



VR Services Portion of the 2016-20 Unified State Plan

Two-year Modifications and Updates

a) Input of State Rehabilitation Council

The Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC) is pleased to be a strategic partner with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). The FRC promotes high standards and expectations for every area of service delivery by recommending best practices in policies using data driven recommendations and by sharing each councilmember's unique perspective from the constituency they represent.

The FRC applauds VR's effort to reduce the wait list under Order of Selection for individuals with the most significant (Category 1) and significant disabilities (Category 2). Although there is a current small wait list for individuals with disabilities (Category 3), we note that some of these individuals will be served through job retention if they are working and need services to maintain their employment. Although the FRC will continue to monitor the flow of individuals into the VR program as well as those exiting with successful employment and career outcomes, we congratulate VR for reducing wait times of customers as well as initiating employment related information and referral resources for those on the wait list.

We appreciate VR's enthusiasm to commit resources to web based communication platforms so that the VR Director's report and other FRC presentations can be offered to the public throughout the state rather than those who can only attend the FRC quarterly meetings in person. Advances in meeting technology are opening up a rich resource for the sharing of information and communication. VR has embraced this inclusive model.

State Rehabilitation Council Recommendations

The FRC offers the following robust recommendations to enhance service delivery and career achievement by individuals with disabilities.

Recommendation 1. Transition

- Promote early contact and the provision of Information and Referral (I&R) guidance for transition students.
- Expand and offer additional opportunities for pre-vocational and/or technical training for students.
- Increase communication and collaboration by VR representatives with school districts and increase participation in the education of options available to students.
- Continue to emphasize peer mentoring in Florida.
- Increase the capacity of transition service providers while encouraging self-employment and entrepreneurial options.

Agency Response:

VR has recently lowered the age limit for Transition services to 14 years of age, and will include this age group in future quarterly updates to FRC. VR has many pilot projects and initiatives anticipated to create additional training and employment opportunities for students and youth, summarized below.

- There are 25 school districts currently participating in the TPCA. There are currently 39 Employment Specialists working with 300 however, this number will increase by the end of the year. We are currently revising the contract to allow for the expansion of Pre-ETS to more students with disabilities served by school districts. VR recently provided training and updated resources for school districts and VR staff.
- VR has entered into an Intensive Technical Assistance Plan (ITAP) with the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC) for assistance in formalizing VR Youth Peer Mentoring

processes. The ITAP will support expansion from the three county pilot to a statewide program. Recent provider recruitment efforts have identified over 50 additional providers interested in providing Youth Peer Mentoring. VR is currently offering training to staff and providers.

- VR has developed the Student Transition Activities Record (STAR) program to track and coordinate Pre-ETS service referrals. Currently, 58 of 74 districts are using the STAR program to refer students for services. VR is working with Project 10 and BEES to develop ways to engage the remaining districts.
- VR has collaborated with the Florida DD Council to increase the number of Project SEARCH sites across Florida. Ten new sites were added for the 2017-18 school year, and 5 more sites are anticipated to be in place by August 2018.
- VR has made great effort to increase the number of providers for Discovery, Customized Employment, and CBTAC by offering more frequent training opportunities. VR will continue provide frequent training to increase the number of providers certified to offer these services.

Recommendation 2. Job Placement Strategies

- Analyze and identify any trends in services provided under the rehabilitation engineering service category by service type and VR area.
- Continue strengthening efforts with business leaders to improve employment opportunities and meaningful careers.
- Develop a deeper understanding of customer strengths and develop tools to communicate succinctly to potential employers.
- FRC fully supports the VR initiative to obtain Worker's Compensation coverage to mirror current coverage of CareerSource Florida customers. This will remove a substantial barrier to employment and allow for increased OJT opportunities for VR and DBS customers.
- FRC applauds VR efforts to increase capacity of the number of providers using the Discovery Model. Self-employment (CBTAC) initiatives should continue to be emphasized.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Abilities Work Help Desk.
- Further build capacity for job customization and Innovation and Expansion projects to include unserved and underserved populations.

Agency Response:

- VR has provided rehab technology service data to FRC and plan to provide regular updates.
- VR Business Relations is participating with WIOA partners in the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration's Integrated Business Services Cohort to improve integration of business services across workforce, education, and economic development.
- Business Relations has created opportunities for summer worksite training with business partners in the Firefighting and Construction Industries by developing a model that includes businesses, local schools, STAR and VR students, and providers. A white paper and reporting on outcomes will occur at the completion of the summer 2018 Construction program, and will be shared with FRC once released.
- VR has made great effort to increase the number of providers for Discovery, Customized Employment, and CBTAC (self-employment) by offering more frequent training opportunities. VR will continue provide frequent training to increase the number of providers certified to offer these services.
- In the past year, VR has developed contracts for 5 Innovation and Expansion projects, and will keep FRC informed on their status. The upcoming CSNA will help VR further identify unserved and underserved populations.

Recommendation 3. Mediation and Conflict Resolution

- Promote Rights education for customers and VR staff as a core principle. Collaborative discussions enhance informed choices.

Agency Response:

- VR agrees with FRC in the importance of rights education and includes it in training required of all VR staff. VR is currently developing a new ethics course specific to VR and its customers. In addition, VR currently requires staff to complete training on confidentiality procedures, the Americans with Disabilities Act, Disability Etiquette, and Auxiliary Aids. VR has redesigned its customer orientation process, VR Works!, to ensure focus on customer rights and responsibilities within the rehab process.

Recommendation 4. Public Awareness of VR

- Develop a media campaign to share the history of VR, Florida specific services, successes and accomplishments.
- Provide an accessible online application system.
- Engage businesses as mandated partners.

Agency Response:

- VR would appreciate hearing FRC's ideas and suggestions for a marketing plan, but recommends waiting until after the CSNA is completed to discuss this, as the CSNA may influence targeted marketing segments.
- VR agrees with the recommendation of an accessible, online application, but at this time, IT resources are not available for this project.
- While VR cannot mandate businesses to be partners, the VR Business Relations Program places great priority on establishing partnerships with businesses to create new and increased job opportunities for VR customers.

Recommendation 5. Counselor Recruitment, Retention

- Actively promote advocacy curriculum that's been developed.
- Identify new ways to recruit employees while implementing long-term retention strategies.
- Continue to promote supervisor succession training.

Agency Response:

- VR is in agreement with all aspects of the Counselor Recruitment and Retention recommendation and has every intention to continue these activities.

Public Forum Summary

The FRC has spearheaded a number of technological improvements to the public forums, which are held quarterly in conjunction with the FRC meetings around the state and whenever substantive policy changes may require public input. There were 4 public forums held during State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2016-17. General areas of comment have included:

- Transportation concerns
- Customer orientation information
- Customer expectations
- Transition

- Agency hiring persons with disabilities
- Outreach to individuals who speak Spanish or Creole
- Communication with VR staff
- Veterans applying for VR services
- Small business development
- Certified Business Technical Assistance Consultants (CBTACs)
- Vendor referrals

We continue to support public access via telephone and have also offered web based communication platforms for meeting access. In addition to the aforementioned platforms, we continue to encourage in-person attendance in varying locations throughout the state.

Customer Satisfaction Survey

The FRC is required to review and analyze the effectiveness of and consumer satisfaction with VR agency functions, rehabilitation services and employment outcomes achieved by eligible individuals including the availability of health and other employment benefits. The FRC and VR contract with Market Decisions to obtain this information. The wealth of data is being used effectively by the FRC and VR to focus on specific areas of excellence for recognition as well as specific opportunities for improvement. Annual highlights from the SFY 2016-17 survey results are below.

VR customers satisfied with Florida’s VR program.....	82%
VR customers satisfied with the services provided by VR.....	80%
VR customers satisfied with their involvement in their VR experience.....	83%
VR customers who say VR staff treated them with dignity and respect.....	95%
VR customers satisfied with their choice of vocational goal.....	82%
VR customers who say VR staff were helpful in achieving their job goal.....	88%
VR customers who say the VR services they received helped them become more independent.....	84%
VR customers who say the VR services they received helped them become more financially independent.....	80%
VR customers satisfied with what they’re doing at their current job.....	76%
VR customers who would tell their friends with disabilities to go to VR....	90%

b) Request for Waiver of Statewideness

Overview

The Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) provides services throughout the state, including Transition Youth services that expand and improve Vocational Rehabilitation options for eligible customers. VR has entered into Third Party Cooperative Arrangements (TPCA) with some local school districts, but services are not currently available in all areas of the state. TPCA and other VR Transition Youth services align with the Pre-Employment Transition Services required under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The State Plan cannot assure that the expanded services provided through the TPCAs will be available in all political subdivisions (school districts) of the state. A Waiver of Statewideness is requested in this State Plan.

Types of Services Provided

School and Community-Based Transition Services for Students with Disabilities

On an annual basis, VR has offered new TPCAs to all school districts in the state of Florida. Although VR approaches and offers TPCA to all districts, the partnership is dependent on the individual district's decision to participate. VR currently has TPCAs with 25 school districts and these arrangements expire in June 2018. VR is in the process of revising the contractual agreement it offers to school districts, but new contracts have not been developed yet. Once developed, if the contract changes the way VR delivers Transition services, the State Plan will be amended as needed. The one-year arrangement will provide community-based work experiences to eligible students who have Supported Employment (SE) service needs identified in their Individual Educational Plan and Individualized Plan for Employment. This model reimburses school districts for services provided to VR-eligible students with the most significant disabilities and facilitates a seamless transition into postsecondary employment with supports.

On-the-Job Training (OJT), through VR providers, delivers needed community-based work experiences to VR-eligible students who do not require the intense supports provided through the TPCA. OJT services are available statewide.

Written Assurances

VR assures the Rehabilitation Services Administration that it has TPCAs with certain school districts and will provide written assurances as required. Specifically, each arrangement is formalized through the contract procurement process and contains the following:

1. The local school district will certify to VR that funds used for match funds are non-federal and are not used for match in any other federally- or state-assisted project or program.
2. VR approval will be obtained for all TPCA services.
3. All local school districts with TPCAs will abide by the state's Order of Selection policy.
4. TPCA services are services not typically provided by local school districts, and TPCA services are only available to persons applying for, or already receiving VR services.
5. All other state plan requirements, including those found in the Unified State Plan required under WIOA, will apply to all services provided under the scope of the

arrangement.

6. Program expenditures and employees providing services under the cooperative arrangement are under the administrative supervision of VR.

Third Party Cooperative Arrangement

During state fiscal year 2017-18, VR has arrangements with the following school districts:

1. Bay
2. Bradford
3. Calhoun
4. Citrus
5. Columbia
6. Flagler
7. Franklin
8. Gadsden
9. Gulf
10. Hendry
11. Indian River
12. Jefferson
13. Leon
14. Liberty
15. Manatee
16. Nassau
17. Pinellas
18. Polk
19. Putnam
20. Seminole
21. South Tech Charter
22. St. Johns
23. Taylor
24. Volusia
25. Wakulla

The current arrangements will expire on June 30, 2018. VR is in the process of revising the contractual agreement it offers to school districts, but new contracts have not been developed yet. Once developed, if the contract changes the way VR delivers Transition services, the State Plan will be amended as needed.

c) Cooperation with Agencies Not Under the Workforce System

The Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) maintains cooperative agreements with agencies and other entities not carrying out activities under the Workforce Investment System. The state of Florida no longer participates in the National Rural Development Program. A description of current VR partners and agreements is below.

The Able Trust

The Able Trust, also known as the Florida Endowment Foundation for Vocational Rehabilitation, is a 501(c)(3) public-private partnership foundation established by the Florida Legislature in 1990. Its mission is to be a leader in providing Floridians with disabilities opportunities for successful employment. The Able Trust assists community organizations throughout the state to help thousands of Floridians with disabilities enter the workforce. They accomplish this by administering grants, as well as supporting educational and public awareness programs. The Able Trust youth programs provide career development and transition to many students with disabilities annually, helping to reduce the dropout rate and prepare young adults for life beyond high school. The Able Trust submits its budget, annual report, audit, and any changes to the Articles of Incorporation or by-laws to the Vocational Rehabilitation director annually for review and VR provides necessary certification, as required.

Agency for Persons with Disabilities

The cooperative agreement between the Agency for Persons with Disabilities and VR contains a detailed and specific focus on collaborative planning and funding of Supported Employment services. Specifically, the agreement addresses the transition of secondary students to the community, to provide a seamless transition of services. The cooperative agreement includes local strategies and joint obligations for both agencies.

Both agencies have a common goal of assisting eligible persons to achieve greater independence through employment. The specific goal of this agreement is to coordinate support and services throughout the state, maintaining maximum customer satisfaction and informed choice. This agreement is currently being updated to ensure compliance with the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) regulations.

Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program, Florida Department of Health

VR and the Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program have agreed to expand referrals between the two agencies in order to improve employment outcomes for persons with a traumatic brain or spinal cord injury. The effort will include joint statewide training for those involved in the project and identification of local referral liaisons.

Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology, Inc.

VR and the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology, Inc. agree to share specific information about their customers to optimize service delivery. Both agree to specific procedures that facilitate the delivery of services to their respective and mutual customers. Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology offers an Alternative Financing Program for the purchase of assistive technology to all residents of Florida who have disabilities.

Florida Independent Living Council, Inc.

VR coordinates with Florida Independent Living Council, Inc. (FILC), and the Centers for Independent Living throughout the state. Through memoranda of agreement with each of the 16 Centers, VR provides funding, outlines roles and responsibilities, and ensures cooperative

planning. VR and the Division of Blind Services (FDBS) are both partners in the agreement with FILC, and both provide funds for council activities outlined in the agreement.

Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind

VR and the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind agree to cooperate in serving students and customers who are deaf or hard of hearing, and in establishing transition meetings. Activities are implemented to increase public awareness of programs serving these customers and to improve transition between the school and local counselors.

Florida Small Business Development Center Network

Coordination with this network is carried out at the local level on a case-by-case basis. VR customers who are seeking self-employment can use a Business Planning Team. A representative from the Small Business Development Center Network can serve on such teams to help VR customers assess their potential for self-employment and analyze the various issues that need to be taken into account.

Institutions of Higher Education

VR has Memoranda of Understanding with the Presidents of Florida's public universities and the Florida College System. Both Memoranda outline the purposes, roles and responsibilities of VR and the educational institutions, as well as financial and programmatic responsibilities. The Memoranda of Understanding provides information regarding financial assistance, sharing of assessment findings, accommodations, rehabilitation technology services, academic advisement, counseling, confidentiality, and other topics.

The Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe

The Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe is located in southern Georgia and is the recipient of the Federal Section 121 Grant under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended. There is not a 121 program in Florida. However, VR and the Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe have a Memorandum of Understanding to coordinate services for eligible Native Americans with disabilities residing on or near the Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe Tama Reservation within a 150-mile radius. The agreement outlines the responsibilities of both groups, including services for joint customers and technical assistance.

Mental Health Program, Florida Department of Children and Families

VR coordinates with the state mental health authority to assist customers who have mental illnesses. One of these is participation on the Florida Assertive Community Treatment Team, a community-based, outreach-oriented method of delivering services to individuals with mental illnesses coordinated by the Mental Health Program. VR provides staff liaisons with many of these teams to help serve this group of customers in a comprehensive manner. In addition, VR is an active member of the State Mental Health Planning Council of Florida. The cooperative agreement promotes coordination so that appropriate services can be delivered to maximize customer choice and satisfaction. This agreement is currently being updated to ensure compliance with new WIOA regulations.

Division of Blind Services (FDBS), Florida Department of Education

Both VR and FDBS serve individuals with visual impairments. This agreement specifies the roles and responsibilities of each division, including those for individuals with one-eye pathology, bilateral visual impairment, multiple disabilities, and for individuals who are deaf-blind.

Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, Florida Department of Education; Division of Blind Services; Florida Department of Health; Department of Economic Opportunity
The Florida Interagency Agreement for the Transfer of Assistive Technology, signed in 2006, establishes a framework for an efficient transition of technology as individuals with disabilities move through the continuum from educational services to employment. Specifically, the agreement ensures children and youth with disabilities and their families, educators, and employers are informed about the continued use and transfer of assistive technology devices. These devices may remain with the person as he or she moves from home to school and to post-school activities in order to assist in meeting transition needs. The agreement outlines the conditions for coordination, the authority for transfer of property by local education agencies, financial responsibilities, and other topics.

Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, Employment Standards Administration
Both agencies agree to further the common goal of providing VR equal employment opportunities and protecting against discrimination. VR will provide expertise on matters relating to disability issues and employment, cross-referral of individuals with disabilities, and will participate in interagency training programs, staff meetings, and conferences. Both agencies agree to a coordinated public outreach effort.

Prison Rehabilitative Industries and Diversified Enterprises, Inc. (PRIDE)
VR uses the services and manufactured items produced in correctional work programs through PRIDE. PRIDE is a Florida corporation that provides these goods and services as a state-use contracting program. A similar product or service of comparable price and quality, found necessary for use by a state agency, may not be purchased from a source other than PRIDE. In addition, contracts between VR and any private vendor require all items be purchased through PRIDE. This is consistent with Section 946.515, Florida Statutes.

Rehabilitation Foundation of Northwest Florida
The purpose of this agreement is to maximize funding of vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with physical disabilities residing in northwest Florida. The Foundation contributes \$25,000 to VR toward meeting its non-federal funding requirements. In turn, VR will allocate an additional \$92,250 in federal funds to match the Foundation's contribution for vocational rehabilitation services in the following northwest Florida counties: Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, and Walton.

The intent of these cooperative efforts is to increase the services leading to quality competitive employment outcomes that are responsive to the strengths, resources, interests, and capabilities of individuals with disabilities residing in northwest Florida. VR agrees to provide quarterly reports of expenditures to the Foundation's Trustees. Each report will include the number of individuals served and a description of services provided under the terms of the agreement.

Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Act
One of VR's ongoing objectives for the Ticket to Work Program is to increase the number of partnerships with Employment Networks (Employment and Rehabilitation Service Providers). VR hopes to expand the resources available to customers to meet the current and future levels of demand. It is also the goal of VR to ensure that customers have a choice in service providers available within their communities. VR has also implemented an Employment Network Referral Partnership that creates more opportunity to develop partnerships with Employment Networks. The partnership features a transitional approach by assisting Social

Security Administration customers in their efforts to achieve self-sufficiency through core VR services followed by ongoing support services from employment networks. VR will continue to monitor the Agreement's effectiveness in meeting the previously stated goal.

United States Department of Veterans Affairs

The need to serve Florida veterans who have disabilities led to the development of an agreement between the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and VR. The agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities of VR and the Department of Veterans Affairs. It clarifies which agency can provide specific services. It also includes information regarding shared planning, joint activities, and coordination.

d) Coordination with Education Officials

The Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding in January 2016 to coordinate transition services with state education officials based on new procedures required for the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. This was an interim measure while the state awaited the publishing of final regulations before updating the State Interagency Agreement to coordinate transition services for students with disabilities. It is a state-level agreement, including agencies charged with providing transition services to students leaving high school and going to postsecondary education, training and/or employment. The educational agencies listed below agree to meet regularly to share information, ideas, and current initiatives, collaborate on training and special projects, cooperate in planning and budgeting, and generally support any areas of work that are mutually beneficial. These agencies include:

- Florida Department of Education:
 - Division of Public Schools (DPS)
 - Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS)
 - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)
 - Division of Blind Services (DBS)

This formal interagency agreement serves as a transition services model for improved collaboration, communication, coordination, and cooperation among local education agencies and local offices of VR and DBS.

VR has dedicated five program staff to administer the VR Transition Youth program. An administrator serves as the liaison for the 67 school districts and a Deaf and Hard of Hearing administrator provides additional liaison support for the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind.

Administrators coordinate and plan for effective transition services delivery with VR staff and external stakeholders statewide. The VR Transition Youth program is responsible for training internal employees and making presentations about VR transition services at conferences statewide in an effort to increase understanding and awareness of the agency's role in assisting eligible students with disabilities.

Additionally, the VR Transition Youth program provides transition-related technical assistance to the Florida Rehabilitation Council. An administrator serves as a representative on the State Secondary Transition Interagency Committee and works closely with the regional representatives of Project 10: the Transition Education Network. Project 10 is funded through a grant from BEESS to the University of South Florida, St. Petersburg. Project 10 helps Florida school districts and stakeholders increase their ability to provide secondary transition services to students with disabilities in order to improve their academic success and postsecondary outcomes. Project 10 helps implement secondary transition services, interagency collaboration, transition legislation and policy, and student development and outcomes. VR counselors serving transition students participate in each area's local interagency councils. The interagency councils are a collaborative effort between VR and Department of Education partners, public high schools, adult service agencies, workforce programs, parents, students, advocates, and employers working together

to meet the transition needs of students with disabilities.

The VR Director or designee serves on the State Advisory Committee (SAC) for the Education of Exceptional Students. This committee is administered by BEES. The SAC includes parents of children with disabilities, individuals with disabilities, educators and administrators from secondary and postsecondary institutions as well as foster care and juvenile justice representatives. The SAC also includes representatives of various state agencies that provide transition and other services to children, youth and young adults with disabilities. The committee advises the state education agency on what children with disabilities need and helps them develop corrective action plans to address findings in related federal monitoring reports. The committee also helps the state education agency develop evaluations and policies, implement policies, and report data. The committee may comment publicly on rules and regulations proposed by the state relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities.

The VR Transition Youth program provides individualized services to help eligible students with disabilities with a seamless transition from high school to an identified career path. Under WIOA, every student with a disability has the opportunity to participate in Pre-Employment Transition Services including sponsored career exploration, work readiness training, and work experiences. The focus is to develop work skills, practice social skills, and acquire a network of community supports while the student is still in high school.

VR services delivered under WIOA do not remove, reduce, or change the school district's responsibility to deliver a *free and appropriate public education* (FAPE) for students served under the auspices of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. VR services supplement, but do not supplant services delivered through the school districts.

The VR Transition Youth program collaborates with education officials and partners to offer youth with the most significant disabilities opportunities to gain work experiences that help them prepare for successful employment. Collaborations such as Third Party Cooperative Arrangements (TPCA), High School High Tech, Project SEARCH, and Inclusive Postsecondary Education (IPSE) programs engage youth in experiences that blend academics with career and technical education. They also provide hands-on career exploration and preparation activities where learned skills, attitudes, and behaviors can be applied. These evidence-based applications of learning, which includes internships and community based work experiences, often lead to successful employment. For some students, these programs include earning postsecondary credentials which allow them to explore professional jobs that may lead to higher-wage careers. VR involvement in these collaborations provides funding for participants to receive needed services and other supports. This shared support helps partner programs serve more youth. VR partnerships deliver career development and employment options through direct services to youth who would not otherwise have access to these opportunities.

VR encourages early referral and application for transition students during high school so that they may receive Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and better coordinate with local education agencies. Pre-ETS includes Career Exploration and Counseling, Work Readiness Training, Work Experiences, Postsecondary Educational Counseling, and Self-Advocacy Training, including Peer Mentoring. Students with disabilities may receive Pre-ETS through the VR STAR program without the need to apply or to be determined eligible. Students who require additional VR services or

supports may still obtain Pre-ETS while applying to VR. VR brochures describe how students and families can access Pre-ETS or other VR services beginning at age 14 and beyond. Students with disabilities who are at high risk for dropping out of school may be referred at any age. This early referral process allows the counselor to develop a rapport with the transition student and family, explore vocational options and comparable benefits, and begin necessary guidance and counseling.

Provisions for Development and Approval of Individualized Plans for Employment for Students with Disabilities

The Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), Supported Employment IPE, Individual Support Plan, and/ or Care Coordination Plans are completed or updated as early as possible prior to graduation or leaving school to allow a seamless transition to a student’s desired postsecondary outcome.

VR counselors, with assistance from VR technicians, serve as representatives to work with all public high schools statewide and any private high school requesting assistance. They provide outreach and vocational rehabilitation services orientation to students, school officials, parents, and others involved in transition services. Only the counselor may determine a student’s eligibility for VR services, develop an approved IPE, and sponsor the delivery of necessary transition services to help the student with planning, preparing for, and achieving successful employment.

Information on Formal Interagency Agreements with Respect To:

Employment First

As an employment leader, VR strongly encourages partner agencies, organizations, and employers to promote competitive integrated employment in the community as the first and preferred option for individuals with disabilities. People with disabilities who are employed experience enhanced independence and quality of life. They are also contributing to the rich diversity of the workforce so the entire community benefits. The Employment First Committee submits a report to the Governor annually, describing the coordination of participating agencies to advance the Employment First philosophy and way of work throughout Florida.

Technical Assistance and Consultation

Local education agencies are strongly encouraged to have written agreements with VR and DBS, including other agencies that offer supports or services during student transition. The agreements addresses consultation, coordination, and providing technical assistance to each other, as well as to students and their families/guardians/surrogates to plan for the transition from high school to postsecondary activities and becoming part of the adult community.

Transition Planning by VR and Educational Agency Representatives for Development and Completion of the Individual Education Plan

Local education agencies work collaboratively with VR, FDBS, APD, Children’s Medical Services, and Mental Health Services in the Transition Individual Educational Plan process. Local education agencies that are considering transition services during the Individual Educational Plan meeting will invite representatives from any other agency who may be responsible for providing or paying for transition services, after obtaining permission from the parent, guardian, or age-of-majority student. If the agency representative does not attend the meeting, the school will do its best to get someone else to come. If the agency representative will not

attend the meeting, the school will then look for alternative ways to provide for the student's transition needs. The local education agency must reconvene the Transition Individual Educational Plan team to identify alternative strategies for providing a student's transition needs if an agency fails to do so.

In order to plan effective transition services for students with disabilities, it is essential that all invited partner agencies encourage and support participation in the Transition Individual Educational Plan (IEP) process.

VR invests 35-40 percent of its statewide staffing resources in transition services to serve students with disabilities in Florida's 67 school districts and the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind. Additional improvements to the rehabilitation information management and billing systems are being implemented to improve the collection and analysis of transition student data. Several of these additional data enhancements were implemented to simultaneously meet WIOA requirements. The enhancements will enable VR to conduct differential analysis to better evaluate agency performance and identify how to best improve service delivery and outcomes for students with disabilities.

Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities for each partner agency as required by federal and state regulations are as follows:

1. Local education agencies provide a *Free and Appropriate Public Education* for students with disabilities, including preparation for transition from school to work or other postsecondary activities.
2. VR and DBS assist with student transition from secondary school to work through postsecondary training, education, or direct placement services necessary to achieve a successful employment outcome.
3. The Agency for Persons with Disabilities tries to "reduce the use of sheltered workshops and other noncompetitive employment day activities and promote opportunities for gainful employment for persons with developmental disabilities who choose to seek such employment," (Chapter 393, Florida Statutes). Additionally, "to promote independence and productivity, the agency shall provide support and services, within available resources, to assist customers enrolled in Medicaid waivers who choose to pursue gainful employment." If an individual is eligible for APD waiver services and employment is a needed service, then this service must be provided to meet standards as outlined in Florida rule.
4. Children's Medical Services ensures a smooth and successful transition process to adult healthcare services and providers for youth and young adults with special healthcare needs.
5. Mental Health Services, in partnership with families and the community, provides a system of care that enables children and adults with mental health or emotional disabilities to live successfully in the community, become self-sufficient or to attain self-sufficiency at adulthood, and realize their full potential. Mental health support and services enable adults and transitioning students to participate in community activities such as employment and other valued community roles.

Specific Purpose

Specific intent of the interagency agreement is to:

1. Provide guidance to the local education agencies, VR, FDBS, APD, Children's Medical Services, and Mental Health Services' front-line employees, when serving students transitioning from school to work or postsecondary activities.
2. Provide information to parents/students so they know what they can expect from the local education agencies, VR, FDBS, APD, Children's Medical Services, and Mental Health Services during the transition process.
3. Provide parameters to the local education agencies, VR, FDBS, APD, Children's Medical Services, and Mental Health Services' administrators/managers/nursing supervisors when developing, negotiating, and implementing local cooperative agreements.
4. Encourage and support the participation of all agency personnel in the IEP process at the local level through the development of guidelines, policies, and/or procedures.

Financial Responsibilities

The Department of Education, VR, FDBS, APD, Children's Medical Services, and Mental Health Services are committed to meeting financial responsibilities as required by law. Agency/Division heads for the organizations will periodically identify areas for improved programmatic and financial efficiencies and develop strategies to meet financial responsibilities, including joint appropriations requests from the state legislature and negotiations with federal agencies. Each party is financially responsible for the services it provides under its own laws and rules.

Conditions and Terms of Reimbursement

If a non-education agency fails to provide or pay for services for which they are responsible, and which are also considered special education and related services, the local education agency (or state agency responsible for developing the student's IEP) shall provide or pay for these services to the student in a timely manner. The local education agency or state agency may then claim reimbursement for the services from the non-education agency that was responsible for the provision of the services and failed to provide or pay for these services, and that agency shall reimburse the local education agency or state agency in accordance with the terms of this agreement.

Procedures for Outreach to and Identification of Students with Disabilities who need Transition Services

Outreach and Identification of Students

Local education agencies are strongly encouraged to enter into written agreements with VR, FDBS, APD, Children's Medical Services, and Mental Health Services employees, on the outreach methods used to inform students with disabilities who may need, and could benefit from these agencies.

Brochures, flyers, website resources, presentations, transition fairs, or informational letters are

available to the local education agency, students, and their parents or guardians, to explain the role that VR and other agencies play in the transition process, and the agencies' referral/application policies and procedures.

VR has executed 25 Third Party Cooperative Arrangements (TPCA) for SFY 2017-18. The goal of these arrangements is to create new or expand existing transition services with a vocational rehabilitation focus. The costs are shared between the agencies. In order for the cooperating agency to receive matching vocational rehabilitation dollars, it must provide a cash match of non-federal funds. Recipients of the TPCA began providing job coaching to eligible students with a Supported Employment IPE in SFY 2011. In SFY 2014, TPCA were redesigned to serve only those students with the most significant disabilities who require Supported Employment services to become employed.

The current arrangements will expire on June 30, 2018. VR is in the process of revising the contractual agreement it offers to school districts, but new contracts have not been developed yet. Once developed, if the contract changes the way VR delivers Transition services, the State Plan will be amended accordingly.

e) Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations

The Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) has a variety of relationships and agreements with private non-profit organizations. These include fee based services purchased through registered vendors, contracts, and other cooperative, non-financial agreements.

All new vendors/providers, whether through a contractual or vendor relationship, must go through a registration and approval process. VR reviews the qualifications of vendors providing services to its customers in order to ensure the quality of these services, as well as the safety of the public. In addition to approving and registering vendor/provider services, VR conducts employment verifications on customer placements facilitated by vendors /contract providers.

VR policy ensures that customers have a choice of qualified service providers to select from. Customers are also informed if the provider has employees experienced in working with special disability populations, foreign languages, and other communication skills. Customers have a choice of necessary services, service providers, and settings in which to receive the services included in the written Individualized Plan for Employment.

