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- Increased employment outcomes
- Increased business engagement and retention

Objective 1.2 Improve communication with customers.

Strategy 1.2.1 Update publications and brochures to be more informative and user-friendly.

Strategy 1.2.2 Revise VR's website for ease of use, clarity of information, and accessibility.

Strategy 1.2.3. Implement a data-driven case review process to verify that contact timeframes are adhered to.

Measure of Success:

- Improved customer satisfaction survey results
- Reduced number of "no contact" closures
- Increased employment outcomes
- Reduced number of valid communication complaints made to the Ombudsman Unit

Goal 2. Increase organizational effectiveness by reducing complexity, streamlining processes, and encouraging a flexible, supportive workplace culture.

Objective 2.1 Streamline internal systems/processes.

Strategy 2.1.1 Simplify service delivery by creating a new electronic referral system that manages referrals to providers, documentation of services provided, and payment processes.

Strategy 2.1.2 Implement a new case management system that streamlines case documentation, accountability, and reporting.

Measure of Success:

- Reduced turnover rates
- Improved Climate Survey results
- Increased employment outcomes

Objective 2.2 Enhance availability and use of data.

Strategy 2.2.1 Improve data integrity by continuing to incorporate internal controls for data collection and reporting.

Strategy 2.2.2 Continue to improve ease of access to data to facilitate data-driven decision-making.

Measure of Success:

- Increased compliance with statutory requirements
- Reduced number of errors in data collection and reporting

Goal 3. Stabilize the VR workforce through improved quality of life for staff.

Objective 3.1 Develop the capacity of existing resources.

Strategy 3.1.1 Increase the availability and quality of training for all staff and all positions.

Strategy 3.1.2. Evaluate positions, roles, and organization of staff to maximize effectiveness and efficiency, including simplifying responsibilities via technical assistance from WINTAC.

Measure of Success:

- Reduced turnover rates
- Improved Climate Survey results
- Improved employment outcomes

Objective 3.2 Incentivize high quality performance.

Strategy 3.2.1. Explore options for improving compensation for staff members.

Measure of Success:

- Reduced turnover rates
- Improved Climate Survey results
- Increased employment outcomes

Goal 4. Maximize engagement with partners to enhance access to services for improved service delivery.

Objective 4.1 Document and implement partnerships.

Strategy 4.1.1. Continue to facilitate effective partnerships with CareerSource Florida, and its local boards, by collaborating on and implementing memorandums of understanding and infrastructure funding agreements to streamline services for job seekers and businesses.

Strategy 4.1.2. Continue to facilitate effective partnerships with state and local education agencies by collaborating on and implementing mechanisms to streamline services for students with disabilities.

Strategy 4.1.2. Continue to facilitate effective partnerships with state agencies that serve individuals with developmental and/or mental health disabilities by collaborating on and implementing mechanisms to streamline services for students with disabilities.

Measure of Success:

- Increased number of individuals served via partnerships
- Increased employment outcomes

Objective 4.2 Enhance the effectiveness of partnerships.

Strategy 4.2.1 Increase the availability and quality of training for partner organizations.

Measure of Success:

- Increased capacity of partners
- Increased employment outcomes

## **(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.

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).

Each month, the Executive Leadership Team looks at expenditure and revenue projections, numbers of individuals in each OOS category, numbers of individuals on the waitlist for services, and staff capacity, to determine whether to release individuals from the waitlist. Based on the available data, VR periodically releases individuals from the waitlist into service. The number of potentially eligible students with disabilities receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services is also a consideration.

**Figure 9.06**  
**Projected Outcome and Service Goals and Time Frames**  
**for Federal Fiscal Year 2020-21**

Priority Category	Projected Number Served	Average Case Cost	Projected Service Cost	Projected Successful Closures	Projected Unsuccessful Closures	Months to Complete
Category 1	28,643	\$1,930	\$54,485,158	3,290	5,676	22.4
Category 2	19,752	\$1,840	\$37,572,560	2,992	4,602	13.6
Category 3	790	\$1,739	\$1,502,750	442	70	6.8

