

NOTICE

This document is a draft version being made available for public comment. The reader is advised that this document is based on draft federal guidance and will be subject to changes based on the final guidance and regulations issued by the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Education; various state boards' approvals; and other state legislation impacting workforce development programming in Minnesota. Some of the programs covered in this plan have already submitted their portion of the plan to their federal agency and will not consider comments or recommendations.

SUBMITTING PUBLIC COMMENTS

Please send any comments on this plan to rick.roy@state.mn.us. All comments will be reviewed by the Governor's Workforce Development Board and the Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Minnesota's Combined State Plan could not have been prepared without the talents of many individuals who serve on the state board and staff at the state agencies administering the federal titles of WIOA. Their contributions influence Minnesota's workforce development system on a daily basis and their contributions to the State Plan are greatly appreciated.

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INTRODUCTION

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act provides an expanded platform from which Minnesota can continue to grow and address workforce and economic development opportunities. As a national leader in many workforce and economic development metrics, Minnesota is positioned well to continue to innovate and provide new opportunities for citizens and businesses to thrive in the 21st century economy.

Minnesota's approach to WIOA implementation will be based on what we have learned through efforts to design Career Pathway models through the National Governors Association (NGA) Talent Pipeline Policy Academy and other initiatives to create a Career Pathway system, engaging local, regional and state level partners to fulfill the promise that Career Pathways can provide to any worker at any stage in their career and to be more responsive to the needs of business and industry through sector strategies that focus on occupations in demand.

It is with great enthusiasm and commitment that the state agencies, state board and local boards move purposefully forward in implementing WIOA.

TYPE

Minnesota is submitting a "Combined State Plan." Along with the mandated federal titles of WIOA, the following programs are included in its submission:

- Career and Technical Education (Carl D Perkins)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
- Employment & Training (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)
- Work Programs (Food and Nutrition Act)
- Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers
- Jobs for Veterans State Grants
- Senior Community Service Employment

STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

ECONOMIC, WORKFORCE AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

(a)(1)(A) The Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the economic conditions and trends in the State, including sub-state regions and any specific economic areas identified by the State.

(a)(1)(B) The Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the current workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment.

The strategic elements include an analysis of the state of Minnesota's economic, workforce and workforce development activities. The elements are used to identify the State's overall vision for its workforce development system. These elements will be used to develop data-driven goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce through better program alignment and support of economic growth.

DEMOGRAPHICS

POPULATION CHANGE, 2000-2014

The state of Minnesota was home to 5,457,173 people in 2014, after gaining 537,694 new residents from 2000, a 10.9 percent increase. That made Minnesota the 21st largest state in the United States, with about 300,000 fewer residents than Wisconsin, and about 100,000 more people than Colorado. In sum, the United States has almost 319 million people, after growing 13.3 percent from 2000 to 2014 (see Table 1).

	2000 Population	2014 Estimates	2000-2014 Change	
State of Minnesota	4,919,479	5,457,173	+537,694	+10.9%
Twin Cities Metro	2,642,056	2,985,405	+343,349	+13.0%
Greater Minnesota	2,277,423	2,471,768	+194,345	+8.5%
Central Minnesota	573,938	693,108	+119,170	+20.8%
Northeast Minnesota	322,073	326,649	+4,576	+1.4%
Northwest Minnesota	526,792	558,673	+31,881	+6.1%
Southeast Minnesota	460,102	500,923	+40,821	+8.9%
Southwest Minnesota	394,518	392,415	-2,103	-0.5%
United States	218,421,906	318,857,056	+37,435,150	+13.3%

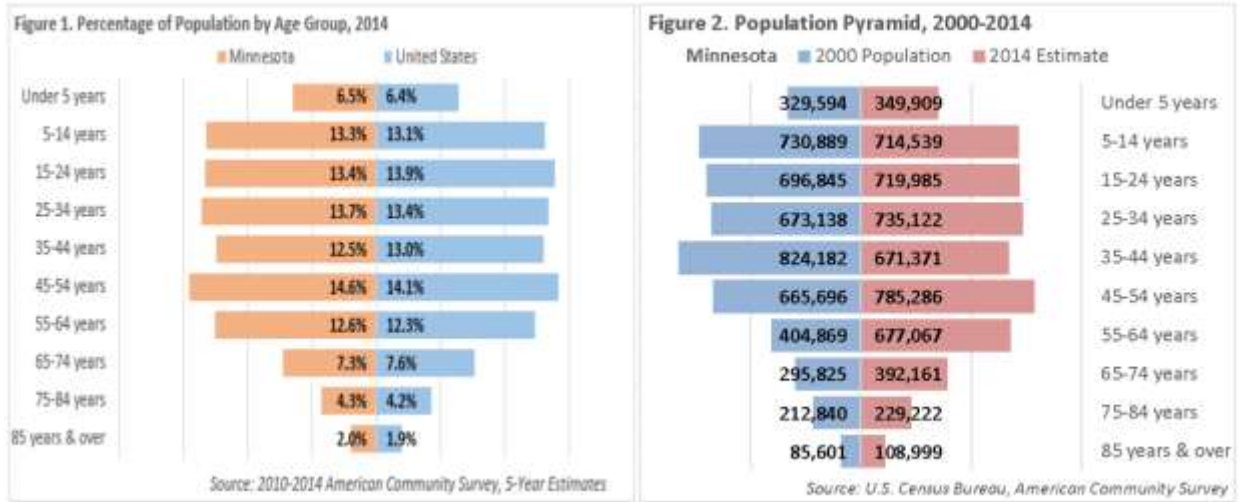
Source: [U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates](#)

Over half (55 percent) of Minnesota's population is located in the seven-county Twin Cities metro area, with the remainder spread across the 80 counties known as Greater Minnesota, encompassing 5 planning regions and 12 separate Economic Development Regions (EDRs). While the Twin Cities grew 13.0 percent from 2000 to 2014, Greater Minnesota saw an 8.5 percent increase in population since 2000; with the biggest and fastest gains occurring in Central Minnesota, steady gains in Southeast and Northwest Minnesota, and slow or no growth in Northeast and Southwest Minnesota (see Table 1).

POPULATION BY AGE GROUP, 2000-2014

Minnesota has a relatively young population, with just 13.6 percent of the population aged 65 years and over. Within the state, Greater Minnesota has an older population than the Twin Cities, with 16.4 percent of the population aged 65 years and over, compared to 11.8 percent in the Twin Cities. Greater Minnesota also had a lower percentage of people in the 25- to 54-year-old age group, typically considered the "prime working years," as well as a smaller percentage of school-aged children (see Figure 1). More than one-fourth of Minnesota's population was a part of the Baby Boom generation, which is creating a significant shift in the population over time. While the number of younger residents

is growing steadily, the number of residents aged 45 years and over was rapidly increasing (see Figure 2).



POPULATION PROJECTIONS BY AGE GROUP, 2015-2035

According to population projections from the [Minnesota State Demographic Center](#), Minnesota is expected to gain about 600,000 net new residents from 2015 to 2035, a 10.8 percent increase (see Figure 3). The Twin Cities is projected to grow 12.3 percent, and Greater Minnesota may expand 9.2 percent.

However, much of this population growth is expected to be in the older age groups.

Minnesota is projected to add nearly 785,000 people in the 65 years and over age cohort, a 93 percent increase. Minnesota is also expected to gain people in the 25- to 44-year-old age group, as well as a corresponding increase in children under 5 years of age.

In contrast, Minnesota is expected to lose school-aged children and young adults from 5 to 24 years of age, as well as a loss of about 80,000 people in the 45 to 64 year old age group – as the Baby Boom generation moves through the population pyramid.



POPULATION BY RACE, 2013

Minnesota's population is less diverse than the nation's, but is becoming more diverse over time. In 2014, about 85 percent of the state's residents reported White alone as their race, compared to 74 percent of residents nationwide. Though they are the largest minority groups in Minnesota, the state had much smaller percentages of Black or African American residents and residents of Hispanic or Latino origin than the nation, as well as smaller percentages of people of some other race. Minnesota had a similar percentage of people reporting Two or More Races and Asian or Other Pacific Islanders to the nation, and a slightly higher percentage of American Indian and Alaska Natives (see Table 2).