Currently, VR has approximately 263 registered Employment Services Providers that deliver employment, supported employment, OJT, Pre-ETS, and other related services on a fee-for-service basis. Additionally, VR maintains the following contracts and/or agreements:

- 16 agreements with the Centers for Independent Living located throughout the state to provide independent living services
- 25 Third Party Cooperative Arrangements with local school districts
- Additional contracts with agencies for services such as delegable VR services, outreach for migrant and seasonal farm workers, interpreting services, rehabilitation engineering, and a project involving the use of virtual reality simulators for customers with severe disabilities.

VR also has 5 contracts for Innovation and Expansion pilot projects to benefit and complement WIOA- related initiatives. These contracts are for various innovative opportunities that could improve employment services to and successful closures for individuals with “unique abilities,” defined in Florida legislation as including individuals who have intellectual disabilities or Autism Spectrum Disorders.

VR also has collaborative, non-contractual arrangements and agreements with non-profit organizations that provide referrals, other vocational rehabilitation services, and comparable benefits. Through coordinating with Centers for Independent Living, individuals with disabilities receive life skills training, employability skills training, and support such as transportation, clothing, and emergency funds.

Relationships with organizations that serve customers with hearing impairments provide opportunities for support groups, sign language classes, and placement assistance.

Throughout the state, many VR employees serve as liaisons with specific groups and organizations. Individuals are referred to those groups if it is determined that they can benefit from their services. Services are coordinated with numerous non-profit hospitals and clinics for referrals and medical assistance. Foundations and associations such as the Easter Seals Society, Muscular Dystrophy Association, National Kidney Foundation, Brain Injury Association of Florida, Epilepsy Foundation, Family Network on Disability of Florida, and others provide individual and family support groups and disability education to mutual customers.

VR intends to continue with the above referenced contractual agreements, cooperative arrangements, and liaison relationships through FFY 2020.

f) Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services

The Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) has cooperative agreements with the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), Department of Children and Families Mental Health and Substance Abuse Program and the Department of Education.

VR is currently in the process of developing and implementing an updated Memorandum of Agreement with APD and the Agency for Healthcare Administration (AHCA) the state agency responsible for administering the State Medicaid Plan.

VR continues to be an active partner with other state agencies and organizations in implementing Employment First, a national effort to assure individuals with disabilities are offered employment as the first and preferred option in planning their lives. Employment First is consistent with VR's belief that individuals with disabilities, even the most significant disabilities, can achieve meaningful employment when provided with appropriate supports.

Executive Order 13-284 (Reaffirming Commitment to Employment for Floridians with Disabilities) was signed by the Governor of Florida in October 2013. The order mandates that an Interagency Cooperative Agreement be developed and requires nine agencies/organizations to participate in the agreement. This order has now been placed in Florida's statute.

- The Department of Education-Division of Blind Services
- The Department of Education-Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- The Department of Education-Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
- The Agency for Persons with Disabilities
- The Department of Children and Families-Mental Health and Substance Abuse
- The Department of Economic Opportunity
- CareerSource Florida
- The Florida Developmental Disabilities Council
- RESPECT of Florida

Six broad-based objectives govern the Employment First Interagency Agreement. VR works closely with the partners to continue to make progress on these objectives.

1. Continue to develop and enhance Supported Employment for persons with the most significant disabilities. The state system for the provision of Supported Employment reflects: (a) mutually agreeable definitions of the services to be provided; (b) administrative responsibility of the intensive component of Supported Employment services to eligible individuals as the primary responsibility of VR for individuals with the most significant disabilities; and (c) administrative responsibility of the extended services component as the primary responsibility of other stakeholders, including APD and the Department of Children and Families, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Program.
2. Continue to improve the statewide management of Supported Employment programs by avoiding duplication of effort and funding while ensuring accountability. This process will provide a coordinated system of program development for SE services.
3. Maximize the quality of service delivery ensuring a comprehensive, continuous, efficient, and effective referral process, individual program planning, coordination of intensive vocational services with extended services, information collection and dissemination, confidentiality, and

technical assistance.

4. Identify issues, policies, and practices that present systemic barriers to effective participation of individuals with the most significant disabilities, and develop appropriate resolutions to remove such barriers.
5. Continue to implement an interagency planning process for budget coordination, which defines and projects the number of people in need of intensive and extended services for each fiscal year and facilitates program and fiscal planning.
6. Support the belief that all individuals with disabilities can work if provided appropriate services and supports and that a team approach is needed to facilitate quality and appropriate services.

Supported Employment Services

VR is responsible for the first phase of Supported Employment services. VR provides intensive vocational services until the individual and employer are satisfied with the Supported Employment placement, and then the individual transitions to a plan for extended services. Supported Employment services consist of intensive, time-limited vocational rehabilitation services (the responsibility of VR) and extended services, also known as the second phase. Funding for the second phase of services is provided by other sources that may include, but are not limited to, APD, the Department of Children and Families' Mental Health and Substance Abuse Program, natural supports or other identified funding sources.

Extended Services

The purpose of extended services is to maintain the individual in SE that is competitive and integrated, enhance the individual's involvement in the workplace culture, and provide supports for career advancement. The nature of services provided during the intensive and extended phases may be similar to the initial services provided by VR but will differ in intensity.

VR and its partners continuously seek alternative methods (e.g. social security incentives, natural supports, etc.) to provide extended services. VR has encouraged Supported Employment providers to focus on developing natural supports and to encourage employers to act in a support role since this will often occur naturally in the labor market.

VR is now authorized to fund Extended Services for youth with the most significant disabilities for a time period of up to four years, if necessary, and funding permits. Allowances ~~would~~ be made for individuals who, while receiving extended services, require additional intensive services through VR because they have destabilized on the job. When appropriate, VR will again assume the responsibility and cost of providing intensive vocational services, including necessary job-related support services.

g) Coordination with Employers

The Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) has formalized a Business Relations Program, with the vision to build and sustain partnerships with business and industry through effective services that are driven by the needs of employers. These partnerships will lead to competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities for VR customers.

Efforts are underway in the Business Relations Program to define and customize services to employers, create strategic partnerships to support workforce needs, and establish an employment-focused culture within the rehabilitation process. Listed below are the program's goals, objectives, and strategies.

Goal 1: Become the foremost recognized and trusted resource for employers' disability inclusion needs.

Objective: Increase the number of employers engaged as business partners.

Strategies:

1. Develop and use a standard business needs assessment.
2. Develop and use a business customer satisfaction tool.
3. Staff and train a team that is responsive to business. The team includes: the program administrator; a senior VR consultant; a business projects specialist; and 11 business relations representatives located across the state in each of VR's seven administrative areas.
4. Implement a business customer relationship management tool.
5. Define the services offered to employers and customize them to meet business needs.
6. Create statewide consistency in business relations outreach and services.
7. Use targeted marketing to engage employers across multiple industries.
8. Participate in business-led organizations, such as Chambers of Commerce, US Business Leadership Network, etc.
9. Create strategic practices that can be replicated.
10. Align services with the Workforce Development Boards and other community partners.
11. Participate in the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation's National Employment Team (NET) and the NET-Southeast regional team to share referrals and best practices.
12. Engage with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) core partners to share best practices.

Goal 2: Become a top resource for employers in need of qualified employees.

Objective: Increase referrals of qualified applicants to business partners.

Strategies:

1. Facilitate direct access to qualified applicants through business relationships.
2. Market career opportunities internally to VR staff.

3. Use the AbilitiesWork Help Desk for applicant-matching services for employers.
4. Coordinate support services provided by VR contractors.
5. Provide a seamless connection to VR services and qualified applicants across a company's footprint locally, regionally, statewide, and nationally through the NET.
6. Engage in local talent pool coordination with other agencies to meet businesses' workforce needs.
7. Participate with the NET and the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP) to create increased opportunities for VR jobseekers and employers recruiting VR jobseekers.
8. Collaborate with business to create a pipeline of qualified candidates.

Goal 3: Expand career opportunities for VR candidates.

Objective: Prepare ready-to-work applicants for in-demand careers and jobs that are available now.

Strategies:

1. Meet with business and industry to assess workforce needs to better align training with those needs.
2. Communicate information from employers about business needs and qualification requirements to VR staff.
3. Engage in sector partnerships.
4. Provide information to VR staff about in-demand jobs and high growth industries and sectors using labor market information.
5. Collaborate with business and education to determine industry recognized training opportunities and inform VR staff about them.
6. Collaborate with WIOA core partners to share resources and best practices.
7. Generate opportunities for worksite training with business partners.

h) Interagency Cooperation

VR is in the process of developing and implementing a cooperative agreement with the state agency responsible for administering the State Medicaid Plan (AHCA) and the agency primarily responsible for providing services to persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (APD). This agreement will specifically focus on Supported Employment services and the roles and responsibilities for coordinating these services on a state wide basis.

The purpose of the agreement is to establish a framework, including terms and conditions that will guide collaborative efforts to advance the development, improvement, and expansion of opportunities for competitive integrated employment as the first and preferred option for persons with significant disabilities.

The agreement will formalize the collaborative processes that have been implemented to improve employment outcomes for mutual customers. It will focus on coordinating efforts in interagency planning, referrals, informed choice, cross and joint training as well as the provision of technical assistance.

The agreement endorses a shared philosophy with a common set of guiding principles. These principles include but are not limited to the following:

- All programs, projects, and activities will be person-centered and include respect for individual dignity, self-determination, pursuit of meaningful careers, and informed choice.
- Reliance on and pursuit of evidence-based best, promising and emerging practices.
- The use of qualified staff to facilitate the achievement of competitive integrated employment.
- Establishment of a referral process for mutual customers.
- To clearly define and clarify boundaries between the VR and APD programs to ensure the complimentary provision of employment services and promote timely access for persons with the most significant disabilities.

VR is working closely with APD to develop competitive integrated employment alternatives for individuals receiving services in a segregated setting. VR will provide technical assistance and support as APD expands these program options. Under WIOA requirements, VR will provide or coordinate information and education for individuals receiving services in sheltered workshops receiving subminimum wages.

VR collaborates with the Florida Department of Children and Families', Mental Health and Substance Abuse Program to improve and increase employment opportunities for people with mental illness. Part of this collaborative work is conducted through a formalized Employment First agreement, while other coordination occurs during a customer's transition from the initial and intense Phase of Supported Employment to the ongoing and extended service phase of Supported Employment services.

In addition to these collaborations, VR works in partnership with local education agencies and partners to offer youth with the most significant disabilities opportunities to gain work experiences that help them prepare for successful employment.

Collaborations such as High School/ High Tech (HSHT), Project SEARCH, Third Party Cooperative Agreements and Postsecondary Education programs engage youth in experiences that blend academics with career and technical education. They also provide hands-on career exploration and preparation activities where learned skills, attitudes, and behaviors can be applied. These evidence-based applications of learning, which includes internships and other work experiences, often lead to successful employment with appropriate supports.

For some students, these programs include earning postsecondary credentials which allow them to explore professional jobs that may lead to higher-wage careers. VR involvement in these collaborations provide funding for participants to receive services and other supports needed to prepare for and maintain employment. This shared support helps partner programs serve more youth. VR partnerships deliver career development and employment options through direct services to youth who would not otherwise have access to these services.

i) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

Assurance of an adequate supply of qualified rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessional personnel is the major driver for the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation’s (VR) Human Resource Development Section. Data from numerous sources is used to determine current and projected needs, as well as VR’s progress toward meeting them. The table below includes VR personnel and turnover data for SFY 2016-2017, and projected staffing requirements for SFY 2017-2018. It should be noted that positions are vacated for many reasons, including termination, promotion, lateral position transfers, or retirement. VR continues to employ strategies to address turnover as well as develop and prepare staff for advancement opportunities.

**Figure 9.01
VR Personnel and Projected Staffing Needs**

Personnel Category*	Number of Personnel, as of 10/1/17	Turnover Rate for SFY 2016-17	**Projected Staffing Needs for SFY 2017-18
Counselor Staff	381	30%	114
Staff Supporting Counselor Activities	320	15%	48
Administrative Staff	191	18%	34
Total Full-time Equivalent	892		
Contracted Counselor Staff	74		
Total Contracted Field Staff	148		

*Categories are based on RSA-2 Report definitions, and positions included in each category.

**This number is an annual average derived by multiplying the number of positions for the job category by the percentage of vacated positions.

Staffing needs for Transition Youth Program counselors remains consistent with overall counselor staffing projections. When factoring in population growth, the projected five-year staffing needs are slightly higher than noted above, but would require that VR be provided with additional FTEs.

The state’s automated People First personnel system maintains employment histories to help project human resource needs. The state continues to make available a deferred retirement option program (DROP) that allows individuals to continue working for the state for five years beyond their original retirement date. Because it is impossible to anticipate how many individuals will accept the deferral option, projecting future employment needs is difficult. However, it is known that there are currently 58 individuals in DROP, 62 individuals with 30 or more years of service, and 110 individuals over the age of 62.

VR collects data from the Rehabilitation Information Management System (RIMS) to calculate the counselor-customer ratio. This is another tool for assessing current and projected staffing needs. The average counselor-customer caseload is 1:97 in relation to assisting customers from the application phase to case closure. This ratio is based on both regular counselor positions and contracted counselor positions.

VR uses People First and RIMS data, as well as internal reports, to obtain:

- The number and classification of authorized positions for each local unit and state headquarters in relation to the number of individuals served

- The number and classification of personnel currently needed by the state agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services
- The projected number and classification of personnel who will be needed in five years to provide vocational rehabilitation services
- The state institutions of higher education that are preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals, by program type
- The number of students in each of these institutions, by program type
- The number of students graduating from each program and the credentials they have received

In order to ensure the continuity of quality rehabilitation services and to address employee vacancies and turnover in particularly difficult to fill geographic areas, VR has contracted for employees. The contracts ensure that qualified personnel are hired to provide necessary rehabilitation services. A VR counselor/analyst reviews each case and performs/authorizes administrative activities that federal regulations (34 CFR 361.13) specify are the responsibility of VR, and cannot be delegated to private providers. These activities include:

- All decisions affecting eligibility for VR, the nature and scope of available services and the provision of these services, and the suspension, reduction, and termination of these services
- The determination to close the records of services of an individual who has achieved an employment outcome
- Policy formulation and implementation
- Allocation and expenditure of VR funds
- Participation as a partner in the CareerSource Florida service delivery system

Described in the following table is information from institutions of higher education in Florida that prepare vocational rehabilitation professionals, categorized by institution and type of program.

Figure 9.02
Program Data for Institutions of Higher Education

Institution, Program Type and Degree	Students Currently Enrolled	VR/RSA Sponsored Employees	VR/RSA Sponsored Graduates	Previous Year Graduates
Florida Atlantic University- Graduate-level Rehabilitation Training Program; MEd and PhD	MEd- 30 PhD- 3	MEd- 0 PhD- 0	MEd- 0 PhD- 0	MEd- 6 PhD- 0
Florida International University- Rehabilitation Counseling Program; MS in Counselor Education	MS- 12	MS- 0	MS- 2	MS- 2
University of South Florida- Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling Program; MA	MA- 136	MA- 1	MA- 7	MA- 40

Plan for Recruitment, Preparation, and Retention of Qualified Personnel

VR maintains close relationships with universities including minority institutions such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities and disability-specific organizations. VR employees collaborate with universities in securing grant funding, invite university employees to help with training and education activities, and provide practicum and internship slots for students.

VR acknowledges that it will not be able to recruit an adequate number of qualified rehabilitation counselors to replace those retiring and departing for other reasons. VR is currently engaged in the activities indicated below to address recruitment, preparation, and retention of counselors.

