who might be eligible for agency services. Materials are being revised to have different languages available, including print, online, and video productions for public use. A translation tool was added in 2014 to the agency website, allowing the user to see all content in a wide range of language options.

There is a need to increase the proportions of people served from minority populations who achieve competitive employment outcomes. The efforts to date have focused on increasing our outreach to all Nebraskans. This needs to continue, along with examining the barriers which might inhibit successful outcomes. We will work to assure that regardless of race or ethnicity, quality services are provided at referral, application, and throughout the VR process.

Assistance related to employment is another identified need. The needs can be broken into three major areas: career exploration and guidance, searching for and obtaining employment, and working with employers on accommodations and other on-the-job requirements. More specifically, the needs include help with finding a job, finding job leads or contacting employers, working with employers on job accommodations, completing applications, exploring career options, and developing clients' skills for seeking and obtaining competitive employment.

The world of work and life in general require increasing needs for technology related skills and equipment. The highest area of need from consumer surveys was in this area. Training in access technology is an area of high need, according to the assessment. This is consistent with our ongoing needs assessment with consumers statewide, described below, which we conduct every year. Employers surveyed also indicated that assistance with technology will help them to hire and retain employees with vision impairments. The Technology Team, led by a Program Manager, works to enhance their own expertise, to train other staff, to provide opportunities for training consumers, and to identify additional opportunities available from external resources.

Another area identified is the importance of partnering with other organizations, agencies, groups, etc. In particular, other components of the statewide workforce investment system are key entities with whom we partner. We do a lot of this throughout the state and need to continue

doing so. Staff members in each area are encouraged to engage in networking opportunities with businesses in their locale. We engage with the Local Workforce Boards in all parts of the State. This helps to assure that we do have knowledge of and interaction with other components of the workforce system statewide. When we learn of new entities, or ones which we've not worked with in the past, we share that information with other staff and consumers who need it. We understand that this agency is strongest when we collaborate with and learn from people and groups which may have resources beyond our own.

With the exception of Omaha and Lincoln metropolitan areas, most of the state is rural. There are small and medium-sized towns sprinkled across the state. Still it is critical that we work to ensure our ability to achieve competitive employment outcomes for clients living in rural Nebraska. Our data show that our rates of acceptance for services and competitive employment are actually slightly better for rural-based clients than for urban. However, there may be a perception amongst individuals who feel isolated and unable to connect with employment, leading to a sense that this is an unmet need. It is also not unusual for VR Counselors in the rural areas to be frustrated by limited employment opportunities for their clients. The fact that this need emerged as critical in the survey reinforces the need for us to strengthen networking efforts, outreach to potential clients and employers, and building skills among agency staff to make sure that all areas of the state are served fully, including rural, urban, and metropolitan.

The Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment also identified some rehabilitation needs of individuals. The top five include instruction using computer assistive technology; training in assistive technology; instruction on low vision aids or devices; cane travel; and exploring career options. Specific to minorities, there may be vocational rehabilitation needs that are different or that need special attention. The top three needs were the same as the general listed above, but also included here are a need for instruction in general and personal home management; help in exploring career options. The only minority group that appears to be underserved by this Assessment are persons of Hispanic origin. One salient point we are considering is that population figures for the State include citizens and non-citizens of a variety of immigrant statuses. Our services, as required by State Law can only be provided to persons who are citizens or of qualified immigrant status. Thus, comparing proportions of persons served with proportions of persons present in the state can be misleading.

For the effort to establish, develop or improve community rehabilitation programs (CRPs), NCBVI collaborates with a wide range of community partners statewide, working together to develop and improve services. We are an active partner with the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC). As part of the State Plan for Independent Living, to assure that IL services are available statewide, we provide 15.5% of the budget for Panhandle Independent Living Services (PILS).

Job coaching to our Supported Employment clients is provided through contracts with community rehabilitation programs. We also work with CRPs and independent living centers to assure that services are coordinated and meeting the needs of Nebraskans with disabilities, especially those who are blind or visually impaired along with multiple disabilities.

NCBVI partners with community rehabilitation programs (Outlook Nebraska, Goodwill, Martin Luther Homes, Community Alternatives of Nebraska, Quality Living) and other entities. Outlook Nebraska, Inc. (ONI) of Omaha is a private nonprofit providing employment and training that allow blind and visually impaired persons to achieve personal and career goals. NCBVI works cooperatively with ONI and other service providers to serve mutual clients or consumers. In addition to services specific to individuals, we collaborate on other projects as the needs arise.

The activities enable NCBVI to inform many persons about the services available to individuals who are blind, thus expanding opportunities to those who are, or who may become, eligible for services of the Vocational Rehabilitation or the Supported Employment program. The agency website is updated continuously and provides information to the public about available services and resources, avenues to apply for services, and ask questions, and so forth.

We collaborate with the Nebraska Division of Developmental Disabilities services (DDD) to identify potential clients, coordinate service plans and share funding for those individuals in the System who are described as blind and visually impaired. For the most part, job coaching to SE clients is provided through contracts with community rehabilitation programs. DDD provides ongoing funding for the job supports. Our contracts with CRPs and our coordination for services all serve to expand, develop and improve such programs across the State of Nebraska.

Part of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment gathered information regarding this question, from the staff survey and the key informant interviews. One item on the staff survey addressed this, and staff did not consider establishing or developing CRPs within the state to be an important need. This was the lowest rated item for staff in terms of need, with 64.7% indicating there was limited or no need to do this. Four of the key informants indicated they did not know or preferred not to provide an answer about this need. One informant did not see a need to establish CRPs, while another commented on the fact that there are not other organizations in the state which can provide blindness rehabilitation services. Only one key informant felt there is a need to establish additional CRPs, although this was from the perspective of providing a source of employment for consumers rather than from the perspective of providing rehabilitation services to consumers. Overall, the results would indicate that most do not consider the establishment or development of CRPs to be an important need for blind consumers in Nebraska. The only information that supports a need is that two key informants thought that there is a need for other service options (beyond NCBVI providing all services). The fact that we do currently partner with community programs to identify and to address consumer needs may be the reason that developing further such programs is not seen as a high-level need.

#### Ongoing Efforts for Needs Assessments

We work with the TACE Center of Missouri, looking forward to develop a three or five year plan to focus on assessing and addressing unmet needs, especially as they may relate to people with the most significant disabilities, transition, minorities, supported employment, unserved and underserved populations, and individuals with disabilities who are served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system.

Throughout each year, NCBVI conducts comprehensive, statewide assessments on an ongoing basis in a number of different formats and settings. Throughout each year, NCBVI holds public forums to elicit opinions and comments from consumers regarding the services currently being provided and the needs of consumers that are not being addressed. In some cases, the sessions are conducted jointly with other providers including the general vocational rehabilitation agency, centers for independent living, education, health and human services, etc. Other forums are conducted as a part of our presentations to statewide meetings of consumer or peer support groups of the blind: National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska, American Council of the Blind of Nebraska, Nebraska Association of the Blind, and other more local groups. The NCBVI Board of Commissioners holds quarterly public meetings during which they encourage consumers and interested persons to make comments and suggestions.

Consumers are informed that the current NCBVI State Plan is posted on the website and is otherwise available to anyone requesting a copy in alternate format. The public meetings serve as focus groups to solicit consumer input. The event locations and logistics are scheduled to best elicit input from and ideas about the needs of persons with the most significant disabilities, disabled individuals of minority or ethnic background, areas that may be underserved, and those who may be served by other entities such as the Nebraska Workforce System or other partner entities.

During Federal Fiscal Year 2014, we held or participated in forums in the following Nebraska locations: Omaha, Lincoln, Kearney, and Norfolk. The consumer-controlled Commission Board handles all functions delegated to a State Rehabilitation Council, with added responsibility for governance in accordance with State Law.

Notes are taken at each forum or meeting to track consumers' ideas. Following such sessions, action is taken to explore ideas to determine what will help to improve services provided by NCBVI and when appropriate and possible, to implement new strategies. Frequently, the same types of comments are made; some of which we may not have any real way to address as a vocational rehabilitation agency. It is very common for individuals at public forums to have questions specific to services, thus generating referrals. We respond by connecting the person with NCBVI staff in their area.

The Client Assistance Program provides a report on cases received throughout the year to the Administrative team and Supervisor's team. Cases are reviewed for systemic issues and any current trends about services to clients.

We use assessment tools throughout each year to evaluate service effectiveness. Doing so adds depth to the ongoing statewide needs assessment, as the service evaluations may point to unmet needs which had not been articulated in the more public settings.