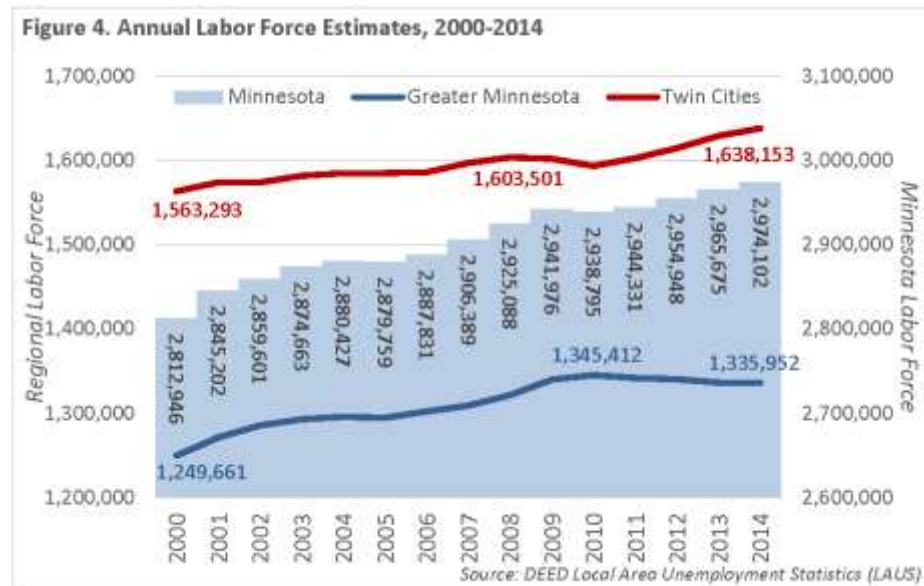
Table 2. Race and Hispanic Origin, 2014	Minnesota			United States	
	Number	Percent	Change from 2000-2014	Percent	Change from 2000-2014
Total	5,383,661	100.0%	+9.4%	100.0%	+11.6%
White	4,585,781	85.2%	+4.2%	73.8%	+9.6%
Black or African American	290,545	5.4%	+69.2%	12.6%	+14.2%
American Indian & Alaska Native	56,490	1.0%	+2.8%	0.8%	+3.6%
Asian & Other Pac. Islander	232,964	4.3%	+61.8%	5.2%	+52.7%
Some Other Race	78,863	1.5%	+19.8%	4.7%	-3.9%
Two or More Races	139,018	2.6%	+68.0%	2.9%	+33.7%
Hispanic or Latino	264,265	4.9%	+84.3%	16.9%	+50.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey

Hispanic or Latino origin was the fastest growing minority group in the state over the past decade and a half, adding 84 percent from 2000 to 2014. In fact, every race group other than White alone and American Indian or Alaska Natives grew faster in Minnesota than the U.S., leading Minnesota to a more diverse future.

LABOR FORCE
LABOR FORCE CHANGE, 2000-2014

According to data from DEED's [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#) program, Minnesota experienced a steady expansion in the size of the available labor force over the last 15 years, despite seeing slower growth in the past five years. Minnesota gained about 160,000 workers over the past decade and a half, from 2,812,946 available workers in 2000 to



2,974,102 workers in 2014. That was a 5.7 percent increase, with labor force growth spread across the state. Greater Minnesota saw a faster rise from 2000 to 2014, while the Twin Cities was gaining workers more rapidly over the past five years (see Figure 4). In spite of slowing growth rates, Minnesota surpassed the 3 million worker threshold in early 2015 and has sustained that level for most of the year, which would be a new peak in total labor force.

LABOR FORCE PROJECTIONS, 2015-2025

If Minnesota's population changes at the projected rates shown in Figure 3 above, the state would be expected to see a slow but sustained increase in the labor force over the next decade as well. Applying current labor force participation rates to future population projections by age group creates labor force projections for the state, which show a small gain in workforce numbers overall, but significant shifts in the labor force by age groups (see Table 3).

	2015 Labor Force Projection	2025 Labor Force Projection	2015-2025 Change	
			Numeric	Percent
16 to 19 years	165,846	162,482	-3,364	-2.0%
20 to 24 years	290,620	310,973	+20,353	+7.0%
25 to 44 years	1,197,220	1,199,274	+2,054	+0.2%
45 to 54 years	672,514	577,948	-94,566	-14.1%
55 to 64 years	523,141	543,025	+19,884	+3.8%
65 to 74 years	123,085	189,190	+66,105	+53.7%
75 years & over	22,408	33,860	+11,452	+51.1%
Total Labor Force	2,994,834	3,016,751	+21,917	+0.7%

Source: Minnesota State Demographic Center, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Because of the size of the Baby Boom generation, Minnesota will see large gains in the number of workers aged 55 years and over against huge declines in the number of workers aged 45 to 54 years. Greater Minnesota will also see a drop in the number of teenaged workers, but is still expected to see gains in the number of entry-level workers and 25 to 44 year olds. This will likely lead to a tight labor market in the future, with employers needing to respond to the changing labor force availability in the state.

EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS, 2013

With over 70 percent of the population aged 16 years and over in the labor force, Minnesota had much higher labor force participation rates than the United States, ranking 4th highest in the nation. The state had higher labor force participation rates in all but the oldest age group, and had lower unemployment rates for all age groups (see Table 4).

Minnesota also had higher participation rates for every race group, but like the nation overall, Minnesota had large unemployment rate disparities for minorities. In sum, unemployment rates were highest for young people, minorities, workers with disabilities, and people with lower educational attainment.

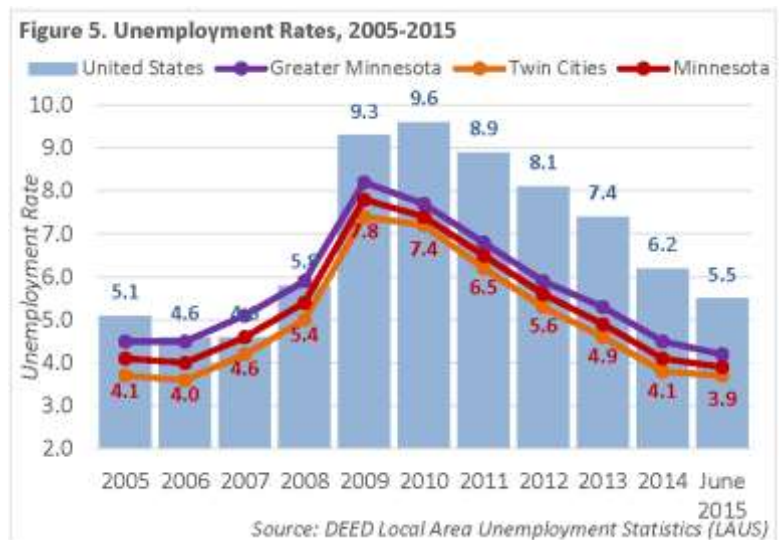
	Minnesota			United States	
	Number	Labor Force Partic. Rate	Unemp. Rate	Labor Force Partic. Rate	Unemp. Rate
Total Labor Force	2,977,637	70.1%	6.5%	63.9%	9.2%
16 to 19 years	148,882	51.1%	18.7%	37.4%	27.1%
20 to 24 years	292,121	81.8%	10.2%	73.6%	15.3%
25 to 44 years	1,239,120	88.1%	5.8%	82.3%	8.4%
45 to 54 years	685,555	87.3%	5.0%	80.4%	7.0%
55 to 64 years	486,134	71.8%	4.9%	64.3%	6.6%
65 to 74 years	104,315	26.6%	4.1%	25.3%	6.2%
75 years & over	19,955	5.9%	3.5%	6.0%	5.7%
Employment Characteristics by Race & Hispanic Origin					
White alone	2,607,068	70.2%	5.6%	63.8%	7.9%
Black or African American	137,313	68.0%	16.4%	62.2%	16.1%
American Indian & Alaska Native	24,118	59.4%	17.4%	58.9%	15.9%
Asian or Other Pac. Islanders	121,498	70.6%	7.2%	65.4%	7.1%
Some Other Race	39,691	76.2%	11.0%	69.5%	11.6%
Two or More Races	46,714	69.5%	13.2%	65.2%	13.4%
Hispanic or Latino	125,615	75.0%	10.1%	67.5%	11.0%
Employment Characteristics by Veteran Status					
Veterans, 18 to 64 years	141,601	77.7%	6.9%	75.2%	6.2%
Employment Characteristics by Disability					
With Any Disability	136,879	51.0%	14.0%	41.3%	17.8%
Employment Characteristics by Educational Attainment					
Population, 25 to 64 years	2,409,831	84.0%	5.4%	77.6%	7.7%
Less than H.S. Diploma	116,282	65.8%	13.1%	60.9%	14.0%
H.S. Diploma or Equivalent	532,306	79.1%	7.3%	73.3%	9.9%
Some College or Assoc. Degree	852,521	85.3%	5.6%	79.5%	7.9%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	909,603	89.2%	3.1%	86.0%	4.1%