Personnel Standards

There is not a state-approved or recognized certification, licensure, or registration of Vocational Rehabilitation counselors. VR, in conjunction with the Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC) established the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) educational eligibility requirement as its standard.

Efforts are made to recruit and hire counselors who meet the CRC educational eligibility status. If VR is unsuccessful in finding enough qualified applicants, it will accept those who meet the minimal initial standard for providing counseling and guidance services. The individual(s) must have a bachelor’s degree from an accredited university and one year of experience counseling individuals with disabilities. Alternative majors other than social, behavioral, or rehabilitative science may be considered along with the minimum qualification requirements for the position. When evaluating the suitability of alternative majors, the hiring authority should consider the major area of study’s applicability to the required knowledge, skills, and abilities. A master’s degree from an accredited university in a social, behavioral, or rehabilitative science can substitute for the year of required experience.

The State of Florida allows employees to use a tuition waiver to enroll in six hours (or less) of courses per semester on a space-available basis at public universities. This approach is how many counselors worked to reach the CSPD standard until fall 2006. As recently as six years ago, Florida had six Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling (MRC) programs, five of which were CORE-accredited. As of 2016, Florida now has three CACREP-accredited programs (Florida Atlantic University, the University of South Florida, and the Florida International University).

In recent years, VR has implemented a more aggressive approach in meeting the CSPD standard. VR employees will be encouraged to use the State of Florida Tuition Waiver program as much as possible, since it represents a significant savings to VR. A substantial portion of the in-service training grant was allocated solely to VR's CSPD activities. In-service training grant funds were used to pay tuition for individuals who could not get the coursework they needed through the waiver program, such as those who do not live near a public university or who otherwise cannot use the waiver program. In-service training grant funds were also allocated for textbook reimbursement. The elimination of the in-service training grant to states has severely reduced VR's ability to continue support for these activities. It is not currently clear how much of the basic support grant will be available for this kind of support. The Learning and Development Office (LDO) has implemented a data system to track academic classes taken and progress toward certification eligibility.

In addition to the Florida public universities referenced above, VR uses the resources of Auburn University, Southern University, Virginia Commonwealth University, the University of Kentucky, the University of Arkansas-Little Rock, the University of West Virginia, and the University of Wisconsin-Stout, all of whom provide online Masters-level rehabilitation programs. VR also uses the resources of the University of North Texas and San Diego State through the Consortium on Distance Education in Rehabilitation. VR will continue to use additional programs, as appropriate.

Personnel Development

LDO efforts will continue to be oriented toward appropriate and adequate training for all employees, with available resources allocated to the CSPD effort. Although the in-service training grant was the primary funding source for these activities, it was not the only money used to fund staff development and training activities. Supplemental funds were provided from other budget resources.

Although there has been an emphasis on helping counselors meet the CSPD standard and developing the technical, managerial, and leadership skills of supervisors and managers, VR provides staff development opportunities to employees at every level. **In FFY 2017-2018 LDO will train all employees of the Division in a program titled VR Works. This program is designed to return the agency to its mission of helping people with disabilities find and maintain employment by refocusing on impediments to employment and job readiness.**

VR continues to offer individual training allocations for each staff member. This allocation can be used for job-related professional development activities, such as attending conferences, purchasing books, CDs, DVDs, or other materials, taking online short courses, or any other approved professional development activity. Supervisory approval is required for these professional development activities to ensure that employees participate in activities consistent with their individual needs and job responsibilities and requirements. LDO provides consultation and technical assistance to VR employees as needed.

Florida State University offers a Certified Public Manager (CPM) program, which requires a two-year commitment. In support of leadership development, VR has developed an internal application, selection, and CPM mentoring process. VR tries to support 2-4 new candidates each year through the program, and once they obtain the CPM credential, VR works to involve staff appropriately in division-wide improvement projects. There are currently six employees from HQ and field operations enrolled in some phase of CPM.

VR purchased a learning management system (LMS) in the spring of 2013 and began implementation in May 2014. The system is named TED, for Training, Education, and Development. The system not only tracks learning participation, but also serves as a host for online learning activities for all employees. Additionally, VR purchased licenses for WebEx for training purposes. Every effort is made to ensure that the correct medium is used to address each particular issue. The ability to deliver interactive training through the LMS greatly expands the capacity of VR to provide a more extensive and comprehensive array of learning activities for all employees.

VR produces a monthly newsletter for all employees, as well as a quarterly newsletter for supervisors to share information about what is happening in the different areas, keep them up to date on new policies and procedures, and offer articles that can help them do their jobs better.

Whether offered directly or contracted by LDO, VR's staff development and training programs are designed with the goal of maintaining a well-prepared, competent workforce equipped with the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to successfully facilitate the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities. VR is responsible for ensuring that employees, including contracted employees, receive necessary development and training. Accordingly, LDO includes contracted employees at all training programs.

Additional Personnel Development Activities

The Organization and Employee Support Team (OES) recently designed a new human resource information site, available through VR's SharePoint application. Using SharePoint increases the level of support and customer service provided to VR's employees, volunteers, contracted staff, supervisors, and personnel liaisons. The intent is to provide user-friendly experiences for new and existing employees. The OES Homepage provides job opportunity announcements, access to more than 900 HR forms, procedures, and policies, and a calendar of upcoming important HR dates and events.

Onboarding

Onboarding helps new personnel successfully assimilate into their new position, with a quicker ramp-up to productivity. VR wants to help all personnel be successful in their new job, get up-and-running with their new duties quickly and smoothly, and contribute to VR's success. Since VR personnel includes career service, selected exempt service/senior management service and OPS employees, as well as volunteers and contracted staff, all with differing onboarding needs, it became apparent that a one-size-fits-all approach to onboarding was not sufficient.

Based on that, OES created Onboarding resource sites specific to needs of VR's career service, selected exempt service/senior management service, and OPS employees, as well as sites specific to VR's volunteers and contracted staff. Each site provides onboarding information for the specific personnel category, such as New Hire Paperwork that provides the new employee with all of the required hiring forms and related policies, VR Mentorship Program information, TED- Training, Education, and Development links and resources, and the Human Resources Page.

VR's Mentorship Program

A major reason why newly hired employees struggle and ultimately leave is failure to establish connections and build strong interpersonal relationships within the organization. Understanding that new employees need connection, a sense of belonging, a sense of their potential, and a need to feel valued, OES worked with various sections within VR to create a Mentorship Program.

Mentors often play an important role in making new employees feel valued, developing coworker relationships, and helping new employees feel comfortable during the first few months of employment. Each new employee, or protégé, will be assigned to a mentor for a period of up to a year. No mentor will be assigned to more than two active protégés at any one time.

The Mentorship Program is composed of two parts. The first is a comprehensive information resource site delivered through SharePoint. The site has information specific to mentors, protégés, Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), and supervisors. The second component is the Individualized Mentoring Action Plan, or IMAP. The IMAP is a software application designed specifically for the mentorship program. In the IMAP, mentors and SMEs create personalized profiles. The profiles are used to assist with assigning mentors and SMEs to appropriate protégés. The software is designed to quickly sort through hundreds of mentor and SME profiles that match the needs identified in the protégé's profile.

Human Resources Page

The Human Resources page is a one-stop information resource for VR personnel. The Human Resources page consists of six functional groups, which are further divided into subject groups, specific categories, and detailed information pages. Topics include employee rights, benefits and responsibilities, resources such as forms, procedures, and policies, and useful information about VR and state government. Most pages have embedded links to either an internal portion of the VR Intranet, or to an outside website. Each employee can then bookmark any page for easy access.

Needs Assessment and Evaluation

A bi-annual training needs assessment is conducted using information from a number of sources. These include a formal needs assessment instrument, performance evaluation data, training evaluation sheets obtained from every sponsored program, exit interviews, and supervisory input. The needs assessment data determines program development and modification.

Annual performance evaluations are conducted on each employee, with intermittent evaluation, if indicated. Performance is evaluated according to standards and goals established at the beginning of the evaluation period. Employees are evaluated in the context of their knowledge, skills, and abilities within the field of rehabilitation, and on policy about priority of service to individuals with the most significant disabilities. If circumstances change, training and professional development activities are provided to help the employee meet his/her goal in support of VR's mission.

In-Service Training Grant (please note this grant ended on 9/30/15)

Funds were requested for the in-service training grant based on current and anticipated needs. VR continues to provide a variety of in-house training programs, including counselor training, supervisory training, policy training, new legislation, casework review training, etc.

In carrying out its staff development and training program, VR addresses several topics in its training curricula. The training curricula include (but are not limited to) modules on the following: preliminary assessment, eligibility determination, assessment, IPE development, vocational counseling (within the modules on eligibility determination and individualized plan for employment development), job placement, rehabilitation technology, cultural competence, ethics, supported employment, transition from school to work, medical and psychological issues, caseload management, and special programs.

VR places emphasis on the professional development of unit supervisors, area supervisors, and area directors. Topics are selected based on policy or procedure changes, new initiatives, audit and review findings, and general professional development.

Counseling and non-counseling employees, including administrative employees, will continue to receive training in core subjects through distance and on-site learning. As caseloads and customer needs continue to grow more complex, the role of the paraprofessional technician becomes more and more critical to the effective management of caseloads. All counseling staff will continue to work toward CRC eligibility and/or degrees in rehabilitation or counseling through tuition waivers and other mechanisms.

Engineers from the Rehabilitation Technology Engineering Program, contracted through the University of South Florida, provide training on rehabilitation technology and engineering. The contract ensures that rehabilitation technology engineers are available statewide.

State labor market information, as well as national data, provides information on the employment and advancement of qualified individuals with disabilities. Job announcements are published online through the People First website, providing access to all state jobs through one internet portal.

Manuals related to policy and rehabilitation information management are available online. Employees can access the internet to find information about medical and psychological conditions, rehabilitation technology, Federal/State Plan, legislation and regulations, and employment-related information.

Coordination of Personnel Development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Presenters provide orientation and training for employees serving transition students with disabilities from VR, the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEES), and community partners. Cross-training between BEES and VR staff is emphasized through interagency agreements as presented in Section (d) of this plan portion. The Department of Education's State Education Agency (SEA) and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) profiles are used to gather important statistical information on graduation rates, dropout rates, Individual Educational Plan compliance, and postsecondary outcomes for students with disabilities. Additionally, BEES and VR continue to share and analyze student data to identify students with Individual Education Plans or 504 Plans who can benefit from VR services and any potential gaps in service.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act was signed into law on July 24, 2014. The new law required VR to fund specific Pre-Employment Transition Services to youth while still in high school, including career exploration, work readiness training and work experiences. VR updated the Rehabilitation Information Management System (RIMS) and the Rehabilitation Electronic Billing Application (REBA) to collect transition data elements and track expenditures for transition youth.

VR strives to help LEAs meet the mandates of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. VR support includes offering an early VR referral and application process beginning at age 15, VR Transition Liaisons Contact List, VR Transition Brochures, and coordination of the Individual Education Plan with the Individualized Plan for Employment when served by both agencies. VR endorses evidence-based LEA services that benefit students with disabilities, including educating students in the least restrictive environment with their non-disabled peers and having access to the original curricula. VR counselors continue to attend regular in-service training that specifically targets transition youth issues and helps meet the requirements of the CSPD.

VR and community partners continue to make presentations and participate in annual transition conferences at the national, state, and local level to better serve students with disabilities. These events allow for agency updates, contributing information on promising initiatives and sharing evidence-based best practices. When VR employees and local educators are assigned to teams at events, they use this time to discuss issues and learn from one another about effective transition practices. This information is often incorporated into VR staff trainings.

Statewide transition training is provided on a yearly basis. New counselors also receive this training which includes resources from the VR Transition Youth Program. The *VR Transition Youth Guidelines and Best Practices* is a resource for VR transition teams to assure statewide consistency in coordinating services to students with disabilities. VR employees have access to the “*Effective Practices for Working with the School System*” and the “*Outreach for the School System*” presentations developed to improve collaboration between VR and the LEAs. At the local level, VR employees participate in interagency groups with a transition focus to improve local coordination and services to students, families, schools, employers, and agency partners.

Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs

VR employees need to be able to work with Florida’s diverse population. One way VR does this is to actively recruit counselors and support employees who have diverse backgrounds. VR places advertisements in ethnic newspapers and collaborates with local civic and social service groups. VR also provides a five percent pay increase to bilingual staff, for positions where this is beneficial to the agency. Bilingual individuals are on staff, but qualified interpreters or translators will continue to be used when a counselor is unable to communicate directly with a customer in his/her preferred language. VR will continue partnerships with local vendors to offer this service.

American Sign Language interpretation needs for customers who are deaf or deaf-blind are met using a combination of employee positions and arrangements with qualified local interpreter service providers. When either staff interpreters or local interpreters are not available, VR will reschedule appointments or use available text communication devices with customers. VR also has assistive listening devices available in most offices for VR employees to communicate with individuals who are hard of hearing or late-deafened and do not know sign-language.

VR complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act by providing materials in Braille and large print, through having qualified sign language interpreters, and offering text-based communication access. In addition, VR arranges for foreign language translators when needed.

j) Statewide Assessment

During FFY 2014-15, the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), in partnership with the Florida Rehabilitation Council, conducted a comprehensive statewide needs assessment (CSNA) to identify factors that affect VR customers' ability to get and keep jobs, and any barriers or limitations they may experience. The CSNA consisted of the following components: state demographic profiles, a statewide public survey, stakeholder interviews, and additional information from agency performance data, customer satisfaction surveys and public input. Findings and recommendations from the CSNA will guide agency planning and development of state plans for federal fiscal years 2016 through 2018.

In October 2014, VR conducted 35 Key Informant Interviews with VR staff, partner council members, employers, and stakeholders. VR's new WIOA partners were well represented, with responses from eight different CareerSource FL regions, as well as FL Division of Blind Services. Group responses were also received from Florida's Project TEN team and Orange County Public Schools. Interview themes are presented in the form of findings and future consideration, in Figure 9.04. Florida conducted a statewide public survey during December 2014, with over 2,200 responses received and over half of those submitted by people with disabilities. Key results from the statewide public survey are presented below.

Figure 9.03 summarizes key results from the needs assessment survey, and Figure 9.04 provides CSNA findings, strategic references, and future considerations. Findings have been considered during statewide planning and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) implementation activities. VR will continue to use this information to guide statewide and agency planning, as well as future collaborations with WIOA core programs and other stakeholders.