Clients of the Nebraska Center for the Blind are invited to participate in a confidential telephone interview three months after completing their Center training. Surveys are conducted by an objective, non-agency person to explore the client's perspectives about various aspects of their training. Results of the surveys are shared with the Center Director and Staff, the NCBVI Executive and Deputy Directors, and the Governing Board. In general, most clients are satisfied

or enthusiastically positive with the training and state that they greatly benefited from it. Many comment that the staff are too busy, but most feel that is part of the nature of the Center. Occasionally, problems are mentioned. When this occurs, the Center Director and the Executive Director follow up on such comments to examine the problems and improve service delivery.

We contract with a neutral external resource to conduct telephone interviews with Vocational Rehabilitation clients at various stages of case service and after closure. The interviews are conducted at status 10, 18, 20, and four months after all closures. The interview results are used in the same way as the interviews following Center training. The comments help to assure quality services, correct any problems not discovered earlier, and to work on continuous improvement. The person surveyed is assured that content of the interview will be confidential and that the results will be used to help evaluate and improve services provided to blind Nebraskans. For current clients, assurance is given that any comments will not impact their service in a negative way; rather, that our desire is to assure that we are meeting their needs.

Another assessment tool is a basic satisfaction survey, mailed to all independent living clients after case closure. The vast majority of respondents say that the services they received were excellent. Some make no comments at all. It is rare that we receive negative responses on these surveys. These surveys are also confidential. If the individual does include their name, and if they have any questions or negative comments, a follow-up contact is made to determine whether it is appropriate for any additional service delivery to address the unmet need. If no name is given, but negative comments are made, we discuss and remind all counseling staff of issues to which they need to be sensitive. Assessments from persons served through the Independent Living (IL) services also help to assure that the ongoing statewide assessment is comprehensive. The IL track sometimes leads to a person applying for Vocational Rehabilitation services; thus assessing IL services is linked to the overall comprehensive statewide assessment.

This screen was last updated on Jul 30 2014 3:00PM by Pearl Van Zandt

## Attachment 4.11(b) Annual Estimates

- Identify the number of individuals in the state who are eligible for services.
- Identify the number of eligible individuals who will receive services provided with funds under:
  - Part B of Title I;
  - Part B of Title VI;
  - each priority category, if under an order of selection.
- Identify 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.

The prevalence of visual impairment and blindness has been established based upon causes of blindness and occurrence in various age cohorts. Computing those rates with total population figures for Nebraska, we project that there are approximately 30,380 persons with a severe visual impairment. The basis for services is a functional definition of blindness; thus, the potential target population includes persons who are not legally blind, but who have significant limitations to functions and activities of daily life and vocation due to vision loss. It is also the case that not everyone with legal, or even total, blindness is in need of vocational rehabilitation services and that some individuals who could benefit from services remain in a state of denial of their vision loss or do not want services for other reasons.

The majority of blind and visually impaired people are in the older age ranges: one in twenty persons between ages 65 to 74 has a significant visual impairment; one in ten in the 75 to 84 age range, and 1 in 4 in the 85-plus population. Thus, many needed services are provided through Title VII Chapter 2 funds. As people live longer, healthier lives, there is a trend to continue working longer and retiring later or to retire and then return to full or part time work. Title I Vocational Rehabilitation services are appropriate for such adults, regardless of their age. NCBVI places an emphasis upon enabling persons of all ages to understand their full range of choices. Neither age, ability to see, nor additional disabilities need to limit the options and life choices open to the individual. Transition services are provided to younger persons while still in school, to facilitate a smooth transition from school to work, despite blindness, visual impairment or multiple disabilities.

The total number of persons served in all Vocational Rehabilitation statuses during fiscal year 2013 was 942; 438 persons were served in active statuses 10 through 30. Total number served in all Independent Living statuses for the same time period was 614; 517 persons were served in active IL statuses.

It is not uncommon for persons, even of the traditional working age range, to enter our system requesting only basic assistance or financial support. We have found that with the initial onset of blindness, it is common to limit personal expectations and to seek charitable help or basic independent living skills. As people learn about vision loss, develop non-visual skills, and gain confidence in their own abilities, they are likely to expand their personal expectations and move to the vocational rehabilitation track of service delivery.

The average cost of services for an individual client is computed to be about \$5,000. This portrays an inaccurate image because the program is so highly individualized. Some people require only basic information and referral, marking of appliances, and being set up with ancillary resources such as talking books. Many others require much more, including orientation teaching; guidance and counseling; tuition, books and other expenditures related to achieving their vocational goal; and so on. The increased need for technological aids and devices, particularly computer adaptive software and hardware, has increased the level of case service expenditures for some individuals. We work on an ongoing basis to assure the best possible services, addressing each individual's personal goals and aspirations, while maximizing the efficient appropriation of resources toward that end.

Given the Nebraska Commission's commitment to improving overall services and high quality employment placement, in particular, it is expected that the total number of clients served will remain relatively constant over the next several years.

Based upon previous years, we project that in FY2015 there will be 650 persons served by Title I funds, and up to 25 persons served by Title VI, Part B. NCBVI is not under an Order of Selection. At present, we do not anticipate the need to establish an order of selection unless State or Federal budget shortfall increases in the future and the Commission budget is impacted dramatically. We do have provisions in the NCBVI Rules and Regulations for instituting order of selection if the need arises.

Title I Funds (\$4,443,687) served all eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities (Category 1), all with significant disabilities (Category 2), and all other eligible individuals (Category 3). Individuals served with Title I Funds, in all statuses, totaled 942. Technically, again since we are not in Order of Selection, all persons served were in Category 1. The average cost of services was \$4,717 per person. Our estimate for Title I funds in FFY 2015 is \$4,500,000; serving an estimated 900 clients. The estimated average cost per person is \$5,000.

Title VI funds served 20 clients in 2013 and totaled \$17,053. The average cost per person served was \$853. For FFY 2015, the grant funds are expected to total \$30,000; average cost per person estimate is \$1,200.

Category	Title I or Title VI	Estimated Funds	Estimated Number to be Served	Average Cost of Services
Services Title I	Title I	\$4,500,000	900	\$5,000

Services Title VI	Title VI	\$30,000	25	\$1,200
				—
				—
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				—
				—
Totals		\$4,530,000	925	\$4,897

This screen was last updated on Jun 25 2014 11:13AM by Pearl Van Zandt

## **Attachment 4.11(c)(1) State Goals and Priorities**

The goals and priorities are based on the comprehensive statewide assessment, on requirements related to the performance standards and indicators, and on other information about the state agency. (See section 101(a)(15)(C) of the Act.) This attachment should be updated when there are material changes in the information that require the description to be amended.

- 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.
- Identify if the state VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the state has such a council, jointly reviewed the goals and priorities and jointly agreed to any revisions.
- Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.
- Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas:
  - the most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates;
  - the performance of the state on standards and indicators; and
  - 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.

Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCBVI) is an independent, consumer-controlled Commission. As such, it does not have a State Rehabilitation Council. A Board of Commissioners governs NCBVI, the majority of whom must be blind consumers. Until this year, all Commissioners appointed by the Governor of the State of Nebraska have been individuals who are blind or visually impaired. This year, we now have an appointed Commissioner who is the parent of a blind young adult. The Board of Commissioners works together with the agency Executive Director to develop and agree to annual goals and priorities.

The mission of Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCBVI) is “Empowering Blind Individuals, Promoting Opportunities, and Building Belief in the Blind.” Our primary priority is to enable persons who are blind and visually impaired, including those who also have multiple disabilities, to achieve their individual goals for competitive employment (including supported employment). Our secondary priority is to enable persons who are blind and visually impaired, including those who also have multiple disabilities, to achieve their individual goals to live independently, and to be full participants in their communities. With both priorities, we work with clients to elevate their personal goals beyond what they might have expected a blind person to be able to achieve. As people learn to understand blindness and learn to utilize the alternative skills of blindness, they develop self-confidence and determination to establish personal goals that embody elevated expectations for themselves and for their future.

NCBVI goals are based on factors identified through analysis of the comprehensive statewide assessments, both the contracted research project and the ongoing public forums, results of federal RSA Monitoring, and the federal standards and indicators.

1. Increase the number and percentage of clients achieving competitive employment outcomes.

2. Increase the rehabilitation rate for transition aged clients achieving competitive employment outcomes.

3. Improve the quality assurance system.

To achieve the goals and priorities of achieving high-quality successful employment for clients, including those of transition age, we are using many approaches. Each situation is individualized, thus the strategies and solutions for each client is unique. This approach is productive in itself. It also helps to model for the individual that throughout life, one can accomplish new things by thinking creatively and having the confidence to try new approaches.