Source: 2010-2014 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Minnesota had slightly higher unemployment rates for veterans, but higher labor force participation rates.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE, 2005-2015

Minnesota has consistently reported much lower unemployment rates than the United States as a whole, regardless of the state of the economy. According to [Local Area Unemployment Statistics](#), Minnesota's unemployment rate hovered just below the national rate from 2005 to 2008, before rising to 7.8 percent in 2009, then dropping back to pre-recession levels in 2014 (see Figure 5). The Twin Cities, Southeast and Southwest had the lowest rates in the state in 2015, while the highest rates were found in Northern Minnesota.



COMMUTE SHED AND LABOR SHED, 2013

According to commuting data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Minnesota is a net importer of labor, having slightly more jobs than workers; drawing in about 100,000 workers from surrounding states, while losing about 93,000 workers across state lines (see Table 5 and Figure 6). Within the state, Greater Minnesota was a net labor exporter, sending over 250,000 residents driving into the Twin Cities or other states to find work. The Twin Cities was a labor importer, with more jobs than workers.

	2013	
	Count	Share
Employed in the Selection Area	2,678,487	100.0%
Employed in the Selection Area but Living Outside	99,614	3.7%
Employed and Living in the Selection Area	2,578,873	96.3%
Living in the Selection Area	2,672,265	100.0%
Living in the Selection Area but Employed Outside	93,392	3.5%
Living and Employed in the Selection Area	2,578,873	96.5%

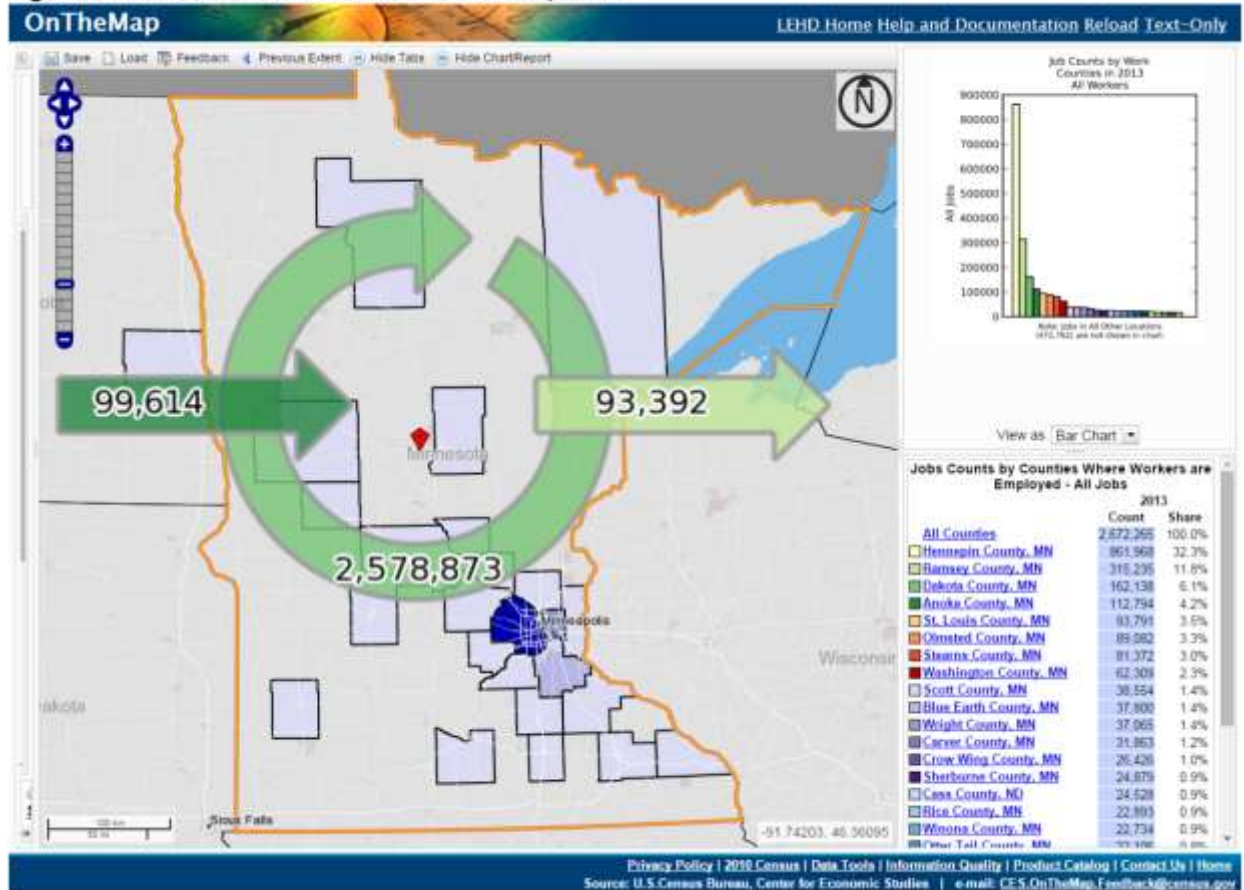
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap

Outside of the Twin Cities, the largest employment centers in Greater Minnesota were Duluth in St. Louis County, Rochester in Olmsted County, St. Cloud in Stearns County, and Mankato in Blue Earth County, which are all also considered metropolitan statistical areas. Many of the state's micropolitan statistical areas also were employment centers, drawing in workers from surrounding counties (see Table 6 and Figure 6).

Counties with the largest job counts in Minnesota	
Hennepin Co. MN	Olmsted Co. MN
Ramsey Co. MN	Stearns Co. MN
Dakota Co. MN	Washington Co. MN
Anoka Co. MN	Scott Co. MN
St. Louis Co. MN	Blue Earth Co. MN

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap

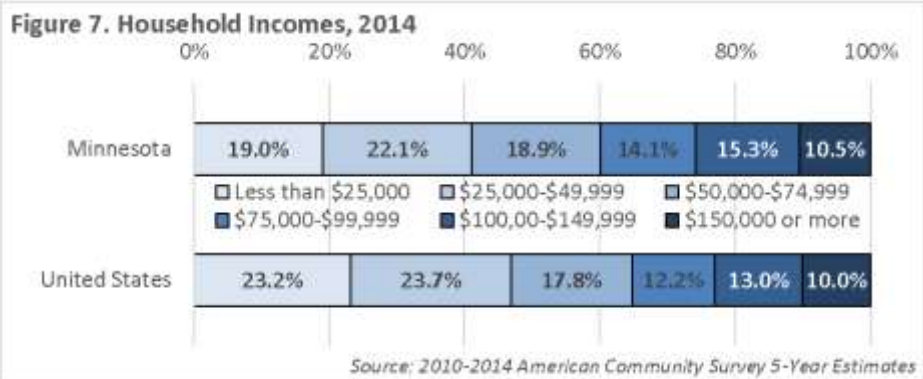
Figure 6. Minnesota Labor and Commute Shed, 2013



INCOMES, WAGES AND OCCUPATIONS

HOUSEHOLD INCOMES

Household incomes were higher in Minnesota than the nation, especially in the Twin Cities metro area. Minnesota's median household income was \$60,828 compared to \$53,482 in the United States. Just over 41 percent of households in

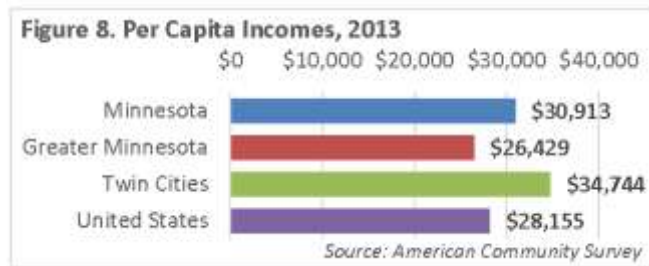


Minnesota had incomes below \$50,000 in 2014, compared to about 47 percent nationwide. One-third of households in Minnesota earned between \$50,000 and \$100,000, compared to 30 percent nationally. Over one-fourth of households in Minnesota earned over \$100,000 per year, compared to 23 percent of households in the U.S. (see Figure 7). Incomes were lower in Greater Minnesota, with just under half of

households earning below \$50,000 per year, compared to less than 40 percent of households in the Twin Cities.