Figure 9.03
Key Results of Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Survey

CSNA Survey Items	Results
Factors rated most important to job seekers with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type of job matches personal abilities (83.65%) • Work location / available transportation (79.59%) • Work environment / culture (72.73%)
VR services rated most important to job seekers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training (61%) • Job Search, Placement and/or Coaching (60%) • Supported Employment (52%)
VR services rated most needed now by job seekers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported Employment (34%) • Job Search, Placement and/or Coaching (30%) • Training (29%)
VR services rated most in-demand in the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Search, Placement and/or Coaching (66%) • Supported Employment (65%) • Training (64%)

<p>Groups rated as having least access to services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals living in rural areas (58.86%) • Individuals with a criminal background (48.57%) • Individuals on waiting list (43.95%) • Individuals with a mental health disability (43.57%) • Individuals with an intellectual disability (43.42%)
<p>Greatest barriers to employment for job seekers with disabilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job seekers need transportation (personal or public) (76.16%) • Employers underestimate the talent and skills of people with disabilities (70.67%) • Employers need training on working with people with disabilities (66.9%)

Figure 9.04
CSNA Findings and Recommendations

CSNA Findings	Strategic References and Future Considerations
VR needs to make a stronger case for hiring individuals with disabilities because of their skills, abilities, and qualifications.	Goal 1 of VR’s strategic plan focuses on ensuring customer success and satisfaction by improving business and support processes. All strategies are anticipated to increase opportunities for job seekers with disabilities, as well as increase VRs community presence and marketing. Strategies within that goal include the following.
VR needs to have greater community presence, and increase its marketing and outreach to employers and businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement all components of the VR Business Relations Program. • Redesign and implement pre-employment services for transition-age customers.
VR needs to better match customer skills to jobs available. This requires first knowing what jobs are available and understanding the needs of employers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and implement a program about service alternatives for customers to use in making an informed choice prior to entering subminimum wage employment. • Design and implement enhancements to the Vendor Profile document for customer use in making informed choices regarding employment providers.
VR needs to support better alignment between job coaches and employers.	
VR’s current benchmark payment system disincentivizes working with customers who have more difficulty or require more time, finding a job.	VR has recently added a customized placement benchmark payment to its reimbursement schedule, with a higher reimbursement rate. This will be monitored for effectiveness in the future.
VR needs to explore collaborative opportunities to increase access to services and employment for people with mental health or intellectual disabilities.	VR is piloting innovative service models such as Individual Placement and Support (IPS) / peer mentoring to provide more service options to individuals with severe and persistent mental illness. VR has expanded the use of Discovery and Customized Employment statewide, and is now focusing on increasing provider capacity to provide these services. VR continues to develop agreements and partner with other agencies and organizations to provide customers more access to community resources.

Although results of the CSNA public survey and a review of VR customer data and state demographic estimates did not indicate any specific ethnic groups with limited access to VR services, VR continues to assess its services to individuals with the most significant disabilities and individuals who may be unserved or underserved, as well as those with the most significant disabilities who may be from minority populations.

Results of the CSNA public survey indicated the following groups as having limited access to VR services.

- Individuals living in rural areas (58.86%)
- Individuals with a criminal background (48.57%)
- Individuals on waiting list (43.95%)
- Individuals with a mental health disability (43.57%)
- Individuals with an intellectual disability (43.42%)

VR continues to assess its services to individuals with the most significant disabilities and individuals who may be unserved or underserved, as well as those with the most significant disabilities who may be from minority populations. VR anticipates that continued WIOA implementation will increase access to the groups mentioned above. In addition, complimentary strategic projects and local-level outreach activities include the following:

- 1.1.1. Develop and implement all components of the VR Business Relationship Program.
- 1.1.2. Redesign and implement pre-employment services for transition-age customers.
- 1.1.3. Design and implement a program about service alternatives for customers to use in making an informed choice prior to entering subminimum wage employment.
- 1.1.4. Design and implement enhancements to the Vendor Profile document for customer use in making informed choices regarding employment providers.
- Continue to explore partnership opportunities with community/faith-based organizations. Develop contact lists of faith-based and other diverse programs as resources for partnership opportunities.
- Continue to identify outreach activities conducted by VR area offices for underrepresented populations. Conduct outreach in local communities to promote VR as an agency, and help individuals with disabilities who are minorities or who may be unserved or underserved to return or remain in the workplace.
- Continue to conduct outreach to migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families through contracts with community-based organizations and other partners.
- Continue to implement activities outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding with the Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe.

Florida VR's most recent CSNA was conducted prior to WIOA, and does not include an assessment of the VR needs of youth and students with disabilities. The VR Transition Youth Program conducted an analysis of "VR Engagement of Youth with Disabilities in High School". Data from the VR Rehabilitation Information Management System (RIMS) and the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services' (BEESS) State and Local Education Agency profiles was used to determine the extent to which VR was engaging youth while still in high school.

The analysis compared the number of youth with disabilities who had applied for VR services to the total number of youth with disabilities (having an IEP) in a given school district. This provided a percentage of VR engagement for each Florida School District and a way to make comparisons between and among school districts. The information is being used to target intensive technical assistance in poorly engaged

areas and facilitate improved communication and collaboration in all school districts. VR will use student engagement data to improve consistency of effort throughout the state and as an additional way to measure gains in performance. In addition to findings and recommendations derived from the Transition Youth Program Analysis, VR has identified the following strategies that will further increase services to youth and students with disabilities.

- Continue to offer Third-Party Cooperative Arrangements (TPCA) to all school districts annually. Although VR approaches and offers TPCA partnerships to all school districts in Florida, the partnership is dependent on the individual district's decision to participate. VR has recently hired another transition administrator to ensure that information is provided consistently to all school districts, and to coordinate and monitor active and potential TPCA partnerships. VR currently holds 25 TPCA, which will expire on June 30, 2018. VR is in the process of revising the contractual agreement it offers to school districts, but new contracts have not been developed yet. Once developed, if the contract changes the way VR delivers Transition services, the State Plan will be amended accordingly.
- Two peer mentoring initiatives are planned at this time. A peer mentoring/IPS project with a youth element is being developed in Broward County, and a youth-specific peer mentoring project is being developed in partnership with Florida Atlantic University.
- Additional initiatives are under way to increase provider capacity and offer more opportunities to youth. These include approval of CareerSource Florida to provide pre-placement services, revision of Certified Business and Technical Assistance Consultants (CBTAC) recertification procedures, and increase in CBTAC and Discovery providers. VR is also partnering with Volunteer Florida, Centers for Independent Living, Florida ARC, and High School High Tech to offer more OJT and community work experiences.

VR assesses its business processes and organizational capacity on an ongoing basis to make consistent improvements. Results of the FFY 2014-15 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment did not indicate a need to establish or develop community rehabilitation programs, although it was indicated that employment providers have a need to better promote and raise awareness of their services. Strategies to improve relationships with community rehabilitation programs are included previously in Figure 9.04, and discussed further in Section o) State's Strategies.

k) Annual Estimates

Number of Individuals in the State Who are Eligible for Services under this State Plan

From October 1, 2018, to September 30, 2019, the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) anticipates that approximately 42,343 Floridians will be eligible for VR services.

Annual Estimates of Individuals to be Served and Cost of Services with Funds Provided Under Part B of Title I and Part B of Title VI of the Act

From October 1, 2018, to September 30, 2019, the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) anticipates a workload of 42,343 individuals. Because of limited resources, VR has determined that vocational rehabilitation services cannot be provided to all individuals with disabilities in the state who apply for services. The following projections for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2018-19 are based on case management and budget projection models.

The projected number of eligible individuals to receive vocational rehabilitation services by priority category, and cost of services per category are as follows:

Figure 9.05
Projected Number of Eligible Individuals to Receive VR Services

Priority Category	Projected Number Served	Projected Service Cost
Category 1	24,677	\$65,082,905
Category 2	16,783	\$38,281,595
Category 3	883	\$3,140,499
Total	42,343	\$106,505,000

The estimated number of customers to be served in Supported Employment (Part B of Title VI of the Act) is 8,080.

Total projected costs for IPE services are \$106,505,000. Additionally, the cost for assessment services is projected at \$20,342,455. Total projected revenue needed for IPE and assessment services for FFY 2019 is \$126,847,455. The revenue available for IPE and assessment services is estimated to be \$125.3 million.

Some expenditures associated with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) initiatives such as pre-employment transition services, and Job Retention Services (discretionary services under Order of Selection) have not been factored into these projections. Until these costs are fully realized and included into service and cost projections, VR will continue its current management of wait list categories under Order of Selection.

I) State Goals and Priorities

VR Vision

To become the first place people with disabilities turn when seeking employment and a top resource for employers in need of qualified employees.

VR Mission

To help people with disabilities find and maintain employment, and enhance their independence.

Strategic Goals and Priorities

During FFY 2014-15, VR, in collaboration with the Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC), completed its three- year comprehensive statewide needs assessment. Information obtained from the needs assessment, management reports, and feedback from VR employees, stakeholders, and customers, is used to evaluate current goals, objectives, and projects, and establish new strategic priorities.

Following the previously established planning process, the Senior Leadership Team regularly reviews progress and updates strategies as needed. Annually, the Senior Leadership Team completed a thorough review of the strategic plan, and then held a planning meeting to determine which projects to include in the updated strategic plan. Strategy updates are provided quarterly and reported out to VR Leadership and stakeholders.

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) completed their monitoring visit with VR in April 2017. In addition, VR is planning for its next Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), which will inform agency planning in FFYs 2019-21. VR will update its strategic goals and priorities after receipt of the RSA Monitoring Report and completion of the next CSNA. Currently, VR agency priorities are to ensure IT systems are fully capable of collecting data required for federal reporting, and to refine its service delivery procedures to meet Pre-ETS budget requirements while continuing to meet the needs of other customers.

Current Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Goal 1: Ensure Customer success and satisfaction by improving business and support processes.

Objective 1.1: Improve and align VR business processes to support WIOA implementation

Strategy: 1. Develop and implement all components of the VR Business Relationship Program.

Measure of Success:

- Full integration and implementation of all components, including business services, field services operations and IT support systems

Strategy: 2. Redesign and implement pre-employment services for transition-age customers.

Measures of Success:

- Services re-aligned to new WIOA guidelines and implemented within required timeframes

- Budget set-aside requirements met

Strategy: 3. Design and implement a program about service alternatives for customers to use in making an informed choice prior to entering subminimum wage employment.

Measure of Success:

- Number of people diverted from or transitioned out of subminimum wage jobs

Strategy: 4. Design and implement enhancements to the Vendor Profile document for customer use in making informed choices regarding employment providers.

Measures of Success:

- Establish baseline use of Vendor Profile
- Customer satisfaction with Vendor Profile

Objective 1.2: Redesign supports for VR service & business processes

Strategy: 1. Coordinate and develop the VR services portion of the statewide plan.

Measure of Success:

- Timely submission of all required information

Strategy: 2. Design and implement an approach for integration of performance and business intelligence information.

Measures of Success:

- Number of revised management reports implemented
- Satisfaction of affected VR Managers with revised reports

Goal 2: Ensure Employee success and satisfaction by improving development opportunities and workplace environment.

Objective 2.1: Provide a comprehensive workforce planning and development system

Strategy: 1. Implement employee onboarding and mentoring processes statewide.

Measures of Success:

- Percentage of new employees completing all requirements within 90 days
- Percentage of new employees assigned a mentor within 10 days from start date
- Protégé/mentor/supervisor satisfaction ratings

Strategy: 2. Develop an agency-wide workforce and succession management plan, including a process to capture organizational knowledge.

Measures of Success:

- Process accurately identifies critical positions and information
- Participant satisfaction with process / components

Strategy: 3. Design a program for identifying and developing VR Leadership candidates.

Measures of Success:

- Successful pilot/ rollout of program
- Percent of VR employees initiating participation
- Participant satisfaction with program components

Strategy: 4. Develop standards, guidelines and curriculum for VR employee training.

Measures of Success:

- Improvement in climate survey items: Q8. Opportunities to learn and grow- 83.61%
- Q11. I am satisfied with the training provided by VR- 77.19%
- Percentage of VR employees successfully completing identified training requirements

Objective 2.2: Provide a safe, accessible, and adequately equipped work environment

Strategy: 1. Develop a comprehensive safety plan for monitoring VR facilities statewide. Specific components include a process for reporting defective/unsafe working conditions, safety and facilities management training for area staff, a move manual, a statewide safety manual, statewide first aid info, furniture inspection instructions, and a facility security / building access policy at HQ.

Measures of Success:

- Improvement in climate survey item: Q17. Physically safe work environment- 81.94%
- Pulse survey results following implementation of each improvement

m) Order of Selection

Justification for the Order of Selection

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) determined that sufficient resources were not available to provide rehabilitation services to all individuals with disabilities who apply. Consequently, VR established an Order of Selection (OOS) within the state to ensure that individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected first for vocational rehabilitation services, those with significant disabilities second and all other eligible individuals selected last. This decision was based on use of funds in the preceding years, projected funding, projected number and types of referrals, number of eligible individuals, and counselor caseloads.

A historical account of VR's management of OOS wait list categories is as follows.

- August 4, 2008 - the Order of Selection was initially implemented, closing all categories
- February 15, 2010 - VR determined that sufficient fiscal and human resources were available to serve all Category 1 individuals and opened Category 1
- August 2, 2010 - Category 2 was opened, but Category 3 remained closed
- November 15, 2013 - VR again closed Category 2
- February 19, 2014 - VR again closed Category 1, but received an additional \$1.4 million in nonrecurring general revenue. This state match funding allowed VR to draw down an additional \$5,172,770 of its federal grant.
- June 2014 - VR opened Category 1 and began a structured release
- February 2015 - VR opened Category 2
- As of December 2015, all individuals previously on the Category 2 wait list are receiving services
- As of March 15, 2016, 1,512 individuals remain on the Category 3 wait list
- As of September 30, 2017, 37 individuals remain in Category 3

The OOS remains in effect statewide and does not select one type of disability over another. The OOS is not established based on age, sex, marital status, religion, race, color, national origin, or political affiliation, and is not based on the vocational goal of the individual with a disability. Elements that relate to the significance of disability are the only factors used in OOS. In accordance with Section 412 of WIOA, VR has elected to provide Job Retention Services (discretionary services to eligible individuals regardless of order of selection, who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment).

Figure 9.06
Projected Outcome and Service Goals and Time Frames for FFY 2018-19

Priority Category	Projected Number Served	Average Case Cost	Projected Service Cost	Projected Successful Closures	Projected Unsuccessful Closures	Months to Complete
Category 1	24,677	\$2,513	\$65,082,905	2,880	6,168	20
Category 2	16,783	\$1,757	\$38,281,595	2,274	3,892	12
Category 3	883	\$6,704	\$3,140,499	431	61	6

Service Costs for FFY 2018-19

Total projected costs for IPE services are \$106,505,000. Additionally, the cost for assessment services is projected at \$20,342,455. Total projected revenue needed for IPE and assessment services for FFY 2019 is \$126,847,455. The revenue available for IPE and assessment services is estimated to be \$125.3 million.

Some expenditures associated with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) initiatives such as pre-employment transition services, and Job Retention Services (discretionary services under Order of Selection) have not been factored into these projections. Until these costs are fully realized and included into service and cost projections, VR will continue its current management of waitlist categories under Order of Selection.

Order of Selection Policies

Individuals needing Supported Employment services are assessed as having a most significant disability. Additionally, individuals receiving Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Insurance benefits as a result of being determined to be disabled or blind are assessed as having at least a significant disability and are evaluated to determine whether they meet the criteria for individuals with most significant disabilities.

After an individual is found eligible for VR services, an OOS determination is completed. Additional evaluations or assessments to make this determination may be needed. The VR counselor and individual jointly determine the individual’s OOS priority category by evaluating his or her functional limitations, anticipated services needed, and the duration of the services.

This policy does not affect an individual who began to receive services under an approved individualized plan for employment prior to the implementation date of OOS, or those individuals who are in need of post-employment services.

VR officially notifies all individuals of their individual OOS determination. Individuals not immediately activated for development of an employment plan are offered Information and Referral services and the option to be placed on a waiting list until employment plan development services can be initiated. Individuals on the waiting list are contacted annually to determine if additional information is available. As resources become available, those with the most significant disabilities are selected first for vocational rehabilitation services, those with significant disabilities second, and all other eligible individuals selected last.

Order of Selection Priority Category Description

Individuals with Most Significant Disabilities (Priority Category 1)

An eligible individual with a disability which:

1. Seriously limits three or more functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome;
2. Requires three or more primary services;
3. Requires services which must be provided over an extended period of time (at least 12 months); and
4. Requires services that are not likely to be corrected through surgical intervention and/or other treatment modes.