The overall priority of high-quality employment includes the traditional working age client, persons in transition from school to work, persons with multiple disabilities (e.g. Deaf Blind) or other special needs (e.g. Supported Employment candidates). Older applicants or persons who express interest in NCBVI's Independent Living (IL) programs are encouraged to explore vocational rehabilitation in addition to IL services. Clients of all ages are encouraged to examine whether, if not for blindness, he or she would still be in the workforce. If so, counselors help individuals to understand blindness and to raise personal expectations and aspirations. This process often does lead to employment goals for individuals who otherwise would not have believed it possible to be employed as a blind or visually impaired person.

The agency Goals and Priorities are all in line with key findings of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, within the context of enhancing employment opportunities.

1. Services to consumers with multiple disabilities

2. Services to minorities

3. Employment related assistance

4. Access (or assistive) technology

5. Partnering with other organizations

6. Services for consumers in rural areas.

The system of Standards and Indicators established by RSA is the primary benchmark we use to measure the extent to which our program goals were achieved and as a result, the effectiveness of our program. Additional evaluation processes are described in detail in Attachment 4.11(e)(2).

### Supported Employment Goals

The primary goal for our Title VI-B Program is to develop supported employment situations for persons who experience the additional involvement of a developmental disability. When competitive employment without ongoing support is not an option, particularly for individuals with developmental disabilities in addition to blindness, supported employment is explored as an

option that may be more conducive for that individual. A system is in place within the Nebraska Health and Human Services System to provide the expertise and resources, including ongoing support, to develop and sustain individualized services.

Each individual with a developmental disability has a case manager service coordinator, employed by the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD). The case manager is responsible for developing an Individual Program Plan for each client. The Plan normally includes provision for ongoing support from DDD when supported employment is involved. We have generally worked with the client (or supported job coaching) for 90 days after stabilization. We use the milestones system. The client remains in active status for about a year after employment. The arrangements are made on a case-by-case basis and mirror the approach in place between the Nebraska general agency (VR) and DDD.

There are also some persons who could benefit from ongoing support, but who do not have developmental disabilities. For the most part, these individuals have traumatic brain injuries or mental health issues with the onset of disability occurring after age 21. NCBVI works to enhance the potential to achieve employment outcomes in many cases which often require maximizing resources and creativity.

Title VI-B funds are also utilized for training of clients who are Deaf-Blind or have other multiple disabilities. We have sent clients to the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) for intensive training, not available in Nebraska. We are seeing more Deaf-Blind individuals who have personal goals to become employed, who qualify for Supported Employment and for whom Supported Employment is indicated. In addition to the actual job coaching and ongoing supports, it is crucial for such individuals to enhance their capabilities for productive lives.

We expected to serve 30 clients with Supported Employment Goals in FY2013. Twenty were served.

This screen was last updated on Jul 30 2014 3:11PM by Pearl Van Zandt

## **Attachment 4.11(c)(3) Order of Selection**

- Identify the order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided vocational rehabilitation services.
- Identify the justification for the order.
- Identify the service and outcome goals.
- Identify the time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.
- Describe how individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities.

This agency is not implementing an Order of Selection.

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

Specify the state's goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of funds received under section 622 of the Act for the provision of supported employment services.

The primary goal for the Title VI, Part B Supported Employment (SE) program of NCBVI is to develop appropriate individualized SE placements for blind and visually impaired persons with developmental disabilities. It is also the goal of NCBVI's SE program to develop appropriate individualized SE placements for blind and visually impaired persons with significant secondary disabilities including brain injury, mental illness, hearing impairment, or other multiple disabilities occurring after consumers have reached the age of 21.

Each blind and visually impaired individual with a developmental disability has a case service coordinator employed by the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD). The case service coordinator is responsible for developing an Individualized Program Plan (IPP) for mutual clients served by NCBVI and DDD. When supported employment services are involved, the IPP includes financial support provided by NCBVI and DDD. DDD pays for hourly rates charged by the supported employment service provider; NCBVI provides incentive payments at specific intervals (start of job search, start of employment, 30 days following the start of employment, stabilization, and 90, 180, and 270 days following stabilization). This arrangement is in accordance with the "milestones" model used by the Nebraska general rehabilitation agency to serve clients shared with DDD.

The NCBVI Deputy Director for Independent Living Services described the milestone model as applicable to NCBVI clients at a statewide gathering of 30 local field office supervisors coordinated by DDD in November 2012. The NCBVI Lincoln district supervisor and vocational rehabilitation counselors and the NCBVI Deputy Director for Independent Living Services also met with DDD supervisors and case service coordinators from various local field offices in southeastern Nebraska in December 2012, and work continues to establish working relationships with DDD local field offices in other parts of the state. One supported employment case has been closed successfully since the milestones model was initiated.

Some blind and visually impaired persons with non-developmental disabilities, primarily those with traumatic brain injuries, mental health issues, or other significant disabilities occurring after age 21 might benefit from supported employment services; however, state funding for support extending beyond eighteen (18) months to such persons is not available in Nebraska. In such cases, the Deputy Director of Independent Living Services, Supported Employment Administrator, works with the NCBVI Counselor involved to identify possible resources for the ongoing support (i.e., PASS plans, natural supports, personal resources). Continued training regarding Supported Employment services is provided to NCBVI counselors, statewide.

The total amount of Title VI, Part B funds projected for FY 2015 is expected to be \$30,000. Our ability to serve more SE clients is limited. We work to assure efficiency so that the limited funding will be as effective as possible. As appropriate, additional funding will be available from

Title I funds. SE services were provided to 20 clients are expected in FY 2013; it is feasible that the number served in 2015 will be 25.

Overall, NCBVI Management staff work to implement creative strategies to most effectively utilize Title VI, Part B funds to maximize the benefit for those individuals in the program's target population. Project SEARCH is a joint effort between Voc Rehab (NE-G) and NCBVI, along with school districts, hospitals and other businesses in several communities. Project SEARCH is not specifically supported employment, but it is designed to benefit people with developmental disabilities in transition, some of whom will be eligible for SE services.

Additional Project SEARCH programs were added during 2013 and 2014. These partnerships between NCBVI, Voc Rehab, schools and businesses are expanding. New projects include a major hotel and hospitals. Outreach to transition aged persons with multiple disabilities will enable us to identify youth who are appropriate for this opportunity and to provide the vocational preparation and experience that will serve them well into adulthood.

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## **Attachment 4.11(d) State's Strategies**

This attachment should include 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 vocational rehabilitation and the supported employment programs. (See sections 101(a)(15)(D) and (18)(B) of the Act and Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)).

Describe the methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities.

### **METHODS TO EXPAND AND IMPROVE SERVICES**

To expand services to individuals who are blind, NCBVI staff members travel to all parts of the state. They meet with clients and potential referrals in their homes, schools and community locations. Vocational Rehabilitation staff travel their catchment areas to meet with referrals and clients, to educate the general public, including employers, and to reach out to individuals who may need our services. Networking contacts are made with businesses to explore potential opportunities for employment.

We contact groups or organizations of minority populations or other underserved people, such as the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Indian Reservations, community groups in areas of poverty, and many others. Frequent talks and in-services are given statewide, in rural and urban areas, to inform people about the services which can be provided for anyone who loses their vision. We also work with community rehabilitation programs and independent living centers to assure that services are coordinated and meeting the needs of Nebraskans with disabilities, especially those who are blind or visually impaired along with multiple disabilities.

Our districts also organize Group Teaching training for youth, deaf-blind, seniors, and those who are looking for jobs. These trainings help to reach more clients and provide more training, one to one, as well as allowing consumers build a network of support.

The NCBVI Executive Director serves on the Lincoln-Lancaster Multi-Cultural Advisory Committee; the Deputy Director for VR services is on the board of Disability Rights Nebraska.

In response to the most recent Monitoring Report, we are working toward improvement and expansion of services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired from ages 16 (or 14 where appropriate) through 24. We have excellent programs for transition aged clients, but we also see cases closing without employment outcomes. Activities have been initiated as strategies for determining the factors involved with unsuccessful closures. We will then be establishing new approaches to enable more youth achieve employment outcomes. Statewide, VR Counselors are taking more initiative in contacting and working directly with local school districts and educational service units, to reach students who are blind or visually impaired. During the past few years, training was provided to our counselors in Motivational Interviewing (MI), as an approach to more effectively serve this target population. Other approaches will be developed as assessments are made regarding unsuccessful closures over the past several years.

Identify how a broad range of assistive technology services and assistive technology devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process; and describe how assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities on a statewide basis.

Identify how a broad range of assistive technology services and assistive technology devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process; and describe how assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities on a statewide basis.