PER CAPITA INCOMES

Per capita incomes were also higher in Minnesota than the United States, at \$30,913 compared to \$28,155, respectively. As noted above, incomes were much higher in the Twin Cities than in Greater Minnesota (see Figure 8).



COST OF LIVING

According to DEED's [Cost of Living tool](#), the basic needs budget for an average Minnesota family (which consists of 2 adults and one child, with one full-time and one part-time worker) was

Region	Family Yearly Cost of Living	Hourly Wage Required	Monthly Costs						
			Child Care	Food	Health Care	Housing	Transportation	Other	Taxes
Minnesota	\$50,988	\$16.34	\$443	\$772	\$405	\$907	\$1,039	\$235	\$448
Twin Cities	\$55,896	\$17.92	\$602	\$783	\$411	\$1,022	\$1,037	\$252	\$551
Central	\$49,884	\$15.99	\$311	\$753	\$402	\$861	\$1,175	\$226	\$429
Northeast	\$43,560	\$13.96	\$245	\$758	\$393	\$764	\$968	\$213	\$289
Northwest	\$43,464	\$13.93	\$220	\$760	\$399	\$700	\$1,047	\$204	\$292
Southeast	\$45,300	\$14.52	\$285	\$761	\$396	\$794	\$987	\$218	\$334
Southwest	\$41,352	\$13.25	\$209	\$766	\$398	\$701	\$933	\$205	\$234

Source: DEED Cost of Living tool

\$50,988 in 2015, and was highest in the Twin Cities, at \$55,896. In order to meet the basic cost of living, workers in this family scenario would need to earn between \$16.34 per hour in the state (see Table 7).

The cost of living for a similar family in Greater Minnesota ranged from a low of \$41,352 in Southwest Minnesota to a high of \$49,884 in Central Minnesota. In all cases, the highest monthly costs were for transportation, food, and housing.

WAGES AND OCCUPATIONS

According to DEED's [Occupational Employment Statistics](#) program, the median hourly wage for all occupations in the state was \$18.65 in the first quarter of 2015, ranging from a low of \$15.42 in Northwest Minnesota to a high of \$20.49 in the Twin Cities. Median wages also tended to be lower in Southwest Minnesota, and highest in Southeast, Central, and Northeast Minnesota. The median hourly wage for all occupations in all of Greater Minnesota is around \$16.50 per hour, about \$4.00 below the Twin Cities - which would amount to about \$8,320 less per year for a full-time worker (see Table 8).

Region	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Regional Employment
State of Minnesota	\$18.65	2,730,020
Twin Cities Metro Area	\$20.49	1,691,650
Central Minnesota	\$16.66	263,270
Northeast Minnesota	\$16.58	141,800
Northwest Minnesota	\$15.42	203,060
Southeast Minnesota	\$17.74	253,990
Southwest Minnesota	\$15.48	177,030

Source: DEED Occupational Employment Statistics

Not surprisingly, the lowest-paying jobs are concentrated in food preparation and serving, personal care and service, sales and related, and building, grounds cleaning and maintenance jobs, which tend to have lower educational and training requirements. For the most part, the gap in pay between Greater Minnesota and the Twin Cities is also lower in these jobs. Wages are most competitive in community

and social service; farming, fishing, and forestry; protective service; and production occupations (see Table 9).

	State of Minnesota			Twin Cities Metro Area		
	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Regional Employment	Share of Total Employment	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Regional Employment	Share of Total Employment
Total, All Occupations	\$18.65	2,730,020	100.0%	\$20.49	1,691,650	100.0%
Office & Administrative Support Occupations	\$17.27	409,100	15.0%	\$18.25	263,440	15.6%
Sales & Related Occupations	\$13.24	270,540	9.9%	\$14.93	172,730	10.2%
Food Preparation & Serving Related Occupations	\$9.21	228,640	8.4%	\$9.28	133,660	7.9%
Production Occupations	\$16.61	217,830	8.0%	\$17.19	116,450	6.9%
Transportation & Material Moving Occupations	\$16.18	167,130	6.1%	\$16.64	93,740	5.5%
Management Occupations	\$47.47	165,730	6.1%	\$51.80	118,720	7.0%
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	\$31.54	160,390	5.9%	\$34.08	88,570	5.2%
Business & Financial Operations Occupations	\$30.37	159,970	5.9%	\$31.78	124,780	7.4%
Education, Training, & Library Occupations	\$22.72	156,090	5.7%	\$24.36	86,130	5.1%
Personal Care & Service Occupations	\$11.11	120,000	4.4%	\$11.32	77,110	4.6%
Installation, Maintenance, & Repair Occupations	\$21.52	94,310	3.5%	\$22.51	51,130	3.0%
Computer & Mathematical Occupations	\$37.96	91,560	3.4%	\$38.92	75,220	4.4%
Construction & Extraction Occupations	\$24.88	91,240	3.3%	\$29.38	47,550	2.8%
Healthcare Support Occupations	\$13.63	89,360	3.3%	\$14.53	46,570	2.8%
Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	\$12.03	81,560	3.0%	\$12.29	46,380	2.7%
Architecture & Engineering Occupations	\$34.76	50,980	1.9%	\$36.36	37,380	2.2%
Community & Social Service Occupations	\$20.51	49,210	1.8%	\$21.15	27,070	1.6%
Protective Service Occupations	\$19.43	43,660	1.6%	\$18.59	26,260	1.6%
Arts, Design, Entertainment, & Media &	\$21.82	36,430	1.3%	\$23.17	27,000	1.6%
Life, Physical, & Social Science Occupations	\$30.29	24,410	0.9%	\$32.52	16,360	1.0%
Legal Occupations	\$38.48	18,330	0.7%	\$42.18	14,710	0.9%
Farming, Fishing, & Forestry Occupations	\$14.41	3,570	0.1%	\$15.15	720	0.0%

Source: DEED Occupational Employment Statistics, Qtr. 1 2015

In contrast, the highest paying jobs are found in management, legal, architecture and engineering, computer, business and financial, healthcare practitioners, and life and physical science occupations, which all need higher levels of education and experience, including many that require postsecondary training. The pay gaps between Greater Minnesota and the Twin Cities are much bigger in these occupations.

JOB VACANCY SURVEY

Employers in Minnesota reported 97,997 job vacancies in the second quarter of 2015, which is the second highest number ever recorded, and a 16 percent increase compared to the previous year. The Twin Cities had 50,880 vacancies, an 8 percent increase from 2014, while Greater Minnesota had 47,117 vacancies. Overall, about 40 percent of the openings were part-time, and 35 percent required postsecondary education. The median hourly wage offer was \$12.99 (see Table 10).