**Service Costs for FFY 2020-23**

Total projected costs for IPE services are \$93,560,468. Additionally, the cost for assessment services is projected at \$23,229,531. Total projected revenue needed for IPE and assessment services for FFY 2019 is \$ \$116,790,000. The revenue available for IPE and assessment services is estimated to be \$ \$137.4 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

**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 (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 (at least six months); OR
4. The individual is a recipient of Social Security Disability Insurance 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 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 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 statewide 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. VR offers 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 statewide level to leverage and collaborate on the use of resources to benefit all 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.
- 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 job seekers 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**

In an effort to address executive order 19-31, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) continues to provide support and services that lead to advance knowledge and skills to find meaningful work and productive careers. Specifically, DVR provides support for students with disabilities and collaborates with customers in the areas of post-secondary vocational training and education, as well, job training and work-based learning to help individuals move into competitive integrated employment. During the State Fiscal Year (SFY) 18/19, DVR assisted businesses and employers with their workforce needs by connecting the talents, skills, and abilities of 5,924 customers with disabilities. This is a 24.7% increase from the previous SFY. In addition to helping more people receive employment outcomes, we increased the number of hours worked for those closures (29 hours a week from 28) and the average weekly salary (\$370 from \$340). Our Return on Investment for each dollar spent increased to \$8.34 from \$6.66 the previous year.



The legislation that authorizes VR, The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) prioritizes youth transition so that youth with a disability are ready to excel in the workplace. DVR has shown its commitment to this vision by increasing the number of individuals we support achieve a high school diploma or a GED by 7%. Additionally, DVR saw an increase of 8.8% in the number of individuals it supported in participants' post-secondary education services.

Below are some example training programs that assist individuals with disabilities to prepare for 21<sup>st</sup> century careers:

- Comprehensive Transition Programs include career and technical schools
- High School High-Tech
- BRICK Program
- Agritourist Collaboration
- Career Camps
- Hands on Education
- Project Search
- Industry Readiness Training
- Self-Employment Program

DVR Business Representatives will continue to stay current and abreast of the labor market needs to align training and employment opportunities with sector strategies and targeted industries. This leads to pathways that are in high-skill, high-wage and high-demand careers and occupations. DVR collaborates with career and technical education, career source, college systems, schools, businesses and the Department of Economic Opportunity, to provide informed choices on career pathways into the 21<sup>st</sup> labor market.

To reinforce the critical importance of VR in our state's emerging efforts to support workforce, DVR is currently updating its policy related to serving individuals with disabilities who have substance use disorders to ensure access to vocational rehabilitation services to help them achieve employment success. Also, DVR is collaborating with Agency for Persons with Disabilities to identify and serve individuals with most significant disabilities to provide opportunities for workforce inclusion. DVR is a partner in the Employment First initiative along with ten other agencies to ensure the long-term commitment to improving employment outcomes for persons with disabilities. Additionally, DVR is working to expand its current Individual Placement Support Program, which is designed to assist individuals with significant mental health disorders obtain employment.

With regard to the state's investment in Apprenticeship and computer science opportunities, DVR will continue to partner with Deloitte and Specialisterne to strengthen its efforts towards building an Autism at Work program, which recruits college graduates with autism into full-time positions in Science, Technology Engineer and Math (STEM) careers including: cyber security, information management systems, computer science, engineering, and other IT related fields. Also, DVR partners with targeted industries to deliver work-based learning experiences for youth and adults. For example, Project Search. Project Search is a nationally recognized and trademark internship program for student with most significant disabilities, providing opportunities to complete job rotations in industries, such as healthcare, universities, hospitality and retail.

Moreover, DVR will continue to partner with the Brevard Internship in Construction Knowledge (BRICK) program which is a partnership with the Home Builders and Contractor Associations of Brevard and the Northeast Home Builders Association, which offer Work-Base Learning experiences (WBLE) in construction and trades. Also, we will

strengthen collaboration with the Federal Aviation Administration to recruit individuals with disabilities into their Air Traffic Controller Training Program. DVR partnered with Aerospace that resulted in a networking and career event with seven business partners to include Lockheed Martin , Collins Aerospace, Bevilacqua Research Corporation (BRC), Lockheed Martin ,Jacobs, Micro Systems, Inc., Raytheon, Zel Technologies, VT Mobile Aerospace Engineering, Inc. (ST Engineering), Your TEK Professionals which created multiple on the job training opportunities and employment.