#### PROVISION OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY – Throughout the Process and Across the State of Nebraska

At each stage of the rehabilitation process, access technology services and devices are particularly important to successful employment for the blind and visually impaired. NCBVI's Technology Team includes a Technology Program Manager and three Technology Specialists, one located in each of the three District NCBVI offices. As a part of the Administrative and Technology Teams, the Program Manager provides leadership statewide in computer access technology for our staff, consumers, business and State of Nebraska technology infrastructure entities; develops NCBVI's IT Plan and strategies; develops and enforces procedures and guidelines related to access technology; and generally works to assure that technology services continue to be cohesive and effective.

The Technology Specialists provide important services. They meet individually with clients and/or referrals to assess the person's need for technology and to determine what types of devices would be most appropriate. They work together with NCBVI Counselors and Teachers, to assure that the correct technology services and devices are provided, in conjunction with the client's informed choice and Individualized Plan for Employment. The Specialists do task analysis at worksites, to assess potential employment opportunities and to educate business people about how blind persons can be employed in that location or company. They also keep up to date with developments in technology; disseminating new information with agency personnel, clients, and consumers in general.

The Technology Specialists work within each District and, together with the Technology Program Manager, form the Technology Team. With recommendations from the Technology Team, Counselors provide specific access technology devices to clients with loans and demonstration of various devices, to determine the best fit for the individual and the task needing to be accomplished. Many of our counselors and teachers have knowledge of access technology and equipment. Furthermore, in our Training Center we have a teacher who provides full time training in access technology. All parts of the State of Nebraska have the same amount of technology devices and services available from the agency.

A computer lab in our Lincoln office allows space to provide clients with training, especially with advances in access technology. In FFY 2015, we hope to make enhancements to the

technology training areas in offices outside of Lincoln. These enhancements include the addition of wireless networking technology in all offices outside Lincoln to make the work of technology specialists and staff in those offices more efficient, as well as to ensure that devices whose only connection modality is wifi can be utilized in our offices. We also plan to make the Omaha technology lab more usable with the procurement of new furniture and other arrangements to make the space more efficient. Through the Statewide Needs Assessment, and consultations with Commission staff, we understand that there are needs for technology training for staff members. We plan to conduct iPhone training throughout our three districts to make staff more familiar with the operation of these devices with VoiceOver and to make their use of the device more comprehensive. In addition, we will provide opportunities for staff to attend training in Baltimore, Maryland which covers the latest in access technology trends. We also hope to offer training in the use of Window-Eyes, so that our staff are familiar with this newly-free screen access package. As with prior years, staff members are able to attend conferences hosted by consumer groups and universities to get hands-on exposure to access technology hardware and software products as well as dialog with access technology vendors.

In 2013 we conducted a Technology Expo and Training where business, teachers of the blind from the public schools, and consumers will be coming. We are partnering with South East Community College so attendees can get CEUs. During FFY 2015, we will continue to follow up on the partnerships initiated during the past two years.

We collaborate with the Assistive Technology Partnership (ATP) to provide access to a wide range of disability related devices, via an online program called AT4ALL. AT4ALL allows individuals and entities to borrow, loan, sell, buy, and have demonstrations of many different items. Both online and in person services are all provided on a statewide basis. A member of the NCBVI Technology Team also serves on the ATP Advisory Committee.

We also communicate and partner with local education associations and other entities addressing the needs of students who are blind and visually impaired. The Nebraska Foundation for Children who are Blind and Visually Impaired has funds that can be used to provide students with access technology devices needed beyond the school setting. For transition aged clients, we often collaborate with educators and community resources to provide the tools needed for success in education and employment. As an example of this work with the Transition community, the Technology Team assisted with a College Workshop sponsored by the Commission and run by the Nebraska Association of Blind Students. Exhibits highlighted mobile devices, book reading technology, screen access software, and refreshable Braille displays and electronic notetakers. Clients also had the opportunity for individual consultation with tech specialists regarding technology questions and advice.

The Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired performs limited web accessibility consulting work. For the most part, this work is completed by the Technology Program Manager. Though it is not the primary goal of the Commission's Technology Team to serve as web accessibility consultants, there are some cases in which the work is beneficial and necessary. This is most important when sites and services are utilized by Commission staff members to complete their daily work. These types of sites and services might include State Government

accounting systems, Benefits Open Enrollment Applications, or statewide performance appraisal systems that affect Commission employees because they are employed by State Government.

Sites and services that are used by Commission clients are also tested for usability and accessibility. This is to ensure that screen access software will work with an on-the-job application, or that a mobile application is accessible with screen reading software used on a particular mobile platform. We also test services that provide access to classroom materials or that allow the purchase of books or other reading materials. Testing these applications, sites, and services ensures that clients can compete on terms of equality with their sighted counterparts.

Identify what outreach procedures will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities; and what outreach procedures will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program.

Identify what outreach procedures will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities; and what outreach procedures will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program.

#### **OUTREACH TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, OF MINORITY POPULATIONS AND WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES**

NCBVI works to ensure that individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds have equal access to VR services. Our statewide plan for outreach and tracking is specific to each geographic area. Activities target the minority populations present in each area; the plan indicates frequency and specific type of contact which is to occur for each identified group, organization, or other community resource relevant to the target populations. A report is updated in each office, whenever relevant contacts are made. Reports are reviewed by a NCBVI Deputy Director every six months. If any follow-up is needed, he takes the steps necessary to assure that the plan is implemented systematically. We partner on various events or public information efforts with other entities, such as the Native American Commission, the Mexican American Commission, Centro Las Americas, the Asian Center, Malone Center, and others statewide.

NCBVI is an active member of the Tri-County Workforce Investment Board (TCWIB), located in Omaha Nebraska. We are collocating counselors at the Workforce Center. The TCWIB is located in an Empowerment Zone and serves many individuals from underserved minority populations. We expect to be more effective in the identification of and serving individuals that previously we have not reached.

The Hispanic population has been rapidly increasing in our State. To aid in reaching individuals from this population, we have recently hired counselors with some abilities in both Spanish and English. Materials for client and public education are being made available in Spanish, including

brochures and recorded presentations. A Translation Tool has been added to the agency website which allows translation of all our online content into eighty languages.

We will be working to continue increasing the service rate for minorities who are referred for or who seek information about the services they might receive from the Commission.

If applicable, identify plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs within the state.

#### PLANS TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

NCBVI collaborates with a wide range of community partners statewide, especially the community rehabilitation programs (CRP). NCBVI works together with CRPs to develop and improve services. We are an active partner with the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC). As part of the State Plan for Independent Living, to assure that IL services are available statewide, we provide 15.5% of the budget for Panhandle Independent Living Services (PILS).

Job coaching to our Supported Employment clients is provided through contracts with community rehabilitation programs. We also work with CRPs and independent living centers to assure that services are coordinated and meeting the needs of Nebraskans with disabilities, especially those who are blind or visually impaired along with multiple disabilities.

NCBVI partners with community rehabilitation programs (Outlook Nebraska, Goodwill, Martin Luther Homes, Community Alternatives of Nebraska, Quality Living) and other entities. Outlook Nebraska, Inc. (ONI) of Omaha is a private nonprofit providing employment and training that allow blind and visually impaired persons to achieve personal and career goals. NCBVI works cooperatively with ONI and other service providers to serve mutual clients or consumers. In addition to services specific to individuals, we collaborate on other projects. We have worked with ONI in providing cane travel instruction to all their employees. We worked with each of three work shifts to demonstrate appropriate cane technique and staff walked all through their work area, break area utilizing canes (Two Point Touch, Shore lining, Pencil Grip, Sighted Guide). We will work with ONI management to make this an annual training event. We are planning a training session for ONI blind employees on Social Security Benefit, the benefits of earning SGA and understanding Social Security. We are also exploring a workshop on Tasks of Daily Living.

The activities enable NCBVI to inform many persons about the services available to individuals who are blind, thus expanding opportunities to those who are, or who may become, eligible for services of the Vocational Rehabilitation or the Supported Employment program. The agency website is updated continuously and provides information to the public about available services and resources, avenues to apply for services, and ask questions, and so forth.

We collaborate with the Nebraska Division of Developmental Disabilities services (DDD) to identify potential clients, coordinate service plans and share funding for those individuals in the System who are described as blind and visually impaired. For the most part, job coaching to SE clients is provided through contracts with community rehabilitation programs. DDD provides ongoing funding for the job supports. Our contracts with CRPs and our coordination for services all serve to expand, develop and improve such programs across the State of Nebraska.

Part of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment gathered information regarding this question, from the staff survey and the key informant interviews. One item on the staff survey addressed this, and staff did not consider establishing or developing CRPs within the state to be an important need. This was the lowest rated item for staff in terms of need, with 64.7% indicating there was limited or no need to do this. Four of the key informants indicated they did not know or preferred not to provide an answer about this need. One informant did not see a need to establish CRPs, while another commented on the fact that there are not other organizations in the state who can provide blindness rehabilitation services. Only one key informant felt there is a need to establish additional CRPs, although this was from the perspective of providing a source of employment for consumers rather than from the perspective of providing rehabilitation services to consumers. Overall, the results would indicate that most do not consider the establishment or development of CRPs to be an important need for blind consumers in Nebraska. The only information that supports a need is that two key informants thought that there is a need for other service options (beyond NCBVI providing all services).