Table 10. Minnesota Job Vacancy Survey Results, 2nd Quarter 2015						
	Percent of Total Vacancies	Percent Part-time	Requiring Post-Secondary Education	Requiring 1 or More Years of Experience	Requiring Certificate or License	Median Hourly Wage Offer
Total, All Occupations	97,997	41%	35%	43%	32%	\$12.99
Food Preparation & Serving Related	13,860	75%	1%	22%	5%	\$9.11
Sales & Related	11,984	64%	10%	27%	7%	\$10.00
Office & Administrative Support	8,608	37%	20%	41%	11%	\$12.52
Personal Care & Service	7,237	54%	26%	26%	42%	\$10.72
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	7,161	43%	91%	54%	91%	\$23.78
Transportation & Material Moving	7,155	30%	5%	40%	73%	\$14.61
Production	5,161	8%	30%	43%	6%	\$13.07
Education, Training, & Library	4,422	35%	84%	48%	70%	\$18.87
Building, Grounds Cleaning & Maint.	4,358	50%	1%	13%	15%	\$9.99
Healthcare Support	3,958	63%	57%	25%	71%	\$12.02
Computer & Mathematical	3,818	3%	85%	89%	14%	\$29.15
Installation, Maintenance, & Repair	3,628	9%	43%	57%	42%	\$15.39
Business & Financial Operations	3,466	9%	80%	87%	16%	\$23.97
Construction & Extraction	3,019	7%	20%	51%	27%	\$14.69
Management	2,841	2%	89%	95%	23%	\$35.03
Arts, Design, Entertainment & Media	1,873	51%	35%	47%	21%	\$14.49
Community & Social Service	1,676	27%	82%	74%	55%	\$16.46
Architecture & Engineering	1,474	1%	90%	83%	32%	\$28.06
Protective Service	938	68%	7%	22%	59%	\$10.92
Life, Physical, & Social Science	689	14%	82%	85%	67%	\$22.43
Legal	420	12%	98%	83%	47%	\$20.78
Farming, Fishing, & Forestry	253	31%	17%	17%	22%	\$12.41

Source: DEED Job Vacancy Survey, Qtr. 2 2015

OCCUPATIONS IN DEMAND

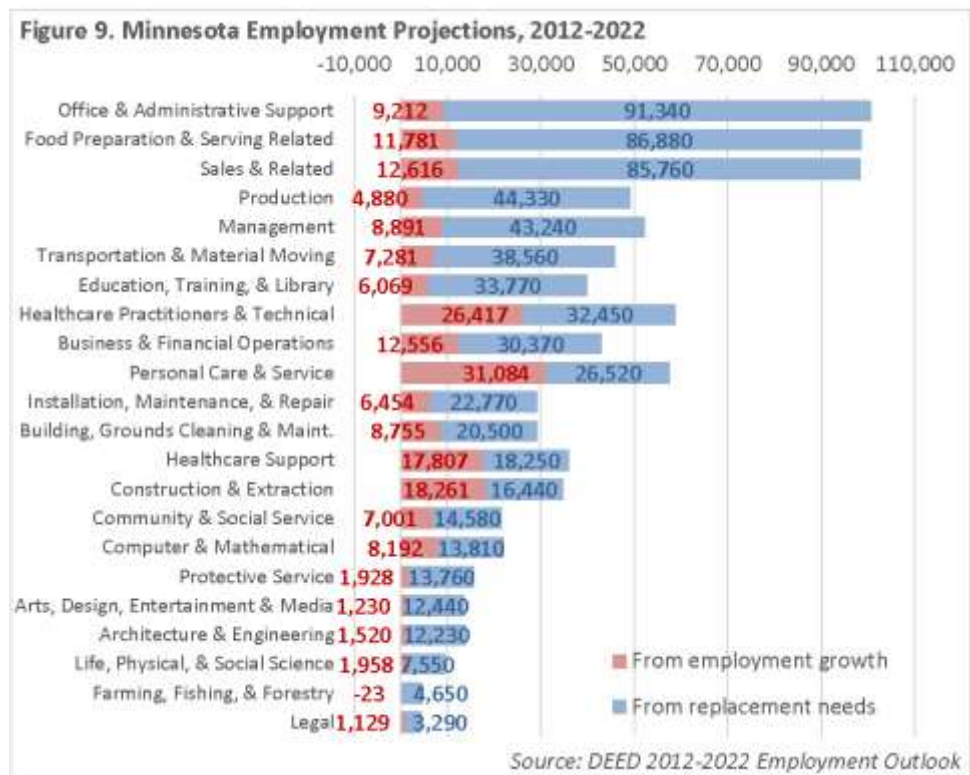
According to DEED's [Occupations in Demand](#) tool, there are hundreds of occupations showing relatively high demand across Minnesota, with training and education requirements ranging from short-term on-the-job training to postsecondary education to advanced degrees. These occupations are spread across different sectors in each region, typically concentrated in each region's major industries. For example, food prep workers, customer service representatives, registered nurses, and software developers are among the top occupations in demand based on the consistent need for workers in different industries. Many of the jobs are concentrated in manufacturing, health care, transportation, and other related industries; as well as retail trade and accommodation and food services (see Table 11).

Less than High School	High School or Equivalent	Some College or Assoc. Degree	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Combined Food Preparation & Serving Workers (\$18,352)	Customer Service Representatives (\$35,671)	Registered Nurses (\$72,022)	Software Developers, Applications (\$91,257)
Retail Salespersons (\$21,491)	Office Clerks, General (\$31,632)	Nursing Assistants (\$27,580)	Computer Systems Analysts (\$86,025)
Personal Care Aides (\$23,032)	Social & Human Service Assistants (\$31,616)	Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers (\$42,101)	Market Research Analysts & Specialists (\$64,083)
Stock Clerks & Order Fillers (\$24,487)	Maintenance & Repair Workers, General (\$41,568)	Licensed Practical & Licensed Vocational Nurses (\$39,366)	Accountants & Auditors (\$63,657)
Laborers & Freight, Stock, & Material Movers (\$27,979)	First-Line Supervisors of Food Prep & Serving Workers (\$29,388)	Hairdressers, Hairstylists, & Cosmetologists (\$23,114)	Industrial Engineers (\$82,791)
Cashiers (\$19,982)	Light Truck or Delivery Services Drivers (\$33,144)	Computer Support Specialists (\$49,766)	Financial Managers (\$115,207)
Home Health Aides (\$24,075)	Secretaries & Administrative Assistants (\$37,761)	Medical Assistants (\$34,876)	Nurse Practitioners (\$103,709)
Construction Laborers (\$41,559)	Fitness Trainers & Aerobics Instructors (\$35,489)	First-Line Supervisors of Production Workers (\$57,131)	Software Developers, Systems Software (\$98,598)
Cooks, Restaurant (\$23,789)	Tellers (\$24,792)	Web Developers (\$63,556)	Network & Computer Systems Admins. (\$77,822)
Janitors & Cleaners (\$25,270)	Bookkeeping, Accounting, & Auditing Clerks (\$38,187)	Computer Network Support Specialists (\$60,047)	Physicians & Surgeons (\$200,000+)

Source: DEED Occupations in Demand

EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS

Minnesota is projected to grow jobs by 7.0 percent from 2012 to 2022, compared to 6.2 percent in Greater Minnesota and 7.6 percent projected growth in the Twin Cities. That would be a gain of 204,999 new jobs across the state. However, Minnesota will also need to fill 673,520 replacement openings for existing jobs left vacant by retirements and other career changers. In fact,