Individuals with Significant Disabilities (Priority Category 2)

An eligible individual with a disability which:

1. Seriously limits one or two functional capacities, in terms of an employment outcome;
2. Requires two or more primary services;
3. Requires services which must be provided over an extended period of time (at least six months); OR
4. The individual is a recipient of Social Security Disability Benefits (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) as a result of disability or blindness.

Other Eligible Individuals (Priority Category 3)

An eligible individual with a disability which:

1. Limits one or more major life's activities; and/or
2. Services are expected to last less than six months.

VR provides Job Retention Services (discretionary services to eligible individuals regardless of order of selection, who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment). This is a new option created by WIOA. Between May 2016 and January 2018, 658 customers were released from the OOS wait list and received Job Retention Services.

n) Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds

To meet the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) collaborates and contracts with community partners in order to be able to provide Supported Employment Services. For FFY 2017-18, Supported Employment services are funded solely by Title I funding, as Title VI-B funding was not federally approved for this fiscal year. These funds are available on a state wide basis. Florida VR uses the majority of its Supported Employment expenditures on allowable services to youth.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) presents VR with the opportunity to provide a wide array of services with a focus on youth. Additional opportunities available include the provision of Extended Services to youth for up to four years or until 24 years of age, as funds permit. VR is now also authorized to provide supported employment services up to 24 months and may extend this time period if necessary.

VR has increased its age range of services to include 14 year olds. VR has focused on youth services and has expanded several options designed to help youth achieve employment outcomes. These options allow youth to gain a variety of skills and exposure to multiple career options, and are designed to provide skills and direction for youth so that when they are ready for Supported Employment services they have skills and knowledge to help their efforts be successful.

Goal 1: Increase the number of individuals with most significant disabilities who receive Supported Employment services.

VR will:

Continue to provide supported employment services on a statewide basis through Title I funds. Statewide allocation of funds allows for equal delivery of services throughout Florida. Individuals may receive supported employment services using a combination of Title I funds, and revenues generated from Social Security reimbursements, community rehabilitation partners, or other state program revenues.

Provide a variety of training and awareness programs designed to increase the awareness of supported employment as a vocational service for individuals with the most significant disabilities. VR Senior Program Consultants have increased outreach activities with a focus on state and local education partnerships. The VR consultants have provided trainings with a focus on sharing information to assist youth, adults, and families in their consideration of pursuing Supported Employment Services.

Review pilot and innovative employment practices and assess the feasibility of replicating programs with successful strategies.

VR has initiated Discovery Services, a person-centered planning tool as a way to increase the number of individuals with significant and complex disabilities receiving supported employment services. Discovery provides an opportunity for individuals to move seamlessly from this person centered assessment and planning to Supported Employment Services.

VR has initiated a Supported Employment Customized Placement Benchmark to incentives providers to work with individuals who will need more intense supports and assistance to become successfully employed. Training opportunities were developed for providers and VR staff on this customized employment strategy.

Goal 2: Use Title I funds for Supported Employment services to achieve the maximum number of quality employment outcomes for individuals with most significant disabilities

with a focus on youth.

- Use Title I funds to provide supported employment services as specified in the Individualized Plan for Employment for youth.
- Purchase supported employment services based upon established performance benchmarks. The contract for supported employment focuses on performance and reinforces the focus on successful outcomes for individuals served.
- Funds may also be used for related customized employment strategies of Supported self-Employment Services
- Provide up to four years of extended services for youth 24 and under when appropriate
- VR Consultants have provided extensive outreach to educators, community providers, individuals, families, community partners, VR staff to promote Supported Employment as an opportunity for youth to become successful in becoming employed and developing a career path.
- VR works closely with the Statewide Employment First Interagency Committee. This group focuses on promoting competitive integrated employment as a first choice for youth and adults with disabilities in Florida.
- The Program Development and Assistance Bureau provides technical assistance and support to a wide variety of stakeholders.
- VR has provided youth receiving subminimum wage employment training opportunities to encourage their consideration of competitive integrated employment opportunities. There is a four hour course focused on self-advocacy, communication, employment options in local communities, how to obtain supports and services, and other related topics.

Goal 3: Increase Supported Employment training opportunities for VR Counselors, Community Rehabilitation service staff, families, and individuals.

VR will:

- Increase supported employment training opportunities for VR counselors, providers, families, and individuals.
- Participate in the development of a consortium of providers designed to identify, share, and promote innovative employment practices.
- Promote awareness of social security benefits planning as a way to fund extended services.
- Continue to provide joint training opportunities for VR employees and the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD).
- Provide funding to support collaboration between VR and other community resources through networking and leadership activities.
- Participate as an advisory member on a variety of grants from the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council that provide training and collaborative activities for providers, counselors, and other agency employees.

Goal 4: Leverage resources for extended ongoing support services.

VR will:

- Participate as a key member of the Employment First Interagency Committee. This committee is composed of nine agencies/organizations. The focus is on competitive integrated employment as a preferred option for youth and adults. The group also works on a state wide level to leverage and collaborate on the use of resources to benefit all of the individuals served by the agencies. This includes mutual training, technical assistance, advocacy and other mutually beneficial activities.
- Continue to work with APD to make sure that referred customers know about the extended service resources they can get through Medicaid Waiver Funding and/or general revenue funding.
- Continue to work with a network of providers to provide technical assistance and support of innovative projects that promote employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities.
- Provide training on the availability of funding ongoing support through Ticket to Work-Employment Network partnerships, natural supports, and Social Security Work Incentives as possible resources for ongoing supports.
- Encourage the use of employer and natural supports as a resource for ongoing supports.
- Enhance relationships with businesses and employers to let them know that on-the-job supports for individuals in supported employment are available. VR will continue efforts to strengthen community partnerships to increase access to appropriate employment services.
- Use the Business Relations Team to provide training and technical assistance to employers interested in working with VR customers. They will also develop positive relationships with employers to increase employment opportunities.
- Use the AbilitiesWork Help Desk as a resource to link employers to qualified jobseekers with disabilities. VR is a partner in the development of and administers the AbilitiesWork Help Desk, a collaboration between the state's Workforce system, Division of Blind Services, and APD.

o) State's Strategies

Council Support

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) continues to provide support for the Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC) and Florida Independent Living Council (FILC). VR allocates funds for the operation of FRC to achieve the goals and objectives in their strategic plan. FRC participates as an active strategic partner with VR in carrying out the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act. VR and FILC operate under a contract which aligns with the State Plan for Independent Living.

Use of Innovation and Expansion Funds

VR recognizes Innovation and Expansion projects as beneficial and complementary to WIOA-related initiatives. Following a formal procurement process, VR has entered into contracts for five Innovation and Expansion projects, described below. Contracts for the projects run through SFY 2020.

1. The Business Center for Diversity and Inclusion (BCDI) – Operated by The Diversity Initiative, Inc. (TDI). TDI is providing a “no fee” Business Center provides consultation, development, training, and support services to local businesses and organizations to facilitate employment placement for individuals with unique abilities. The BCDI serves Pasco, Pinellas, Hillsborough, and Hernando counties.
2. The Arc-2-Work: a work-skills training program – Operated by Arc of Alachua County. The Arc-2-Work program is providing pre-employment training and participation in volunteering positions to high school students and clients of the Arc that will foster employment placement for individuals with unique abilities in Alachua County.
3. The Industry Readiness Training (IRT) Program – Operated by Brevard Achievement Center. The IRT Program is providing pre-employment training and participation in volunteering positions that will foster employment placement for individuals with unique abilities in Brevard County.
4. Discovering Your Potential (DYP) – Operated by Gulfstream Goodwill Industries, Inc. The DYP Program is providing highly focused, intensive discovery, training, and support to individuals with unique abilities in order to increase employment outcomes in Indian River, St. Lucie, Martin, and Okeechobee counties.
5. Discovering Your Potential (DYP) – Operated by Gulfstream Goodwill Industries, Inc. The DYP Program is providing highly focused, intensive discovery, training, and support to individuals with unique abilities in order to increase employment outcomes in Palm Beach County.

Rehabilitation Technology

Rehabilitation Technology is provided through a contractual agreement with the Center for Assistive, Rehabilitation and Robotics Technologies at the University of South Florida. The program provides rehabilitation technology assessment and evaluation services for VR customers across all stages of the rehabilitation process. Rehabilitation technology includes a range of services and devices that supplement and enhance individual functions. It includes services like job redesign or worksite modifications that improve the work environment.

Assistive Technology Services and Devices

VR sponsors the Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology Project that is directed by the Assistive Technology Advisory Council in accordance with Section 413.407, Florida Statutes. The project provides for the coordination and delivery of appropriate, cost-effective, state-of-the-art assistive technology services and devices on a statewide basis. The Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology, Inc. (FAAST), is a not-for-profit corporation for which the Assistive Technology Advisory Council acts as the board of directors, manages the project, and provides administrative and technical support to the council.

FAAST is responsible for administering a low interest loan authority that provides funding to individuals with disabilities who may be unable to qualify for traditional loans and bank financing to purchase assistive technology devices.

Assistive technology includes both devices and services. A device is any item or piece of equipment used to maintain or improve the functional capabilities of a person with a disability. Many high-tech and low-tech devices are available to help people with disabilities in daily living tasks, communication, education, work, and recreation.

Expansion and Improvement of Services

Results gained through the Innovation and Expansion projects described above will contribute to increased employment opportunities for VR customers. In addition to the innovation and expansion projects, VR's strategic plan contains the following initiatives anticipated to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities:

- Develop and implement all components of the VR Business Relations Program.
- Redesign and implement pre-employment services for transition-age customers.
- Design and implement a program about service alternatives for customers to use in making an informed choice prior to entering subminimum wage employment.
- Design and implement enhancements to the Vendor Profile document for customer use in making informed choices regarding employment providers.

Outreach to Individuals with Disabilities who are Minorities and/or who have been Unserviced or Underserved

VR continues to assess its services to individuals with the most significant disabilities and individuals who may be unserved or underserved, as well as those with the most significant disabilities who may be from minority populations. VR will be completing its next CSNA during FFY2018-19, which will further identify unserved and/or underserved groups, as well as recommendations for how to better serve these groups. Strategic projects and local-level outreach activities include the following:

- Develop and implement all components of the VR Business Relationship Program.
- Redesign and implement pre-employment services for transition-age customers.
- Design and implement a program about service alternatives for customers to use in making an informed choice prior to entering subminimum wage employment.
- Design and implement enhancements to the Vendor Profile document for customer use in making informed choices regarding employment providers.
- Continue to explore partnership opportunities with community/faith-based

organizations. Develop contact lists of faith-based and other diverse programs as resources for partnership opportunities.

- Continue to identify outreach activities conducted by VR area offices for underrepresented populations. Conduct outreach in local communities to promote VR as an agency, and help individuals with disabilities who are minorities or who may be unserved or underserved to return or remain in the workplace.
- Continue to conduct outreach to migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families through contracts with community-based organizations and other partners.
- Continue to implement activities outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding with the Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe.

Improving and Expanding VR Services for Students with Disabilities

WIOA provides great opportunities for VR to increase transition services and opportunities to youth with disabilities. Increased information and referral to transition age youth is built into WIOA, and VR has already begun providing more transition service-related information to youth. Strategies noted below are anticipated to increase opportunities for students with disabilities.

- Continue to offer Third-Party Cooperative Arrangements (TPCA) to all school districts annually. Although VR approaches and offers TPCA partnerships to all school districts in Florida, the partnership is dependent on the individual district's decision to participate. VR has recently hired another transition administrator to ensure that information is provided consistently to all school districts, and to coordinate and monitor active and potential TPCA partnerships. The current arrangements will expire on June 30, 2018. VR is in the process of revising the contractual agreement it offers to school districts, but new contracts have not been developed yet. Once developed, if the contract changes the way VR delivers Transition services, the State Plan will be amended as needed.
- Continue to provide activities for youth and students designed to assist in developing a concept of work, navigating the community, and obtaining work experience during high school. Pre-Employment Transition Services include vocational evaluation, career guidance and counseling, work readiness and self-advocacy training, and experiential activities such as community-based work experience and on-the-job training. Support services include assistive technology and services, transportation and uniforms. Intensive services are designed for those who need additional support with appropriate work behavior, require repetition to acquire skills, build endurance to work, and identify the right fit or environment for work. These services include Discovery, Youth Peer Mentoring, Project SEARCH, services provided under Third-party Cooperative Arrangements with school districts, and tuition, books and supplies for Post-Secondary Education programs.
- Additional initiatives are under way to increase provider capacity and offer more opportunities to youth. These include approval of CareerSource Florida to provide pre-placement services, revision of Certified Business and Technical Assistance Consultants (CBTAC) recertification procedures, and increase in CBTAC and Discovery providers. VR is also partnering with Volunteer Florida, Centers for Independent Living, Florida ARC, and High School High Tech to offer more OJT and community work experiences.

Improving Community Rehabilitation Programs

VR assesses its business processes and organizational capacity on an ongoing basis to make consistent improvements. Results of the FFY 2014-15 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment did not indicate a need to establish or develop community rehabilitation programs, although it was indicated that employment providers have a need to better promote and raise awareness of their services.

In April 2017, VR established the Field and Provider Relations Unit (FLPR) within its Bureau of Vendor and Contracted Services (BVCS), to better connect employment service providers to field operations. This unit works complimentary to the Monitoring and Employment Contracting Unit (MECU) to ensure that providers have the tools and resources needed to provide quality services to VR customers. The Field and Provider Relations Unit has 7 Area Provider Liaisons housed throughout VR's service areas. The supervisor is housed in VR headquarters in Tallahassee.

MECU and FLPR work together to engage providers on a regular basis and deliver support and consistent information. BVCS will be engaging the providers on a quarterly basis through face-to-face meetings, area wide provider trainings, and a Provider Engagement Conference Call. FLPR Provider Liaisons hold bi-annual face-to-face meetings with providers in their service area. During these meetings the MECU Provider Managers, Provider Liaisons, and CRP staff discuss internal agency changes, CRP performance and concerns, as well as provide individualized service training if needed. Another component of provider engagement efforts are planned area wide group provider trainings, and a management level provider engagement call that gives CRP staff access to BVCS leadership. The first Provider Engagement Conference call took place in November 2017. CRP staff had access to BVCS leadership to ask questions and learn about updates. FLPR and MECU are working to build provider capacity by revamping the provider onboarding and orientation process.

MECU recently developed a new Intake Process for Provider Applicants. The Applicant's packet goes through several vetting processes before being considered for approval. After the initial intake and background screening is completed, the Applicant goes through an Onboarding. Prior to scheduling the Onboarding, the Applicant is sent a Welcome Guide. The Welcome Guide was developed by the Managers and includes the Manual, Helpful Tips, contact information and resource documents. The Welcome Guide is sent to the Applicant through the mail. Once the Welcome Guide has been received, the Manager will schedule a call to complete the Onboarding. The Manager will go over the Welcome Guide, provide technical support, and answer any questions. After Onboarding, the Provider Liaison will schedule an Orientation. The Orientation provides the Applicant the opportunity to meet face-to-face with the Liaison and Area staff. Both units have put great effort into standardizing provider materials and resources, and centralizing provider information by creating a dedicated page on the VR external website for provider resources.

Additional initiatives for these units are to identify required training for VR providers and new provider staff, and to develop a Provider Newsletter, which is rolling out in January 2018. VR anticipates the work of these units to be beneficial in improving relations with VR employment service providers, leading to improved services for VR customers.