Describe strategies to improve the performance of the state with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators.

## IMPROVING PERFORMANCE ON STANDARDS AND INDICATORS

Each year, performance on RSA Standards and Indicators are examined and discussed by administrators, supervisors, and the NCBVI Commission Board. We analyze the results, compare with previous years, and consider implications and relevant factors. Those areas needing improvement are identified, with an approach to better performance in the future. Those which were at or above standard are also examined, to see where our strong points are and to work to keep those services strong.

NCBVI supervisors and counselors approach rehabilitation services for the blind based on a common understanding of blindness and what blind people can do. This pervasive philosophical foundation is developed and reinforced during fifteen weeks of immersion training in the alternative skills of blindness (using sleepshades for those with some vision) provided to all new staff members. This training promotes a deep-seated intuitive belief in the capabilities of people who are blind that goes beyond an intellectual understanding of blindness. New staff members are also trained to regard high-quality employment as the most desired outcome of services provided to blind and visually impaired consumers. In this way, a culture is created within which employment represents the highest priority of the agency.

VR Counselors work intensively with clients toward each person's Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Throughout the year, data is compiled and distributed to all staff. The Deputy Directors and District Supervisors review progress toward increasing and improving performance on all the RSA Standards and Indicators. Comparisons are made to the previous fiscal year as a whole and to the same time in the year as the previous year (e.g. June 2013 compared to June 2014). Case Reviews are held in each office, where management meets with VR counselors to discuss individual clients' progress towards achieving their vocational goals. Strategies specific to each individual client and that person's IPE, to determine how best to proceed toward success.

All staff approach services with high expectations of clients, and work to motivate blind persons to raise their personal expectations for setting and achieving employment goals. The focus is on planning and activities that will enable them to become competitively employed, work full time, earn good wages, and have opportunities for advancement. Benefits counseling is provided to help clients understand their options and make informed choices. Blind vendors in the Nebraska Business Enterprise (NBE) program are encouraged to operate more facilities with higher earning potential. Employment conferences give clients the chance to hone their job-seeking skills and to meet with business people who may be seeking job candidates. These events also help to inform businesses about the potential of blind Nebraskans as a valuable resource to their firms. Career classes and small group training sessions are held in each district from time to time, so that VR clients can learn from each other on ways to enhance their own opportunities for achieving competitive employment goals. In 2014, we partnered with the Nebraska Association of Blind Students (NABS) on a very productive College Workshop. The focus was geared to helping transition clients enter and succeed in higher education, and how that all relates to the ultimate goals for individuals to achieve competitive employment outcomes after college.

All of the strategies and practices discussed throughout this State Plan are related to accomplishing an increase in clients who become employed, the percentage who achieve competitive employment, a high rate of hourly earnings, the proportion of clients with significant disabilities who achieve competitive employment, becoming self-supporting at closure, and the ratio of clients we serve from diverse minority populations. The standards and indicators do not focus separately on transition age clients. However, it is clear that the increased emphasis on achieving competitive employment outcomes, better wages, and more self-support after services, for all clients, will have an equally valuable impact on the results achieved by transition aged clients.

Describe strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce investment system in assisting individuals with disabilities.

#### **STRATEGIES TO ASSIST THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT SYSTEM SERVE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.**

NCBVI Rehabilitation Counselors and Supervisors work with local and regional Workforce Boards at the workforce centers and satellites. NCBVI employees are official members of all

three local area Workforce Boards in the state. Referrals are made between our agency and Workforce statewide, to assure that job-seekers receive the services needed. NCBVI consults with the Centers and Satellites regarding the accessibility of facilities and resources within WIB locations. When funding was available, Nebraska Workforce has supported our summer youth employment program, WAGES. We will collaborate with them on this program to the greatest extent possible during FFY 2015, partnering for job opportunities more than funding which is not generally available from Workforce any longer.

The NCBVI Executive Director is working with the Director of the Nebraska General VR agency and Director of Workforce Services to assess how effectively the workforce system is assisting individuals with disabilities. This affects potential clients of both blind and general VR agencies. We will specifically examine referrals from Workforce to VR and work to prevent persons from falling through the cracks and not receiving assistance to achieve employment from any component of the statewide workforce system.

Describe how the agency's strategies will be used to:

- achieve goals and priorities identified in Attachment 4.11(c)(1);
- support innovation and expansion activities; and
- overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the state Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and the state Supported Employment Services Program.

#### AGENCY STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING GOALS AND PRIORITIES, SUPPORT INNOVATION& EXPANSION, AND IDENTIFY AND OVERCOME BARRIERS.

##### Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired Goals and Strategies

1. Increase the number and percentage of clients achieving competitive employment outcomes.
  - a. Statewide outreach for and service delivery to clients statewide from six offices;
  - b. Network with businesses, workforce entities, and other segments of the public to increase possibilities for competitive employment;
  - c. Educate entities not related to the workforce system to enhance access for persons with multiple disabilities, of minority backgrounds, and other unserved or underserved populations.
  - d. Provide access technology techniques and equipment to clients of all ages.
2. Increase the rehabilitation rate for transition aged clients achieving competitive employment outcomes.

- a. Coordinate per the Memorandum of Understanding with educators statewide for collaborating to identify and meet the needs of transition aged persons with visual impairments;
- b. Provide group teaching and experiential sessions for youth to build expectations about employment, learn and improve skills related to the workforce, develop personal ‘soft skills’ required to succeed in today’s workforce;
- c. Provide training in and the access to access technology devices and applications;
- d. Provide actual job experience with summer program and individualized opportunities for clients of transition age.

### 3. Improve the quality assurance system.

- a. Explore system for client data tracking, entry, services and fiscal components that will improve and enhance capability for all staff to access, effective reporting to federal and state officials, and internal quality assurance review and enhancement.
- b. Train all staff on new system, once it is acquired. Establish system for continued training for new-hires and for all staff as changes to the system are incorporated over time.

NCBVI utilizes strategies identified in the text above and in the Rehabilitation Act to achieve our goals and priorities, to support innovation and expansion activities, and to overcome barriers to accessing the Commission’s vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs. There are six physical offices throughout the State of Nebraska, to reach blind and visually impaired persons in their home communities. Vocational Rehabilitation staff travel their catchment areas to meet with referrals and clients, to educate the general public, including employers, and to reach out to individuals who may need our services.

There is an increasing emphasis upon providing effective services to the transition population of our clientele. From the RSA perspective, as well as this agency, it is crucial to increase successful outcomes for clients who begin rehabilitation services from the age of 16 (or 14 where appropriate) through age 24. NCBVI closely reviews all transition cases which were closed without achieving employment outcomes. Through this process, we analyze our approaches and services, to determine how we can increase successes for transition clients. At the same time, we conduct case reviews on all transition cases closed which did achieve employment outcomes. We examine the level and types of services provided and the success achieved based upon benchmarks established by RSA’s Standards and Indicators.

Workshops are provided in various locations around Nebraska to spotlight the capabilities of blind individuals. We partner with other agencies, consumer organizations, communities, and groups; including Disability Rights Nebraska, Nebraska Assistive Technology Partnership (ATP), the Statewide Independent Living Council, Workforce Development Councils, educational entities, hospitals, multi-cultural centers, community rehabilitation programs (Goodwill, Martin Luther Homes, Community Alternatives of Nebraska, Quality Living), and a wide range of other entities. The activities enable NCBVI to inform many persons about the

services available to individuals who are blind, thus expanding opportunities to those who are, or who may become, eligible for services of the Vocational Rehabilitation or the Supported Employment program. The agency website is updated continuously and provides information to the public about available services and resources, avenues to apply for services, and ask questions, and so forth.

In 2015, we will continue with employment conferences for clients. The conferences are an effective approach to expand and improve efforts to secure high quality employment outcomes for job ready consumers. Included in the conferences are motivational speakers, sessions on resume writing, interviewing and related skills, technology demonstrations, mock interviews with local business people, and a job fair with local businesses present. Employers have an opportunity to meet blind job candidates in a setting conducive to exploring the options for both blind consumers and for business representatives. Clients learn and practice many skills necessary to succeed in the world of work.

Instructional videos developed and produced by NCBVI are now being used by clients, for self-study on blindness skills, between appointments with Rehabilitation Counselors and Teachers. Over the past several years, staff training included intervention strategies promoting greater effectiveness working with people with Traumatic Brain Injury, Deaf-Blindness, autism, and other significant disabilities. These activities will enable more blind consumers to obtain employment and to be full participants in their families and communities.