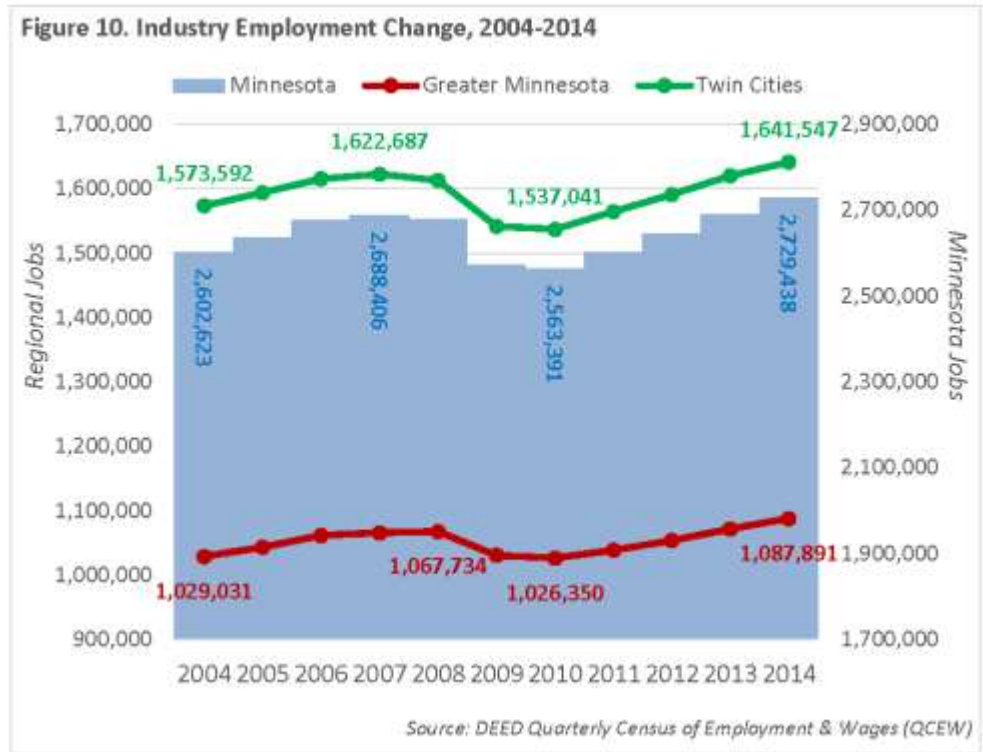


the number of replacement openings is expected to dwarf the number of new jobs in every group except personal care and service, healthcare and healthcare support, and construction. Farming, fishing,

and forestry is the only occupational group that is not projected to see any new job growth, but will still have demand for workers to fill replacement needs (see Figure 9).

ECONOMY
INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT

Minnesota has seen employment ups and downs over the past decade, but ended 2014 with 126,815 more jobs than it had in 2004. After experiencing steady job growth through 2007, Minnesota entered the recession in 2008, before suffering severe declines in 2009 and 2010. Since then, Minnesota has enjoyed a solid recovery, gaining jobs at a 6.5 percent clip from



2010 to 2014. The Twin Cities grew 6.8 percent since 2010, while Greater Minnesota expanded 6.0 percent. The state of Minnesota reached a prerecession peak of 2,688,406 jobs in 2008, then hit a low of 2,563,391 jobs in 2010, before recovering to a new record high of 2,729,438 jobs in 2014 (see Figure 10).

According to DEED's [Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages \(QCEW\) program](#), Minnesota was home to 164,409 business establishments providing 2,729,438 covered jobs through 2014, with a total payroll of just over \$140 billion. Nearly 60 percent of statewide employment was located in the Twin Cities metro region, while the remaining 40 percent is in Greater Minnesota. Average annual wages were \$51,584 across the state, but were about \$7,000 higher in the Twin Cities and about \$10,000 lower in Greater Minnesota (see Table 12).

The state of Minnesota added over 166,000 jobs from 2010 to 2014, a 6.5 percent growth rate. About 104,500 of those jobs were gained in the Twin Cities, and about 61,500 were added in Greater

Table 12. Minnesota Industry Employment, 2014				Average Annual Wage	2010-2014		2013-2014	
Geography	Number of Firms	Number of Jobs	Total Payroll		Change in Jobs	Percent Change	Change in Jobs	Percent Change
State of Minnesota	164,409	2,729,438	\$140,857,248,755	\$51,584	+166,047	+6.5%	+37,321	+1.4%
Greater Minnesota	86,055	1,087,891	\$45,405,206,957	\$41,737	+61,541	+6.0%	+16,204	+1.5%
Twin Cities Metro	78,354	1,641,547	\$95,452,041,798	\$58,136	+104,506	+6.8%	+21,117	+1.3%

Source: [DEED Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages \(QCEW\)](#)

Minnesota. That included a gain of just over 37,300 jobs in the past year, with faster growth occurring in Greater Minnesota than the Twin Cities, but a slightly higher amount being added in the Twin Cities (see Table 12).

With 454,738 jobs at 14,048 firms, health care and social assistance is easily the largest employing industry in Minnesota, accounting for 16.7 percent of total employment. Health care and social assistance has been adding jobs consistently over time, including nearly 35,000 net new jobs from 2010 to 2014.

Manufacturing has 311,905 jobs at 8,012 firms in Minnesota, making it the second largest industry. Greater Minnesota has a much higher concentration of manufacturing employment than the Twin Cities, due in part to a strong recovery since 2010. Manufacturers in Minnesota added 19,700 jobs in the past five years, accounting for almost 12 percent of total job growth during that time. At \$61,048, average wages were about \$9,500 higher than in the total of all industries.

Retail trade is the third largest industry, with 288,966 jobs at 18,871 establishments; and the related accommodation and food services industry provided 219,895 jobs at 11,301 firms. Both industries saw a steady recovery in jobs since 2010, however, wages are still relatively low in both industries. Combined they provide about 20 percent of total jobs in Minnesota.

Other important industries in Minnesota include educational services and public administration, which have about 345,000 jobs combined. Minnesota also has significant employment in professional and technical services, finance and insurance, administrative support and waste management services, wholesale trade, construction, transportation and warehousing, other services, and management of companies. The recovery was widespread, with 19 of the 20 main industries adding jobs since 2010; led by huge gains in health care and social assistance, manufacturing, construction, professional and technical services, administrative support (which includes temporary staffing agencies) and waste management services, management of companies, and retail trade and accommodation and food services (see Table 13).

NAICS Industry Title	2014 Annual Data				Avg. Annual Wage	2010-2014		2013-2014	
	Number of Firms	Number of Jobs	Percent of Jobs	Total Payroll		Change in Jobs	Percent Change	Change in Jobs	Percent Change
Total, All Industries	164,409	2,729,438	100.0%	\$140,857,248,755	\$51,584	+166,047	+6.5%	+37,321	+1.4%
Health Care & Social Assistance	14,048	454,738	16.7%	\$21,144,800,181	\$46,488	+34,722	+8.3%	+7,951	+1.8%
Manufacturing	8,012	311,905	11.4%	\$19,053,127,782	\$61,048	+19,702	+6.7%	+4,677	+1.5%
Retail Trade	18,871	288,966	10.6%	\$7,850,864,668	\$27,144	+10,591	+3.8%	+2,059	+0.7%
Accommodation & Food Services	11,301	219,895	8.1%	\$3,652,205,389	\$16,588	+15,795	+7.7%	+2,903	+1.3%
Educational Services	3,924	218,818	8.0%	\$10,101,891,266	\$46,072	+3,489	+1.6%	+449	+0.2%
Professional & Technical Services	19,887	141,749	5.2%	\$11,885,980,709	\$83,772	+16,964	+13.6%	+4,999	+3.7%
Finance & Insurance	9,167	136,563	5.0%	\$12,716,330,442	\$93,132	+1,916	+1.4%	-3,343	-2.4%
Admin. Support & Waste Mgmt.	7,889	135,522	5.0%	\$4,591,154,568	\$33,852	+12,335	+10.0%	+843	+0.6%
Wholesale Trade	13,523	132,011	4.8%	\$10,164,289,250	\$77,012	+8,117	+6.6%	+1,428	+1.1%
Public Administration	3,295	126,331	4.6%	\$6,472,785,850	\$51,220	+966	+0.8%	+2,509	+2.0%
Construction	16,189	114,283	4.2%	\$6,731,579,149	\$58,760	+19,115	+20.1%	+6,919	+6.4%
Transportation & Warehousing	5,460	96,040	3.5%	\$4,708,374,157	\$48,984	+4,121	+4.5%	+2,708	+2.9%
Other Services	15,741	87,371	3.2%	\$2,618,499,566	\$29,952	+4,235	+5.1%	+1,955	+2.3%
Management of Companies	1,319	78,676	2.9%	\$9,075,988,953	\$115,336	+8,037	+11.4%	+1,728	+2.2%
Information	3,477	56,371	2.1%	\$3,821,807,951	\$67,756	-1,537	-2.7%	-662	-1.2%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	3,036	49,508	1.8%	\$1,492,026,464	\$30,264	+1,007	+2.1%	+500	+1.0%
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	6,055	39,461	1.4%	\$2,166,060,466	\$54,964	+3,380	+9.4%	-298	-0.7%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fish & Hunt	2,569	20,565	0.8%	\$700,305,798	\$33,956	+2,018	+10.9%	-39	-0.2%
Utilities	422	14,280	0.5%	\$1,363,564,607	\$95,576	+202	+1.4%	-123	-0.9%
Mining	227	6,382	0.2%	\$545,611,539	\$85,540	+1,159	+22.2%	+159	+2.6%

Source: DEED Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages (QCEW)

DISTINGUISHING INDUSTRIES

Minnesota stands out for its higher concentrations of employment in financial services, manufacturing, agriculture, and management of companies. In comparison to the United States, Minnesota has a high concentration of employment at Central Bank Monetary Authorities, and Lessors of Nonfinancial Intangible Assets. Minnesota also has high concentrations of employment in printing, computer and electronic product manufacturing, leather and allied product manufacturing, miscellaneous manufacturing (which includes medical devices), and animal production and aquaculture (see Table 14).