Strategies to Improve the Performance Related to Goals, Priorities, and Performance Indicators

Figure 9.07 Federal Standards and Indicators

Federal Performance Indicators and Targets	Actual Performance (FFY 17)	Previous (FFY 16)
Indicator 1.1: Change in Employment Outcomes (RSA Target: Increase over prior year)	+265	+419
Indicator 1.2: Percent of Employment Outcomes (RSA Target: 55.8%)	37.9%	40.8%
Indicator 1.3: Competitive Employment Outcome (Primary) (RSA Target: 72.6%)	96.94%	97.7%
Indicator 1.4: Significance of Disability (Primary) (RSA Target: 62.4%)	92.56%	99.5%
Indicator 1.5: Earnings Ratio (Primary) (RSA Target: 52%)	55%	53%
Indicator 1.6: Self-Support (RSA Target: 53%)	54.53%	60.2%
Indicator 2.1: Ratio of Minority to Non-Minority Service Rate (RSA Target: 80%)	94%	95%

VR’s rehabilitation rate remains below the federal target, but has increased over the past two years, as has the overall number of customer employment outcomes. This is expected as VR continues to release customers from the Category 3 wait list.

VR collaborates with partners at the state and local levels to maximize employment services for people with disabilities. VR anticipates that the following projects will have a positive impact on program performance.

- Support employers and community partnerships through the Business Relations program.
- Expand the Youth Peer Mentoring pilot to all VR areas.
- Provide Career Counseling / Information and Referral (CCIR) services to individuals participating in subminimum wage employment. Due to the positive response to CCIR services, VR is developing an orientation and follow-up process for CCIR service recipients who expressed interest in VR services.
- Assist customers in making informed choices about employment providers through use of the Service Provider Choice Directory.
- Redesign and implement pre-employment services for transition-age customers.
- Implement additional mental health training for counselors, and develop transitional employment, Individual Placement and Support, and peer specialist models to improve success with individuals with severe and persistent mental illness.
- Expand the capacity for providing Discovery and Customized Employment services.
- Establish additional casework quality assurance review practices to validate data entry.
- Continue data validation practices to detect errors prior to reporting.
- Expand use of Benefits Planning services for Social Security recipients that will promote self-support. Purchase these services when not available from SSA.

Strategies for the Statewide Workforce Investment System to Assist Individuals with Disabilities

WIOA presents requirements and opportunities for VR to strengthen its partnership with entities of the Statewide Workforce Development System. In addition to requirements outlined in WIOA, the following strategies will increase partnerships with the statewide workforce development system to further help jobseekers with disabilities.

- Continue implementation of WIOA with other core programs, including design of the one-stop career center system and integrated performance accountability system.
- Collaborate with and offer training to CareerSource Florida and Employment Networks to provide services.
- Continue area directors' and representatives' participation on the local Workforce Boards.
- Continue to promote VR's presence in CareerSource Florida through co-location of VR units in One-Stop Career Centers, employees being out-stationed, and/or through regular visits by VR employees to One-Stop Career Centers.
- Develop a network of qualified benefits planners to augment the SSA contracts for Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) program services. SSA contracted networks are insufficient in quantity, and they have reprioritized their service population so that ticketholders, youth and SSI/SSDI beneficiaries who are not yet working or ready to work are in last place. VR believes benefits planning must be provided early to families and youth, and will purchase these services when not available through SSA capacity.

Equitable Access

Since 2013, VR has made great progress in accommodation and access to services for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Specific accomplishments include completion of revised best practices guides for services and communication, as well as hiring a specialized consultant in the field of deaf-blindness to develop best practices, provide consultation, training, and advocacy with stakeholders involved in these cases. VR also repurposed a vacated FTE into a Deaf-Blind Specialist position, which was filled during FFY 2014.

Key administrators from VR and FDBS held monthly meetings to revise and update the Memorandum of Agreement, develop strategies, discuss training needs, create informational guides needed by both agencies for this population, and provide case consultation. Additional VR strategies and activities to increase equal access to individuals requesting services are as follows:

- Develop a comprehensive safety plan for monitoring VR facilities statewide. Specific components include a process for reporting defective/unsafe working conditions, safety and facilities management training for area staff, a move manual, a statewide safety manual, statewide first aid information, furniture inspection instructions, and a facility security/building access policy at HQ.
- Continue to use interpreters and translators and VR's online resources as well as the websites of other partners and stakeholders (where permitted) to reach underserved populations and increase communication with customers.
- Offer reasonable accommodations to give equal access to services, and make sure materials and other program information are available in English, Spanish, and Haitian-

Creole for various agencies, employers, churches, community leaders, health clinics, and other settings.

- Continue to assign counselors and consultants to serve specialized populations, such as the deaf and hard-of-hearing, transition students, mental health customers, and brain and spinal cord injury customers.
- Collaborate with CareerSource Florida and other One-stop system partners to implement universal design principles into the workforce development system's facilities and operations, with the intent to include universal design as a separate component of the One-stop career center certification process.

p) Evaluation and Reports of Progress

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), in collaboration with the Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC), established three strategic goals for FFY 2015. These goals and priorities were developed based on an analysis of VR's performance on the federal standards and indicators, the preliminary results of the statewide needs assessment, and input from customers, providers, and other stakeholders.

The following section provides VR's evaluation and report of progress towards achieving its strategic goals.

Review of Current Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Goal 1: Ensure Customer success and satisfaction by improving business and support processes.

Objective 1.1: Improve and align VR business processes to support WIOA

implementation **Strategy: 1.** Develop and implement all components of the VR

Business Relationship Program. **Performance Measure:**

- Full integration and implementation of all components, including business services, field services operations and IT support systems

Actual Performance:

The VR Business Relations Program (BRP) developed processes to streamline their operations and better integrate into field service operations. BRP has developed partnerships with businesses and industry sectors to expand customized employment and summer worksite opportunities. BRP staff have provided numerous trainings and presentations to businesses, providers, VR staff and local groups such as Chambers and trade-group chapters. BRP implemented and customized Salesforce software to track employer information and outreach activities, and allows for reporting out area level employer and performance data. BRP also participates in collaborative activities such as the ApprenticeshipUSA grant team and USDOL-ETAs Integrated Business Services Cohort.

Strategy: 2. Redesign and implement pre-employment services for transition-age customers.

Performance Measures:

- Services re-aligned to new WIOA guidelines and implemented within required timeframes
- Budget set-aside requirements met

Actual Performance:

VR has recently lowered the age limit for Transition services to 14 years of age, and implemented pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) through the following activities-

- Expansion of Third Party Cooperative Agreements with school districts to include pre-employment transition services, and providing updated training and resources to schools, providers and VR staff.
- Piloting Youth Peer Mentoring Services in 3 counties, and entering into an Intensive Technical Assistance Plan to expand the program statewide.
- Developing the Student Transition Activities Record (STAR) Program to track Pre-ETS referrals, and providing training to school districts, providers and VR staff. VR is also working with

stakeholders to develop ways to engage school districts not using the STAR program.

VR is still working toward meeting the Pre-ETS budget requirements, and is working with WINTAC on a Technical Assistance Agreement to better plan future services.

Strategy: 3. Design and implement a program about service alternatives for customers to use in making an informed choice prior to entering subminimum wage employment.

Performance Measure:

- Number of people diverted from or transitioned out of subminimum wage jobs

Actual Performance:

VR has successfully implemented Career Counseling/ Information and Referral (CCIR) services for participants in subminimum wage employment. During SFY 2016-17, approximately 4,780 participants received CCIR services. VR has approved 21 agencies and 315 individuals to provide this service. VR also provides internal and external stakeholders technical assistance and support on compliance with Section 511.

CCIR services have received positive feedback from providers and participants, and VR is working with stakeholders to develop a follow-up process for CCIR participants who express an interest in VR services or employment.

Strategy: 4. Design and implement enhancements to the Vendor Profile document for customer use in making informed choices regarding employment providers.

Performance Measures:

- Establish baseline use of Vendor Profile
- Customer satisfaction with Vendor Profile

Actual Performance:

VR launched the Service Provider Choice Directory (SPCD) in August 2017, through the VR external website. Prior to its launch, VR delivered live orientation webinars for VR staff and providers to discuss the information available in the Directory and system use. Usage statistics for October- December 2017 are below.

Usage Statistics for Website: <http://ChoiceDirectory.Rehabworks.org> (external)

- Date Range: October 1st, 2017 – December 30th, 2017
- Total number of Visit During this Date Range: ~114,132
- Total Number of Pages Viewed by Visitors: ~1,544,497

Usage Statistics for Website: <http://it-in-web-01/vendorprofile> (internal)

- Date Range: October 1st, 2017 – December 30th, 2017
- Total number of Visit During this Date Range: ~ 3,442

Total Number of Pages Viewed by Visitors: ~ 6,309

Objective 1.2: Redesign supports for VR service & business processes

Strategy: 1. Coordinate and develop the VR services portion of the statewide plan.

Performance Measure:

- Timely submission of all required information

Actual Performance:

VR successfully developed and submitted the VR services portion of the Unified State Plan.

Strategy: 2. Design and implement an approach for integration of performance and business intelligence information.

Performance Measures:

- Number of revised management reports implemented
- Satisfaction of affected VR Managers with revised reports

Actual Performance:

This strategy is on hold until after all current reporting processes are modified to meet WIOA requirements.

Goal 2: Ensure Employee success and satisfaction by improving development opportunities and workplace environment.

Objective 2.1: Provide a comprehensive workforce planning and development system

Strategy: 1. Implement employee onboarding and mentoring processes statewide.

Performance Measures:

- Percentage of new employees completing all requirements within 90 days
- Percentage of new employees assigned a mentor within 10 days from start date
- Protégé/mentor/supervisor satisfaction ratings

Actual Performance:

From June to July 2016, a series of webinars provided VR staff information on the new mentoring program, how to use the system, and setting up personal profiles. This concluded with a Mentor / Protégé Matching Day. The Mentoring Program officially kicked off on August 1st. The VR Organization and Employee Support Section (OES) is available via the Mentorship Program Help Desk email to assist with any Mentorship program questions, and IMAP software assistance.

Strategy: 2. Develop an agency-wide workforce and succession management plan, including a process to capture organizational knowledge.

Performance Measures:

- Process accurately identifies critical positions and information
- Participant satisfaction with process / components

Strategy: 3. Design a program for identifying and developing VR Leadership candidates.

Performance Measures:

- Successful pilot/ rollout of program
- Percent of VR employees initiating participation
- Participant satisfaction with program components

Actual Performance (3 & 4):

VR's Supervisor Succession Training Program (SSTP) was successfully launched statewide in October 2016. As of December 2017, 32 participants have successfully graduated from SSTP.

Strategy: 4. Develop standards, guidelines and curriculum for VR employee training.

Performance Measures:

- Improvement in climate survey items: Q8. Opportunities to learn and grow- 83.61%
- Q11. I am satisfied with the training provided by VR- 77.19%
- Percentage of VR employees successfully completing identified training requirements

Actual Performance:

VR's Learning and Development Office (LDO) has developed standardized resources for designing VR training and courses, that allow curriculum to be designed in various (blended) formats. LDO has collaborated with program and administrative staff to revise New Counselor Training materials, and provides consultation and support to VR staff on training aspects when launching new programs or services.

Objective 2.2: Provide a safe, accessible, and adequately equipped work environment

Strategy: 1. Develop a comprehensive safety plan for monitoring VR facilities statewide. Specific components include a process for reporting defective/unsafe working conditions, safety and facilities management training for area staff, a move manual, a statewide safety manual, statewide first aid info, furniture inspection instructions, and a facility security / building access policy at HQ.

Performance Measures:

- Improvement in climate survey item: Q17. Physically safe work environment- 81.94%
- Pulse survey results following implementation of each improvement

Actual Performance:

VR has developed a comprehensive safety plan and resources that are used in all VR offices and facilities. This strategy continues operationally.

Explanation of Performance:

Strategies that contributed to achievement of goals and priorities

Following the previously established planning process, VR Senior Leaders regularly review progress and update strategies as needed. Annually, the Senior Leadership Team completed a thorough review of the strategic plan, and then held a planning meeting to determine which projects to include in the updated strategic plan. Strategy updates are provided quarterly and

reported out to VR Leadership and stakeholders.

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) completed their monitoring visit with VR in April 2017. In addition, VR is planning for its next Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), which will inform agency planning in FFYs 2019-21. VR will update its strategic goals and priorities after receipt of the RSA Monitoring Report and completion of the next CSNA. Currently, VR agency priorities are to ensure IT systems are fully capable of collecting data required for federal reporting, and to refine its service delivery procedures to meet Pre-ETS budget requirements while continuing to meet the needs of other customers.

Smooth operation of the strategic planning process is in part due to VR senior leaders' commitment to provide all supports necessary for project teams to be successful. Senior leaders also realize the value of feedback received from VR customers, personnel, stakeholders, and concerned citizens. Arrangements are in place so that anyone can provide feedback on the state plan, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, using a dedicated email address on the Florida VR website, www.rehabworks.org/plans.shtml. The email address is vrplan@vr.fldoe.org. Concerted effort has also been made to standardize and streamline VR operational processes and procedures, such as staff development, planning, IT governance and development schedules, and business intelligence functions.

Barriers that impeded achievement of goals and priorities

Despite obstacles such as changes to waitlist management, fiscal strains, preparing for and implementing Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), staff turnover and rising caseload sizes, VR made great progress towards achieving its strategic projects and agency priorities. When waitlist categories were closed due to fiscal and human resource deficits, field staff used this time to reconnect and engage customers, as well as close cases for customers no longer interested in services. Budget and caseload projection models were also developed during this time, and have allowed VR to better manage and plan.

Preparing for WIOA implementation forced VR to reexamine its business processes and organizational structure, which has resulted in more efficient and standardized operations. It has also allowed VR to develop true partnerships and connections with other employment-focused entities. These improvements, borne out of necessity, have increased VR's ability to plan for the future, as well as to be flexible when barriers are encountered.

**Figure 9.07
Federal Standards and Indicators**

Federal Performance Indicators and Targets	Actual Performance (FFY 17)	Previous (FFY 16)
Indicator 1.1: Change in Employment Outcomes (RSA Target: Increase over prior year)	+265	+419
Indicator 1.2: Percent of Employment Outcomes (RSA Target: 55.8%)	37.9%	40.8%
Indicator 1.3: Competitive Employment Outcome (Primary) (RSA Target: 72.6%)	96.94%	97.7%
Indicator 1.4: Significance of Disability (Primary) (RSA Target: 62.4%)	92.56%	99.5%

Indicator 1.5: Earnings Ratio (Primary) (RSA Target: 52%)	55%	53%
Indicator 1.6: Self-Support (RSA Target: 53%)	54.53%	60.2%
Indicator 2.1: Ratio of Minority to Non-Minority Service Rate (RSA Target: 80%)	94%	95%

Explanation of Performance:

VR’s rehabilitation rate remains below the federal target, but has increased over the past two years, as has the overall number of customer employment outcomes. This is expected as VR continues to release customers from the Category 3 wait list. VR has multiple strategies and initiatives anticipated to improve the rehabilitation rate, overall agency performance, and customer outcomes.

Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

In FFY 2013-14, with the agreement of the FRC, VR continued to use funds designated under this section to support the functions of the FRC and Florida Independent Living Council (FILC), and to support opportunities for improving the efficiency of service delivery.

Actual Performance:

VR continues to support and collaborate with the FRC and FILC as required in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. In SFY 2016-17, a total of 15,222 independent living plans were developed, and 24,339 independent living goals were set through the network of 16 Centers for Independent Living (CIL). CILs served a total of 19,452 individuals with significant disabilities. Information and Referral services were provided to approximately 22,932 individuals and Community Transition Assistance was provided to 56 individuals.

VR recognizes Innovation and Expansion projects as beneficial and complementary to WIOA-related initiatives. Following a formal procurement process, VR has entered into contracts for five Innovation and Expansion projects, described below. Contracts for the projects run through SFY 2020.