Every year, NCBVI conducts comprehensive, statewide assessments on an ongoing basis. Throughout each year, NCBVI holds public forums to elicit opinions and comments from consumers regarding the services currently being provided and the needs of consumers that are not being addressed. In some cases, the forums are conducted jointly with other providers (e.g. the general vocational rehabilitation agency, centers for independent living, education, health and human services, etc.). Other forums are conducted as a part of our presentations to statewide meetings of consumer or peer support groups of the blind: National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska, American Council of the Blind of Nebraska, Nebraska Association of the Blind, and others. The NCBVI Board of Commissioners also holds quarterly public meetings during which they encourage consumers and interested persons to make comments and suggestions.

In addition to the ongoing work to hear from the public about services and needs, we now have the results of the formal Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, completed in late calendar year 2013. The results are consistent with our less formal, ongoing assessments, validating the information that is received from both approaches.

Consumers are informed that the current NCBVI State Plan is posted on the website and is otherwise available to anyone requesting a copy in any format. The forums serve as focus groups to solicit consumer input. The event locations and logistics are scheduled to best elicit input from and ideas about the needs of persons with the most significant disabilities, disabled individuals of minority or ethnic background, areas that may be underserved, and those who may be served by other entities such as the Nebraska Workforce System or other partner entities.

We work toward achieving the third goal (Improve the quality assurance system) with the following strategies:

Each fiscal year, a percentage of Title I funds are used to develop and implement innovative approaches to expand and improve services. During recent years (FY2010 through 2014), Innovation and Expansion funds were allocated to further our ability to manage data systematically.

Our data management system, eForce, has been live since April 9, 2009. Each year, we have held training sessions for NCBVI personnel to operate the system, both inputting data and accessing information. Additional programming and training efforts were required to fully utilize the system, on an ongoing basis as the system was developed and refined. As with any data management system, facets needing to be fine-tuned have become evident as we have used it. The programming and training costs have been funded with a combination of Title I Innovation and Expansion and Social Security Reimbursement funds.

Day to day enhancement of the system and provision of the service are specific areas for which resources are needed. During FY 2015, we will allocate Title I Innovation and Expansion funds to cover that enhancement and service provision function.

New, major additional requirements from RSA for 911 data collection have been implemented, relating to medical coding and other reporting elements. The new regulations and our own effort to link our system with the State of Nebraska fiscal system has led us a decision to purchase a proprietary data system. In mid-year 2014, we are in the process of assessing the applicability, use-ability, accessibility and affordability of one of these systems.

The NCBVI Business Manager is working with State of Nebraska Administrative Service to issue a formal Request for Information. This should generate proposals from major software entities (such as AWARE, LIBRA and perhaps others), for our consideration. We plan to utilize Innovation and Expansion for this project. It is likely that the exploration phase will continue throughout FFY 2015. Our plans for starting with a new system is likely to be after October 1, 2015, and on into FFY 2016.

Our work with the data management system will address all four goals. Data management will enable us to analyze the effectiveness of all parts of our system. We can then use the data based results to add value to our overall efforts, achieve established goals, and to identify future needs and challenges.

This screen was last updated on Jul 30 2014 3:15PM by Pearl Van Zandt

# Attachment 4.11(e)(2) Evaluation and Reports of Progress

## Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Supported Employment (SE) Goals

1. Clearly identify all VR program goals consistent with the goals described in the FY 2013 Attachment 4.11(c)(1), including an evaluation of the extent to which the VR program goals were achieved.

- Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.
- Provide a description of the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

The mission of Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCBVI) is “Empowering Blind Individuals, Promoting Opportunities, and Building Belief in the Blind.” Our primary priority is to enable persons who are blind and visually impaired, including those with multiple disabilities (deafness, hearing impairment, brain injury, mental illness, etc.) to achieve their individual goals for competitive employment, including supported employment. Our secondary priority is to enable persons who are blind and visually impaired, including those who also have multiple disabilities, to achieve their individual goals to live independently and to be full participants in their communities.

NCBVI goals are based on factors identified through analysis of the comprehensive statewide assessments, both the contracted research projects and the ongoing public forums, as well as the federal standards and indicators.

Agency program goals of the 2013 State Plan have been reviewed with the following results:

1. Increase the number and percentage of clients achieving full-time (31+ hours per week) competitive employment outcomes.

The number of clients closed Status 26, achieving their competitive employment goals, who went into full-time employment in 2013 was 30, compared to 39 in FY 2012. The percentage of clients closed Status 26, achieving their competitive employment goals, who went into full-time employment in 2013 was 71.43% (compared to 61.90% in 2012). Our goal specifically focused on employment with more than 31 hours per week. Our goal to increase our number from 2012 was not met. However, even though we had less full time Status 26 closures, our overall percentage for these closures increased over last year by 9.53%.

2. Increase the ratio of average hourly earnings of clients who become employed compared to average earnings in the state, to .72.

The ratio for 2012 was .824. Goal number 2 was achieved and surpassed. The annual report for 2013 from outside labor sources is not yet available to obtain the state average earnings to 2013.

3. Increase the rehabilitation rate for transition aged clients to 35%.

Employment rate for transition age clients 2012 was 48.15%. Our figures indicate that the Employment Rate for Transition Age Clients for 2013 is 53.85% which is greater than the 2012 rate and greater than the averages for agencies of 47.22%. Goal 3 was met.

We are still working toward more transition clients achieving their employment goals. We encourage transition aged clients to elevate their expectations for personal achievement. This often translates to higher education, which then delays their ultimate employment. It may take more years to reach that goal, but when they do, it will be in a career that will pay well, have benefits and the chance for promotions.

#### 4. Improve the quality assurance system.

Our client data information system, eForce, went live in April 2009 and is working well. We have developed the system to be effective at all phases of the process, such as establishing ticklers to assure the services move along as needed, ways for staff to communicate with each other about client needs and case service activity, mechanisms for administrators to review work that is done, accomplishments made, and to assess gaps in either eForce itself or the agency's service delivery system. As we have more time using eForce, we will be better able to track effectiveness of programs and in other ways, assure that high quality services are provided, to accomplish successful outcomes for our clients. Goal 4 was achieved.

To achieve the goals and priorities of achieving high-quality successful employment for clients, we are using many approaches. Each situation is individualized, thus the strategies and solutions for each client is unique. This approach is productive in many ways. It helps each individual client to clarify personal goals and then to achieve those goals. It helps to model for the individual that throughout life, one can accomplish new things by thinking creatively and having the confidence to try new approaches. It also helps rehabilitation staff by reinforcing creative, individualized thinking, which in turn stimulates creative thinking for the next client who walks in the door.

Clients are encouraged to examine whether, if not for blindness, he or she would still be in the workforce. If so, counselors help individuals to understand blindness and to raise personal expectations and aspirations. This process often does lead to employment goals for individuals who otherwise would not have believed that they could be successful in the job market as a blind or visually impaired person.

We have developed workshops for clients that give a jump-start toward competitive employment. They also serve to educate business people about the features and benefits involved with hiring blind job candidates, the capabilities of blind individuals, and technology related to blind persons in the workplace. These events have been highly effective in the short term; we expect to see additional benefits over time.

The continuing struggles in the national economy and the nature of the current workforce have impacted the ability of NCBVI clients to achieve their employment goals. Unemployment rates in the general population have increased, but now seems to be leveling off. The economic situation in Nebraska is not as dramatic as it is elsewhere; however, there are still pressures

which make getting a job more difficult for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. We are hopeful that the overall economic situation here in Nebraska and across the country will continue to improve.

Every year, NCBVI evaluates the effectiveness of our vocational rehabilitation program in several different ways; using data and input from Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), employers, consumers and the general public, staff members, the Client Assistance Program, and private or other public entities with whom we collaborate. Most importantly, service recipients are asked for their evaluation of services provided at several stages as detailed in Attachment 4.11(a). We gather identified needs of Nebraskans who are blind or have visual impairments on a statewide basis through our public forums and meetings, our surveys of clients after completion of Center training, three months after case closure, one year after being placed into statuses 18 and 20, and randomly thereafter. We have ongoing communication with our Governing Board of Commissioners (all blind consumers) and our accessible website. We continue to work with the results to best address identified needs and to modify procedures for the future. The public forums held throughout the year continue to confirm and reinforce findings of that formalized needs assessment.