NAICS Industry Title	NAICS Code	Number of Firms	Number of Jobs	Total Payroll	Avg. Annual Wages	Location Quotient
Total, All Industries, Private Sector	0	157,331	2,357,462	\$122,500,136,528	\$52,000	1.0
Monetary Authorities - Central Bank	521	31	1,156	\$101,292,406	\$87,620	3.1
Printing and Related Support Activities	323	710	23,959	\$1,259,398,376	\$52,572	2.6
Computer & Electronic Product Mfg.	334	458	45,140	\$4,155,375,155	\$92,040	2.1
Animal Production & Aquaculture	112	852	10,524	\$360,345,897	\$34,164	2.1
Leather & Allied Product Manufacturing	316	18	1,150	\$53,396,562	\$46,436	2.0
Miscellaneous Manufacturing	339	945	22,913	\$1,518,651,321	\$66,300	1.9
Lessors of Nonfinancial Intangible Assets	533	77	939	\$83,190,930	\$88,764	1.9
Management of Companies	551	1,312	78,685	\$9,073,552,163	\$115,284	1.8
Nursing & Residential Care Facilities	623	2,674	105,686	\$2,610,192,200	\$24,648	1.6
Transit & Ground Passenger Transportation	485	504	14,433	\$318,432,267	\$21,996	1.5

Source: DEED Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages (QCEW)

INDUSTRY PROJECTIONS

As noted above, Minnesota's economy is projected to grow 7.0 percent from 2012 to 2022, a gain of 204,999 new jobs.

The largest and second fastest growing industry is expected to be health care and social assistance, which may account for 46 percent of total projected growth in the state from 2012 to 2022. The state is also expected to see significant job growth in construction, professional and technical services, administrative support and waste management services, retail trade, accommodation and food services, finance and insurance, and wholesale trade. In contrast, the state is expected to see job declines in public administration, utilities, manufacturing, and information (see Table 15).

Industry	Estimated Employment 2012	Projected Employment 2022	Percent Change 2012-2022	Numeric Change 2012-2022
Total, All Industries	2,915,401	3,120,400	+7.0%	+204,999
Health Care & Social Assistance	410,004	503,800	+22.9%	+93,796
Construction	94,835	118,520	+25.0%	+23,685
Professional & Technical Services	130,505	149,410	+14.5%	+18,905
Admin. Support & Waste Mgmt.	131,644	148,610	+12.9%	+16,966
Retail Trade	283,040	293,860	+3.8%	+10,820
Accommodation & Food Services	205,312	215,630	+5.0%	+10,318
Finance & Insurance	138,413	147,150	+6.3%	+8,737
Wholesale Trade	128,759	134,860	+4.7%	+6,101
Educational Services	54,652	59,800	+9.4%	+5,148
Other Services	124,752	129,750	+4.0%	+4,998
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	51,767	56,010	+8.2%	+4,243
Real Estate, Rental & Leasing	38,873	42,920	+10.4%	+4,047
Management of Companies	74,576	76,740	+2.9%	+2,164
Agriculture, Forestry, Fish & Hunt	24,423	25,060	+2.6%	+637
Mining	6,242	6,760	+8.3%	+518
Transportation & Warehousing	79,203	79,655	+0.6%	+452
Public Administration	373,564	372,520	-0.3%	-1,044
Utilities	12,699	11,620	-8.5%	-1,079
Manufacturing	305,607	301,530	-1.3%	-4,077
Information	53,526	49,400	-7.7%	-4,126

Source: [DEED 2012-2022 Employment Outlook](#).

EMPLOYERS BY SIZE CLASS

The vast majority of businesses in Minnesota are small businesses, with 54.2 percent of businesses reporting one to 4 employees in 2013, according to County Business Patterns from the U.S. Census Bureau. Another 31.1 percent had between 5 and 19 employees; and 12.1 percent had between 20 and 99 employees. Only 2.4 percent had 100 to 499 employees. Just 444 businesses in Minnesota had more than 500 employees, which is the Small Business Administration's official cut off for a "small business." Obviously then, small businesses are vital to the state's economy (see Table 16).

Number of Employees	Minnesota	
	Number of Firms	Percent of Firms
1-4	79,294	54.2%
5-9	25,873	17.7%
10-19	19,656	13.4%
20-49	12,972	8.9%
50-99	4,657	3.2%
100-249	2,718	1.9%
250-499	740	0.5%
500-999	270	0.2%
1,000 or more	174	0.1%
Total Firms	146,354	100.0%

Source: [U.S. Census, County Business Patterns](#)

NONEMPLOYER ESTABLISHMENTS

Before growing, the basic building block of most small businesses is a self-employed business. Minnesota was home to 388,900 self-employed businesses or "nonemployers" in 2013, which are defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as "businesses without paid

	2013		2003-2013	
	Number of Firms	Receipts (\$1,000s)	Change in Firms	Percent Change
State of Minnesota	388,900	\$17,268,230	+40,173	+11.5%
Greater Minnesota	168,739	\$7,062,278	+7,315	+4.5%
Twin Cities Metro	220,161	\$10,205,952	+32,858	+17.5%

Source: [U.S. Census, Nonemployer Statistics program](#)

employees that are subject to federal income tax, originating from tax return information of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS)." Much like covered employment, Minnesota has seen a steady increase in nonemployers over the past decade, with the largest amount and fastest growth occurring in the Twin Cities. In sum, Greater Minnesota gained 7,315 new nonemployers from 2003 to 2013, a 4.5 percent increase. In comparison, the Twin Cities added 32,858 nonemployers, a 17.5 percent rise. Nonemployers in the state generated sales receipts of \$17.3 billion in 2013 (see Table 17).

CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

Finally, one of the most important industries in Minnesota is agriculture, with 74,542 farms producing nearly \$21.3 billion in the market value of products sold in 2012, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Greater Minnesota had 94.3 percent of the state's farms, and 96.8 percent of the state's total market value, led by major ag-producing counties like Stearns, Renville, Martin, Polk, and Redwood County, which were the top 5 counties in the state for the market value of products sold. Despite seeing a small decline in the number of farms, Minnesota saw a 61.5 percent increase in the market value of products sold from 2007 to 2012, as many farms got bigger and commodity prices went up (see Table 18).

	Number of Farms	Market Value of Products Sold	Change in Market Value, 2007-2012
State of Minnesota	74,542	\$21,280,184,000	+61.5%
Greater Minnesota	70,292	\$20,591,244,000	+61.8%
Twin Cities Metro	4,250	\$688,940,000	+39.2%

Source: 2012 Census of Agriculture

The following links provide access to the Regional Workforce Development Area profiles, required by WIOA for regional and local planning purposes.

- [Regional Workforce Development Area 1](#)
- [Regional Workforce Development Area 2](#)
- [Regional Workforce Development Area 3](#)
- [Regional Workforce Development Area 4](#)

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION & TRAINING ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

THE STATE'S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

(a)(2). The Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the workforce development activities, including education and training in the State, to address the education and skill needs of the workforce and the employment needs of employers

(a)(2)(A) Provide an analysis of the State's workforce development activities, including education and training activities of the core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs, and mandatory and optional one-stop delivery system partners.