### **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 will renew contracts for two Innovation and Expansion projects, described below. Contracts for the projects run through SFY 2021.

1. 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.
2. 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.

### **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 Unserved 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 to ensure services to minorities and unserved/ underserved groups 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. DVR currently collaborates with the Department of Juvenile Justice and Foster Care to ensure access to pre-employment transition services for student with disabilities in institutional settings. DVR is in partnership with the Department of Corrections to collaborate on the Adult Re-entry and Employment Strategic Planning Program Grant to identify strategies for connecting re-entry citizens to employment.

#### **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 Work-Based Learning Experiences (WBLE) to all school districts annually. Although VR approaches and offers WBLE 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 WBLE partnerships.
- 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 Work-Based Learning Experiences with school districts and tuition, books and supplies for postsecondary 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 partners 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 2018-19 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment CSNA) indicate a need to develop service providers in the rural areas of the state, particularly providers for supported and customized employment, as well as providers that are skilled in working with individuals with the most significant disabilities. The CSNA also identified a need to develop providers that can sign and have experience working with Deaf individuals.

VR has increased its number of registered CRPs from 154 in 2017 to 342, as of January 2020. Each new provider went through stringent vetting, including background screening, and attended mandatory onboarding before being approved to deliver services. VR's Bureau of Vendor and Contracted Services continues to engage service providers on a quarterly basis through face-to-face meetings, area wide provider trainings and Provider Engagement Conference Calls.

Recognizing the need to develop a service delivery model that would allow the flexibility and creativity necessary to better serve our customers, a cross functional team of VR staff worked together to develop a new service delivery model and rate structure. This new structure incentivizes better outcomes, such as higher pay; allows for payment sooner in the process; incorporates Individual Placement Services (IPS); and creates distinct Pre-Employment Transition Services benchmarks. The new model has been shared with stakeholders, including all current service providers. The response has been overwhelmingly positive.

VR is also in the process of developing an e-referral system that will allow service providers to receive referrals and bill for services electronically. The new system will replace multiple standalone systems, thereby streamlining the process and relieving some of the undue administrative burden currently felt by our providers. VR is targeting October 1, 2020 for full implementation of both the new service delivery model and the new e-referral system.

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

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 job seekers 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 Arrangements 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 continues to work 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 2018-2019, approximately 4700 participants received CCIR services. VR has approved 21 agencies 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, 2018 - September 30th, 2019
- Total number of Visit During this Date Range: 961,323
- Total Number of Pages Viewed by Visitors:7,191,100

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

- Date Range: July 1st, 2018 - September 30th, 2019
- Total number of Visit During this Date Range: 14,476
- Total Number of Pages Viewed by Visitors: 22,930

**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 in August 2016. The VR Organizational 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 2019, 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 completed its Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), which informed agency planning in FFYs 2020-23. VR updated its strategic goals and priorities after receipt of the RSA Monitoring Report and completion of the 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](http://www.rehabworks.org/plans.shtml). The email address is [vrplan@vr.fldoe.org](mailto: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 allows 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, as well as to be flexible when barriers are encountered.

**Figure 9.07**  
**WIOA PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

WIOA MEASURES	Actual Performance (FFY 19)	Previous (FFY 18)
Employment Two Quarters after Exit	baseline	baseline
Employment Four Quarters after Exit	baseline	baseline
Median Wage Two Quarters after Exit	baseline	baseline
Skill Gains	3.5%	baseline
Business Engagement	baseline	baseline

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 2018-19, a total of 12,717 independent living plans were developed, and 23,334 independent living goals were set through the network of 16 Centers for Independent Living (CIL). CILs served a total of 17,151 individuals with significant disabilities. Information and Referral services were provided to approximately 22,788 individuals and Community Transition Assistance was provided to 118 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.

- 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 statewide 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 4,700 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 2018-2019 Supported Employment Performance Data

- Number of active cases: 10,618
- Number of Individualized Plans for Employment: 3,384
- Number of Employment Outcomes: 1,107

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.

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. 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