In 2013, we initiated a contract for the statewide needs assessment with the National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision (NRTC), Mississippi State University Research Unit. The assessment includes surveys of blind clients who were closed either in status 26 or 28, members of NCBVI staff, and employers who have had experience with NCBVI staff and clients. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with other key informants. In addition, existing data from various sources will be analyzed, such as the RSA-911 data for NCBVI, American Community Survey data, and Bureau of Labor Statistics labor and economic forecasts. Data gathering began in March 2013 and continued through August 2013. Analysis will be conducted primarily during the final quarter of Fiscal year 2013. The report was finalized during the first three months of FFY 2014.

Throughout the rest of FFY 2014, the agency is working to understand and assess the study's results. Implications for practice and policy will be considered. Steps will be taken to move forward on the recommendations of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment.

NCBVI now uses a comprehensive electronic client information system. This enables us to achieve our goal of improved quality assurance with a systematic assessment of progress of all aspects of service delivery. The system has been customized to our environment and fine-tuned to provide the data-analysis components which we will find most useful during future years.

Further programming was done to the system during 2013, to enable VR Counselors to access the system remotely, while working with clients in their home communities. The possibilities in terms of hardware, software or applications, and internal processes were explored to enable us to comply with new federal requirements for reporting medical codes and to enable us to link our client data system with the State's financial system. This allows for better planning and tracking of service related expenditures and obligations.

We are now looking at proprietary case management software to replace our current system. During FY 2015, we will allocate Title I Innovation and Expansion funds to such a system. Our work to implement a new data management system will address all four goals and enable us to analyze the effectiveness of all parts of our system. We can then use the data based results to add value to our overall efforts, achieve established goals, and to identify future needs and challenges.

2. Identify all supported employment program goals consistent with the goals described in Attachment 4.11(c)(4), including an evaluation of the extent to which the supported employment program goals were achieved.

- Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.
- Provide a description of the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

The primary goal for the Title VI, Part B program of NCBVI is to develop appropriate individualized Supported Employment (SE) placements for persons who experience the additional involvement of a developmental disability. A system is in place to provide both the expertise and resources, including ongoing support, to develop and sustain individualized services within the Nebraska Health and Human Services System.

The overall priority of high-quality employment includes the traditional working age client, including persons with multiple disabilities (e.g. Deaf-Blind) or other special needs who may be Supported Employment candidates. When competitive employment without ongoing support is not an option, particularly for individuals with developmental disabilities in addition to blindness, supported employment is explored as an option that may be more conducive to that person. There are also some persons who could benefit from ongoing support, but who do not have developmental disabilities. For the most part, these individuals have traumatic brain injuries or mental health issues with the onset of disability occurring after age 21.

A small number of blind and visually impaired persons with non-developmental complications, primarily those with traumatic brain injuries or mental health issues occurring after age 21, might benefit from supported employment services. Generally, however, funding for extended support beyond eighteen (18) months to such persons is not available in Nebraska. In such cases, the Deputy Director of Independent Living, Supported Employment Administrator, works with the NCBVI Counselor involved to identify possible resources for the ongoing support, such as developing a PASS (Plan to Achieve Self Sufficiency) with the assistance of WIPA (Work Incentives and Assistance Program). The Deputy Director also works to keep NCBVI Counselors informed and updated on the Supported Employment program, so that eligible clients do, in fact, obtain the services they require. Continued training regarding Supported Employment services is provided to counselors, statewide.

It is difficult to establish meaningful measures for the Title VI, Part B program. SE clients can require extremely high expenditures to accomplish successful supported placements. The funds

are limited and fixed. During FY2012, 42 clients were served in Supported Employment. The goal had been to serve 30 and was achieved.

The NCBVI Title VI, Part B budget has been at \$30,000 per year since the inception of the program. One client may require all or most of the total funds available. In some years, we have several clients identified as SE, with initial work done toward an SE placement. By the end of the year, however, they might all have ended their service plan due to a wide range of complicating factors. Some or all might continue in preliminary stages to supported job placement, again due to complicating factors beyond our control. During 2012, NCBVI spent \$24,033 for SE clients. Average cost per person served was \$572.

We collaborate with the Nebraska Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDD) to identify potential clients, coordinate service plans and share funding for those individuals in the System who are described as blind and visually impaired. For the most part, job coaching to SE clients is provided through contracts with community rehabilitation programs. DDD provides ongoing funding for the job supports.

We train persons with experience in blindness and alternative techniques as short term Job Coaches, to provide some short term job coaching for blind and visually impaired clients of NCBVI's Title I vocational rehabilitation services. NCBVI contracts with third party entities for ongoing job coaching required for SE clients. Five Commission staff positions are currently classified as Vocational Rehabilitation Technicians. In collaboration with the TACE, training is being provided on a District basis to NCBVI counselors and other staff, to build skills and understanding in this area. The Deputy Director in charge of the Title VI, Part B program continues to investigate training opportunities which would be available to our staff.

Overall, NCBVI Management staff works to implement creative strategies to most effectively utilize Title VI, Part B funds to maximize the benefit for those individuals in the program's target population. We will pursue OJT or OJE options for SE clients, when possible.

3. Provide an Assessment of the performance of the VR program on the standards and indicators for FY 2013.

The system of Standards and Indicators (S & I) established by RSA is key benchmark we use to measure the extent to which our program goals were achieved and as a result, the effectiveness of our program. The following are results of our status in meeting those parameters for quality vocational rehabilitation services to blind and visually impaired Nebraskans. Note: some figures below differ from results reported earlier, as the S & I include aggregated 2-year segments of FY 2011/2012 and FY 2012/2013 data with the result being the difference between the two segments.

Standard 1.1: Change in number of Employment Outcome - Difference must be greater than previous year. In 2012 NCBVI had 126 closures with employment outcomes; 2013 data show 105 successful closures, a decrease of 21 closures with employment outcomes. NCBVI did not

pass this standard. We continue to work to increase the number of clients served and those who achieve employment outcomes during the coming year, in addition to emphasizing high quality employment outcomes. This decrease may be better understood in perspective of the strong showing on subsequent standards.

Standard 1.2: Percentage of persons receiving services who become employed must be 68.9% or better. For 2013, the percentage of individual clients achieving employment outcomes was 58.66% (an increase from 56.5% in 2012). This result was better, but still below the standard. We continue to work to assure that a higher percentage of people served do achieve quality employment outcomes. We are examining the factors involved with the standard, to identify trends that might be impacting the outcomes as well as to strengthen our ability to help individuals achieve their employment goals.

Standard 1.3: Percent of Employment Outcomes that were Competitive Employment. The percentage must be 35.4% or better. In 2013, Competitive Employment closures were 98.10% of total Employment closures. NCBVI achieved well above the required level and also exceeded the percentage level from previous years, thus passing the standard. Continuing with this strong focus on competitive outcomes will help to assure that we pass the standard every year, so that the clients we serve will continue to obtain competitive jobs.

1.4: Proportion of Individuals with Competitive Employment Outcomes who had Significant Disabilities was 100% for NCBVI. The level required is 89% with significant disabilities. This standard was passed and exceeded.

1.5 Average Hourly Earnings: Ratio must be .59 or better. In 2013, the average hourly wage for NCBVI clients achieving competitive employment outcomes was \$15.47; the weighted average hourly wage in Nebraska was \$18.89. The ratio of wages earned by NCBVI clients, compared to the average in the state, was .819. NCBVI did pass this standard, well above the required ratio. We will continue to work with clients and employers to assure that the outcomes achieved are high quality job placements, with good wages or salaries.

1.6 Self Support at Closure compared to Application: Percentage must be 30.4% or better. For 2013, of clients achieving Competitive Employment Outcomes, the difference between the percent self-supporting at closure and at application was 33.01%, thus passing the standard. We continue to emphasize the importance of achieving job placements which help individuals to become self-supporting as a result of the newly achieved earnings.

2.1 Minority Ratio - agencies must attain a ratio level of greater than .80 (for states serving more than 100 minority persons). States with smaller minority populations are not held to the standard, but must have a strategy to assure outreach to people with disabilities in minority populations. During 2013, the NCBVI ratio for 2013 was .685. Our state has a low ratio of minorities in the population, so is not held to the standard. We practice statewide procedures to ensure that individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds have equal access to VR services. Our statewide plan for outreach and tracking is specific to each geographic area, targets the minority populations present in each area, and indicates frequency and specific type of contact which will occur for each identified group, organization, or other community resource relevant to the target

populations. Reports are reviewed by a NCBVI Deputy Director every six months. If any follow-up is needed, he takes the steps necessary to assure that the plan is implemented systematically. The process is repeated as necessary.

In 2013, we began co-location with a workforce center to increase our ability to reach and serve eligible individuals from underserved, minority populations. This has proven to be effective and we will continue the arrangement into future years.