1. The Business Center for Diversity and Inclusion (BCDI) – Operated by The Diversity Initiative, Inc. (TDI). TDI is providing a “no fee” Business Center provides consultation, development, training, and support services to local businesses and organizations to facilitate employment placement for individuals with unique abilities. The BCDI serves Pasco, Pinellas, Hillsborough, and Hernando counties.
2. The Arc-2-Work: a work-skills training program – Operated by Arc of Alachua County. The Arc-2-Work program is providing pre-employment training and participation in volunteering positions to high school students and clients of the Arc that will foster employment placement for individuals with unique abilities in Alachua County.
3. The Industry Readiness Training (IRT) Program – Operated by Brevard Achievement Center. The IRT Program is providing pre-employment training and participation in volunteering positions that will foster employment placement for individuals with unique abilities in Brevard County.
4. Discovering Your Potential (DYP) – Operated by Gulfstream Goodwill Industries, Inc. The DYP Program is providing highly focused, intensive discovery, training, and support to individuals

with unique abilities in order to increase employment outcomes in Indian River, St. Lucie, Martin, and Okeechobee counties.

5. Discovering Your Potential (DYP) – Operated by Gulfstream Goodwill Industries, Inc. The DYP Program is providing highly focused, intensive discovery, training, and support to individuals with unique abilities in order to increase employment outcomes in Palm Beach County.

Explanation of Performance:

These collaborative efforts helped strengthen leadership and improve services, which led to increased employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. It is anticipated that the new Innovation and Expansion projects will contribute positively to VR's rehabilitation rate and provide more informed customer choice and options.

Evaluation of Supported Employment Program

Review of Section (n) Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI-B Funds in 2016-17

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is committed to providing quality Supported Employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities. VR collaborates and contracts with community rehabilitation providers across the state of Florida. VR has focused this year on increasing the quality and capacity of the employment providers. VR may now provide Supported Employment services for up to 24 months, if necessary.

VR has also focused on expanding services to Transition Youth. The Career Exploration, Workplace Readiness, Community-Based Work Experiences, Self-Advocacy, Youth Peer Mentoring, and Postsecondary Educational Counseling are all services that were expanded to assist youth in their eventual pursuit of employment.

VR may also offer youth extended services for up to four years, as necessary, and as funds permit.

Goal 1: Increase the number of individuals with most significant disabilities who receive Supported Employment Services.

- VR continues to provide Supported Employment Services on a statewide basis through Title VI-B funds, and with Title I funds when Title VI-B funds are expended
- Fully expend Title VI-B funds for the provision of Supported Employment services after reserving no more than 5% for program administration
- Provide a variety of training and outreach programs designed to increase the awareness of Supported Employment as an appropriate vocational program for individuals with most significant disabilities
- Review pilot and innovative employment practices and assess the feasibility of replicating programs using successful strategies

Update:

Supported Employment services were provided to adults and youth who required these services on a state wide basis. Supported Employment funds were used to pay for Placement, Stabilization, Transition, and placement for successful Employment Outcomes. Funds were fully

expended on services. Five percent or less was used to support program administration.

VR increased training opportunities for individuals, youth, counselors, providers, and other stakeholders to promote Supported Employment services as a first and preferred service option. Transition Youth services were expanded to offer an array of services that would support youth in pursuing competitive integrated employment opportunities. Fifty percent of the Title VI B funding was expended on youth 24 and under.

VR developed and implemented a Career Counseling Information and Referral Course for individuals participating in subminimum wage employment in 14 (C) entities as required under the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act. This course provides information that allow individuals to make an informed choice about current and future employment opportunities. Approximately 5,000 individuals participated in this training opportunity. Individuals who stated an interest in pursuing VR services will be provided the information and support needed to apply for VR services.

VR staff have worked with Employment First Partners, Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Project 10 staff, local Education Agencies and other partners to increase Third Party Cooperative Arrangements, Project SEARCH programs and other work experience programs that provide training opportunities that lead to employment.

VR staff have also collaborated with the Florida Association for Rehabilitation Facilities and the ARC of Florida to develop a package of VR services that would assist individuals with most significant disabilities to pursue competitive integrated employment opportunities.

Goal 2: Use Title VI, Part B funds to achieve the maximum number of quality employment outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities

- Use Title I funds, supplemented with Title VI B funds to provide Supported Employment services as specified in the individual plan for employment.
- Purchase Supported Employment services based upon established performance benchmarks. The contracts for Supported Employment focuses on performance and reinforces the focus on successful outcomes.
- Funds may also be used for related customized employment strategies and supported self-employment services.

Update:

VR provided Supported Employment services to individuals with most significant disabilities who requested these services. Data below represents VR's performance in serving Supported Employment customers.

SFY 2016-17 Supported Employment Performance Data

- Number of active cases: 8,553
- Number of Individualized Plans for Employment: 3,099
- Number of Employment Outcomes: 920

VR has increased the number of Supported Employment Providers throughout Florida. Additional training and support has been provided to new employment providers. VR has also added a Customized Job Placement benchmark to support individuals with most significant disabilities who may need a customized employment option.

Goal 3: Increase Supported Employment training opportunities for VR Counselors, Community Rehabilitation Providers, families and individuals.

- Increase Supported Employment training opportunities for VR counselors, providers, families, and individuals.
- Participate in the development of a consortium of providers designed to identify, share, and promote innovative employment practices.
- Promote awareness of social security benefits planning as a way to fund extended services.
- Continue to provide joint training opportunities for VR employees and the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD).
- Provide funding to support collaboration between VR and other community resources through networking and leadership activities.
- Participate as an advisory member on a variety of grants from the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council that provide training and collaborative activities for providers, counselors, and other agency employees.

Update:

The Supported Employment Senior Consultant continues to provide training on service delivery for individuals with the most significant disabilities to new counselors, as well as follow-up trainings and technical assistance to seasoned counselors and supervisors at conferences, meetings, and workshops.

VR Consultants provided training to families and members in the community as requested. These sessions are designed to provide information and a vision that Supported Employment services are designed for individuals with the most significant disabilities. They provide families and customers with the information they need to become successfully employed. The sessions were provided to the groups and organizations listed below. Additional presentations are made throughout the year to local stakeholder groups.

- Florida Developmental Disability Council
- Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities
- Florida ARC Membership
- Florida Rehabilitation Council
- Florida Project SEARCH Sites
- Certified Business and Technical Assistance Consultant Area Trainings
- Standing Transition Committees throughout Florida

- Individualized Technical Assistance and Trainings as requested
- Florida Department of Education – Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services
- Family Café Participants
- Visions Conference Attendees

VR Senior Consultants provide technical assistance and consultations on individual cases as requested by supervisors, family members, VR staff, and individual customers.

A number of strategies were used to support collaboration between VR and other community resources through networking and leadership activities listed below.

- Representation on the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council and Employment Task Force. This included helping develop pilot projects on a wide array of employment topics. Administrators were involved as task force members, on advisory committees, and as monitors of projects. The projects complimented and supported VR’s mission of helping individuals prepare for, get or keep a job.
- Presentations on Supported Employment at conferences around the state. Audiences included professionals, families, and students regarding employment options.
- Participation as a board member for the Florida Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE).
- Representation on the Statewide Employment First Initiative by VR’s Supported Employment and Transition Consultants.
- The VR Senior Consultant coordinated and developed training for providers and staff on Discovery and Customized Employment Services.

VR initiated and implemented training opportunities for adults who were participating in subminimum wage employment. This service was provided in collaboration with 14 (C) employers and community providers. 4,780 individuals received Career Counseling Information and Referral Services during the first year of the program. This course is designed to promote competitive integrated employment opportunities.

Goal 4: Leverage resources for extended ongoing support services

- Continue to work with APD to make sure that referred customers know about the resources for extended service they can get through Medicaid Waiver Funding and/or general revenue funding.
- Continue to work with a network of providers to provide technical assistance and support of innovative projects that promote employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities.
- Provide training on the availability of funding extended services through Ticket to Work-Employment Network partnerships, natural supports, and Social Security Work Incentives.

- Encourage the use of employer and natural supports as a resource for extended services.
- Enhance relationships with businesses and employers to let them know that on-the-job supports for individuals in Supported Employment are available. VR will continue efforts to strengthen community partnerships to increase access to appropriate employment services.
- Use the Business Relations Team to provide training and technical assistance to employers interested in working with VR customers. They will also develop positive relationships with employers to increase employment opportunities.
- Use the AbilitiesWork Help Desk as a resource to link employers to qualified jobseekers with disabilities. VR is a partner in the development of and administers the AbilitiesWork Help Desk, a collaboration between the state's Workforce system, Division of Blind Services, and APD.

Update:

VR continues to work closely with the Agency for Persons (APD) with Disabilities to assist VR customers in receiving seamless ongoing support services. VR and APD staff are working together to identify mutual customers and coordinate the needed services.

VR continues to expand its services to include Discovery and Customized Placement services to help individuals with most significant disabilities become employed. Discovery improves the quality of the placements, increases the success of the job placements, and reduces the need for intense follow up supports. Concentrated efforts are in place to continue to increase capacity across the state.

VR and APD consultants work together to provide training for VR counselors, waiver support coordinators, and for APD field staff on best practices in Supported Employment and the roles and responsibilities of all partners. Training included a focus on all of the possible extended service options.

VR may offer youth extended services for up to four years, as necessary, and as funds permit.

The Supported Employment administrator provides training to field staff on the multiple options available for extended services. The development of natural and employer supports available on the jobsite has been a specific focus of VR efforts.

q) Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services

Quality

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is committed to providing quality Supported Employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities. VR supports the individual in making employment choices consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and interests. The scope of services varies based on the amount, intensity, and support needed by each individual.

VR counselors work in partnership with the individual when developing the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). This plan guides the services and supports that are needed for that individual. The IPE is evaluated throughout the process and updated as needed.

The quality of Supported Employment outcomes is assessed individually. Each individual receives services that are determined based on the specific needs of that person. A key component of evaluating the service is the individual satisfaction with the services and supports, as well as a successful employment outcome.

VR makes every effort to provide opportunities for individuals to provide their feedback on the services they received from VR. This feedback is useful information in adjusting and improving VR services to better meet their needs. There are formal service surveys, public hearings and satisfaction surveys. The VR counselor has regular communications with the individual and the Supported Employment provider to monitor, provide counseling, and assist the individual, as needed.

VR recognizes that it is important to get feedback from the employer and provider's perspectives to determine the quality of service and make necessary improvements. They are also encouraged to let VR know at any point if support is needed.

Scope

The scope of Supported Employment services varies based on the amount, intensity, and type of support each person may need to obtain and maintain a job. VR provides the intensive initial services needed to help an individual with a most significant disability obtain and maintain a job of his/her choice.

Supported Employment makes possible competitive integrated employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities and for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred, and because of the severity of their disability, need ongoing support services in order to maintain their jobs.

Service limits have recently been increased from 18 months to 24 months. Under special circumstances, the customer and VR counselor may jointly agree in writing to extend the time, when doing so will achieve the employment outcome identified in the IPE.

Services are individually designed around the needs and desires of the individual and may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Initial placement

- Stabilization in the workplace
- Job Coaching
- Assistive Technology
- Specialized Job Training
- Social Skills Training
- Discovery
- Establishing formal and informal worksite-related expectations (e.g., time and attendance, dress, communication)
- Supported Self-Employment
- Customized Job Placement

VR has added Discovery as a service option to its array of Supported Employment services. It offers a more thorough person-centered planning approach for those individuals with the most significant and complex disabilities who may need a more customized approach to employment.

VR has also added a customized job placement option for individuals in Supported Employment who may need a more individualized job development process. Individuals receiving Supported Employment services will have access to this service as needed.

Post-Employment supports and services may be provided when an intensive need arises during the provision of ongoing extended services. This may occur when job duties substantially change, the work environment is altered or the impact of the individual's disability increases.

Extent

VR will continue to expand Supported Employment services by educating community members, providers, and relevant stakeholders on the need and advantages that Supported Employment provides for individuals and employers.

Supported Employment services are available for individuals with most significant needs who meet the criteria for VR services and supports.

VR has increased its focus on youth and expanded its Transition Youth services to begin at age 14. In addition VR has increased several initiatives designed for youth with most significant disabilities. The following experiences are anticipated to help youth in their desire to have a successful career.

- High School High Tech
- Project Search
- Inclusive Postsecondary Education programs
- Third Party Cooperative Transition Agreements
- Pre-Employment Transition Services

The VR Transition Youth program collaborates with education officials and partners to offer youth

with the most significant disabilities opportunities to gain work experiences that help them prepare for successful employment. These evidence-based applications of learning, which include internships and other work experiences, often lead to successful employment.

VR also provides the opportunity for youth to receive up to four years of extended services funded through VR, when necessary, and based on the availability of funding. This is the only situation where VR is permitted to provide extended services.

VR will continue to actively engage and partner in order to:

- Develop a collaborative agreement with APD specific to Supported Employment and removing or reducing barriers for employment for individuals with significant disabilities.
- Implement the Interagency Employment First Agreement between the nine signatory parties. Continue to implement the agreements at the local and state level with appropriate stakeholders.
- Maximize the quality of service delivery ensuring an efficient and effective referral process, individual program planning, and coordination of intensive vocational services with extended services available for youth and adults.
- Expand available services through youth-related initiatives.
- Seek additional resources for extended services through collaborations with agency partners, including APD, Agency for Healthcare Administration, Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Department of Education agencies, and other stakeholders.
- Collaborate with community organizations, employers, families, and support groups to develop natural supports for Supported Employment extended services.
- Distribute information and train counselors about Social Security Work Incentives. Increase awareness of using a Plan for Achieving Self-Sufficiency or other work incentives as an option for funding extended services. Include training on the new Able Act as a potential way for individuals to fund their own services.
- Provide opportunities for counselors, providers, and support coordinators to receive training on innovative employment strategies designed to promote employment success for individuals.

Extended Services

VR's approach for Supported Employment uses the nationally accepted "best practices" models of Supported Employment services and has added new customized strategies as well. The key to the approach is an emphasis on person-centered planning and facilitation of natural supports. Individualized job development is conducted and based on job-matching assessments, informed choice, strengths, interests, and skills. Individuals are assisted with employment planning and placement by selected providers. Job skills training is provided at the job site either by job coaches or through natural supports of existing resources.

Transition to Extended Services occurs when an individual has sufficient time to learn the tasks and is comfortable in the work culture, has had the supports addressed and is satisfied with the type of work and work hours. At the time of transition, the counselor, providers, individual, and others, as applicable, will have agreed that the individual is stable in their employment and

expected to succeed. VR counselors confirm this information with the individual, provider, and employer. They will continue to monitor the case until the person reaches a successful employment outcome of a minimum of 90 days of stabilized employment after transitioning to extended services.

VR continues to:

- Emphasize providing services to all racial/ethnic minorities
- Seek additional resources for extended services in collaboration with VR partners
- Collaborate with community organizations, families, and support groups to develop natural supports as an option for assisting customers on the job site
- Participate on interagency committees to expand initiatives and increase employment outcomes
- Distribute and provide technical assistance to counselors on the use of Social Security Work Incentives to help with funding extended services

Extended services are provided and/or funded by sources other than VR. VR works collaboratively with other state agencies and organizations to ensure that extended support services, identified on the individualized plan as needed for employment, are available for as long as the customer needs them.

A Senior Consultant serves as a statewide coordinator who monitors Supported Employment issues that arise in the field and serves as a resource person to field staff. The coordinator also assists leadership when implementing programmatic policies in accordance with federal mandates, developing effective programs, recommending training for Supported Employment staff, and other liaison duties as requested.