Ongoing communication between NCBVI client and NCBVI counselor provides an informal mechanism for evaluation. Counselors are trained in working with clients to be receptive to changes that need to be made in order to better meet the needs of individuals. Caseload reviews between Counselors, Supervisors, and the Deputy Directors in charge of Vocational Rehabilitation and Independent Living provide a vehicle for additional evaluation and input regarding services delivered. Ideas from the discussions often impact the direct service offered, improving the likelihood of achieving goals and priorities, and accomplishing positive outcomes for clients.

NCBVI obtains data on level of satisfaction with services from individuals closed from Vocational Rehabilitation services through telephone interviews. We contract with an outside person who conducts the interviews with clients who have been in status 18 or 20 for one year and randomly thereafter, and three months after closure for clients in statuses 26 and 28.

A satisfaction survey is sent in Large Print format to all Independent Living clients, upon case closure. The surveys go to IL clients under age 55, as well as to clients of the Older Blind Program, over age 55. These are returned to us on a voluntary and anonymous basis, unless the respondent chooses to self-identify. Generally, responses are positive. When there are specific issues mentioned, the Deputy Director follows up to resolve the issues involved. In these cases, it is not unusual for the individual to list his/her own name or to identify the staff person involved. If negative comments are made, we discuss the issue with supervisors and remind counseling staff of issues to which they need to be sensitive. This allows us to make changes if needed to facilitate better services in the future.

NCBVI operates a residential program, the Nebraska Center for the Blind, providing intensive training in the skills of blindness, self-confidence building, philosophical understanding and focus on achieving employment goals. Many clients from across the State come to the Center for this training. Toward the end of training, each individual client writes an article to describe what they have experienced while at the Center. Three months after students leave the Center, they receive a telephone call and are asked to answer questions related to Center training. This occurs whether or not the individual completes the training. 87.8 percent of Center clients successfully achieve their employment goals.

In some cases, a student may leave because of health or other personal reasons. The Deputy Director of Vocational Rehabilitation Services trains objective interviewers who conduct the telephone interviews. Results of each interview are provided to the Center Director who then changes the client name to a code number and forwards the results to Center Staff, the Executive Director of NCBVI, and to the Board of Commissioners.

These interviews have proven to be a very useful tool for assessing a major component of our overall service system. In addition to evaluating our Center program, comments sometimes relate to Field Services which individuals receive in preparation for attending the Center, or which occur during the months following training. The interviewee is assured that comments will be held in confidence. Much of the feedback is very positive regarding the productive impact felt as a result of attending the Nebraska Center for the Blind. The more negative comments have included the need for more one-on-one training or are specific to the student's personal expectations and needs. When trends are noticed or issues of concern are raised, we discuss the issue with the Center Director and find ways to revise our approach so that services continue to be improved.

During FFY 2013, we established a contract for a formal Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. We are working with the National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision (NRTC), Mississippi State University Research Unit. The assessment includes surveys of blind clients who were closed either in status 26 or 28, members of NCBVI staff, and employers who have had experience with NCBVI staff and clients. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with other key informants. In addition, existing data from various sources will be analyzed, such as the RSA-911 data for NCBVI, American Community Survey data, and Bureau of Labor Statistics labor and economic forecasts. Data gathering began in March 2013 and continues through August 2013. Analysis will be conducted primarily during the final quarter of Fiscal year 2013. The report was finalized during the first three months of FFY 2014.

Throughout the rest of FFY 2014, the agency is working to understand and assess the study's results. Implications for practice and policy will be considered. Further steps will be taken during 2015 to move forward on the recommendations of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment.

Over the past few years, we utilized ARRA funds to support needs identified in the statewide comprehensive needs assessment (providing technology and low vision aids and devices to clients, training in access technology for both clients and personnel, a variety of services related to job creation and job placement, including exploration of career options, self-employment, and job accommodations). We will continue to address identified needs in 2015 with Title I funds, as well as with other grants and Social Security Reimbursement dollars as appropriate.

4. Provide a report on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized in FY 2013.

Each fiscal year, a portion of Title I funds are used to develop and implement innovative approaches to expand and improve services. During FY 2013 and 2014, Innovation and Expansion funds were allocated to further our ability to manage data systematically, using internal data management system, eForce. We held training sessions for NCBVI personnel to operate the system: inputting data, tracking case services, client status and activity, running reports, and other case management work. Additional programming efforts are also needed if we continue using eForce.

As with any data management system, facets needing to be fine-tuned become evident after it is used over time. The programming and training costs in recent years were funded with a combination of Title I Innovation & Expansion, and ARRA funds. The effort will continue in 2015 using Title I Innovation and Expansion and Social Security Reimbursement funds. It may include obtaining a system other than eForce, to better meet the needs of the future.

We expect that ramping up such efforts will result in achieving our goals:

1. to increase the number and percentage of clients achieving competitive employment outcomes;
2. to increase the ratio of average hourly earnings of clients who become employed compared to average earnings in the state;
3. to increase the rehabilitation rate for transition aged clients; and to
4. Improve the quality assurance system.

Our work to implement a new data management system will address all four goals, enabling us to analyze the effectiveness of all parts of our system. We can then use the data based results to add value to our overall efforts, achieve established goals, and to identify future needs and challenges.

This screen was last updated on Jun 30 2014 9:53AM by Pearl Van Zandt

## **Attachment 6.3 Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services**

- Describe quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities
- Describe the timing of the transition to extended services

Supported Employment (SE) is a training option available to individuals with the most significant disabilities receiving services from the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCBVI). An individual with the most significant disability is defined in rule (Title 192 Nebraska Administrative Code, Chapter 1) as an individual with a severe visual impairment or combination of visual, physical, or mental impairments which profoundly limits one or more functional capacities (such as mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome; and an individual whose vocational rehabilitation can be expected to require at least four extensive or intensive multiple core services for at least twelve months. Supported Employment requires the provision of a job coach for the initial, intensive training; and requires long-term, intermittent support to insure the individual is successful on the job. This long term support is provided for as long as the person has the job.

NCBVI provides financial support of supported employment services using Title VI Part B funds only if the placement is expected to meet the following conditions:

1. The placement is community-based.
2. The consumer is integrated into the workforce with other non-disabled individuals.
3. The consumer earns minimum wage or better.
4. The need for ongoing support is expected to continue indefinitely.

Each individual with a developmental disability has a case manager service coordinator, employed by the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD). The case manager is responsible for developing an Individual Program Plan for each client. The Plan normally includes provision for ongoing support from DDD when supported employment is involved. In the past, we have generally worked with the client (or supported job coaching) for 90 days after stabilization. We are now moving to using the milestones system. The client will remain in active status for about a year after employment. The arrangements will be on a case-by-case basis and will mirror the approach currently in place between the general agency (VR) and DDD.

NCBVI collaborated with the Department of Education, Special Education and Vocational Rehabilitation in the development of policies and procedures more clearly delineating the responsibilities of the different agencies and institutions involved and the scope and nature of services available to younger persons with disabilities in transition from school. The

Collaborative Agreement between NCBVI, Department of Education/Special Populations, and the Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired, applies to persons who are likely to require supported employment in the future, as well as those students without this need.

Financial support by NCBVI for supported employment services is limited to 18 months unless there are compelling reasons to believe that extending NCBVI support will result in a more successful placement. For example, supported employment services may be provided by NCBVI for longer than 18 months in those cases involving consumers between the ages of 18 and 22. Developmental Disabilities (DDD) does not pick up the cost of supported employment services until individuals have reached the age of 22. In such cases, NCBVI will extend services for longer than 18 months until the age of 22 is reached. In those cases in which the consumer has a developmental disability, long-term financial support after NCBVI's support is discontinued is typically provided by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Service-Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD).

A small number of blind and visually impaired persons with non-developmental complications, primarily those with traumatic brain injuries or mental health issues occurring after age 21, might benefit from supported employment services. Generally, however, funding for services extending beyond eighteen (18) months to such persons is not available in Nebraska. In such cases, the Deputy Director of Independent Living, Supported Employment Administrator, works with the NCBVI Counselor involved to identify possible resources for the ongoing support, such as developing a PASS (Plan to Achieve Self Sufficiency). The Deputy Director also works to keep NCBVI Counselors informed and updated on the Supported Employment program, so that eligible clients do, in fact, obtain the services they require. Continued training regarding Supported Employment services is provided to counselors, statewide.

NCBVI has service contracts with a number of providers in the Nebraska Developmental Disabilities system and with private providers of job coaching and related services. Contracts are developed on behalf of individuals with the most significant disabilities with both private and public providers who are actively seeking suitable work placements for them in integrated settings. The total amount of Title VI, Part B funds that we project to expend in FY 2015 is \$30,000. We expect to provide SE services to approximately 30 clients in FY 2015.

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# **System Information**

System information

The following information is captured by the MIS.

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