The development of Minnesota's Combined State Plan for the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act represents an opportunity to consider a significant number of challenges and opportunities that exist in the continued evolution of Minnesota's workforce development system. Minnesota's Combined State Plan seeks to address a variety of significant barriers to ongoing workforce development system and the state residents it supports. These challenges include a range of issues that include labor force availability, racial disparities, increased reliance on technology, and an overall challenge to remain relevant with a rapidly changing set of job seeker capacities and expectations.

The activities of the workforce development system be categorized into three primary areas: 1) career and job seeker services; 2) education and training; and 3) employer services. Each category offers a broad range of services and providers to address various needs of job seekers and businesses.

Career and job seeker services is probably the broadest category of the three, focusing on providing career information, job seeker services and connections to a host of supports that assist individuals with becoming job search ready - addressing "life assets" issues to ensure the level of stability necessary to successfully participate in the workforce. It has been estimated that 66 percent of job seekers over-estimate their readiness for a successful job search, which make all of these services essential for successful job search. All system partners provide workshops, e-learning, and one-to-one or other resources to assist individuals with becoming prepared for a successful job search. The choices are robust and ranging to meet the diverse needs of Minnesota's workforce.

Education and training opportunities are also abundant and varied. Postsecondary options are available through the Minnesota State Colleges and University system – both traditional education and customized training; private training providers – including all levels of credentials; registered apprenticeships and other work-based learning opportunities. All the system partners, with funding dedicated for education and training, utilize Minnesota's training resources, including the State's Workforce development fund, which focuses on major dislocated worker projects and other targeted populations.

Business services are offered by several of the system partners. These services are provided to assist employers with workforce management and development issues, as well as having connections to state and local economic development activities through referrals. The primary service provided to employers is labor exchange services. MinnesotaWorks.net is the most recognizable brand in the state for business services. System partners also assist with recruiting and other workforce planning strategies, such as training or skill assessments and labor market information so employers understand factors related to their competitiveness in attracting and retaining a high skilled workforce.

THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

(a)(2)(B) Provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce development activities identified in (A).

Minnesota's strengths stem from the quality and diversity of providers across the state and the additional state supported initiatives that align with workforce development activities. State agencies overseeing the WIOA required titles have also been working together on many of the initiatives highlighted in this State Combine Plan that set a firm foundation for creating a Career Pathway system. Following with the three categories of career and job seeker services; education and training; and businesses services, here is a summary of strengths within these areas.

Career and job seeker services are supported by nationally recognized labor market information systems and "Creative Job Search" curriculum, as well as a host of workshops specifically designed for different situations. Minnesota's UI division has also laid the ground work for moving services to the web by creating e-learning courses based on the Creative Job Search curriculum. These services are provided throughout the system at one-stop locations and partner sites and are often augmented by non-required titles/partners, such as the public library system.

Education and training services support many strengths within the system. The State supported adult literacy funding enable a much higher degree of accessibility around the state than could be accomplished with just the federal dollars. It also allows for greater capacity building for staff which has contributed to successful career pathway initiatives around the state, which focus on and contextualize career pathway concepts into regular curriculum.

Minnesota also has a youth practitioner's network that excels at keeping youth service agencies connect and supporting the service to out of school youth, with strong connections and focus on reattachment to education and training programs. This network is comprised of affected state agencies and service providers, providing the additional knowledge and support necessary to maximize resources dedicated to serving youth.

The postsecondary education and training opportunities, as discussed earlier, provide strong a base from which to draw from for Career Pathway design. One of the strong elements is the use of industry advisory committees for the two-year education and training programs that help guide and keep skill requirements current. These committees are utilized in partnership with the Minnesota State Colleges and University system by other providers, too, like the 2nd Chance Act programs operated by the Minnesota Department of Corrections. The Carl D. Perkins efforts around education and training articulation and matriculation will also be central piece to career pathway development in Minnesota.

One of the primary strengths of business services efforts is the degree of coordination among those offering these services. Minnesota currently has a business services partnership through the use of Salesforce, a customer resource management platform that allows business services providers to share information about business contacts and initiatives. Engaged partners include Job Service, Chambers and economic developers. Minnesota is currently considering a more robust use of this tool and expanding access to more business services providers.

The weaknesses of Minnesota's workforce development activities are based on a number of challenges, due to an evolving workforce and a growing economy. Labor force availability will increasingly challenge the state as Minnesota's population ages and the numbers of individuals leaving the workforce outpace available replacement workers.

While the state benefits from extremely low unemployment rates overall, and one of the lowest metropolitan unemployment rates in the country, Minnesota is likely to experience acute workforce shortages for the foreseeable future. While this is generally considered to be an enviable situation relative to the needs of job seekers, Minnesota is also struggling with filling a net shortage of over 35,000 openings currently. The gap in the number of workers to fill available jobs is anticipated to grow exponentially over the coming years.

Compounding this challenge is that Minnesota also has a relatively mature workforce with an average age of 46 years. Coupled with the average age of Minnesota workers are an increasing number of individuals who are reaching the age where they may potentially retire. The following graph dramatically indicates the surge in the number of Minnesotans aged 65 years and older.

Contrasted with workforce shortages is one of the highest incidences of racial disparities in employment in the country. Minnesota lags behind much of the rest of the United States in advancing the needs of individuals from communities of color to obtain employment in occupations that pay family sustaining wages. This is an important issue on multiple levels and is a key goal for Minnesota to address as a part

of its statewide planning activities. It is also a connection to the fastest growing segment of the available workforce.

Employers also report high levels of competition for employees and often find that they are competing with other firms on the basis of wages and benefits. Companies located outside of the Metropolitan area find this issue to be especially acute in not only experiencing relatively small additions to the local labor market but also pressure to raise wages in fiercely competitive markets. Often, workers are applying for jobs without the requisite skill sets required forcing employers to make difficult choices of either going without needed workers or hiring individuals and providing significant levels of on-the-job training. The strength of the growing economy has pushed the conversation past a "skills gap" to a "body gap."

Another area of concern are levels of unemployment for Minnesota's youth. All too often, young people in Minnesota struggle with starting or advancing their careers in meaningful ways and miss opportunities to participate in the state's growing and vibrant economy.

This impacts the three focus areas of services in a variety of ways. This four year plan will explore and provide guidance on modernizing services for the challenges we face as individual organizations and as a system.

Minnesota's career and job seeker services are in need of updates, both in content and delivery methodologies. The changing demographics impacts how the content should be designed and how it should be delivered. Focus groups with customers have revealed needs for more cultural sensitive content and environments that enhance the learning of job seekers. We've learned that many potential customers do not find the environment of the one-stops as welcoming and conducive to learning. These issues need to be addressed and learning adapted to multi-cultural understanding. Technology will also need to play a stronger role in augmenting services and creating greater access around the state. With the associated costs of technology, strategic decisions will have to be made about how service delivery will need to change. This all has a significant impact in the ability of employers to be able to recruit and identify the talent they need.

Minnesota's education and training services are also challenged by the trends discussed earlier in this Section. A central theme for all three categories, but probably more critical for education and training, is looking at responsiveness of the system in delivering and designing appropriate content to meet the needs of business and industry, but also in a more accessible way for today's workforce. The demographic shift flows against the predominate designed of postsecondary education, one which is designed for full-time students, not part-time working adults and, as required by WIOA and needed to meet workforce demands, populations with barriers to employment. Many of the Career Pathway programming in Minnesota has explored addressing this and some best practices will emerge from this work. This will be a critical determinant in setting the stage for a successful transition to a Career Pathway system.

Another challenge for education and training services is growing gap on both sides of the adult literacy equation. On one side, we are seeing lower levels of literacy at the point of entry, due to the demographic shifts we've experienced with non-native English speakers. Greater connections to services are required to ensure the attainment of basic literacy skills. On the other side, we have the gap between GED attainment and family sustaining wage employment. As skill level requirements have risen

over the past couple of decades, the GED is no longer enough, with most family sustaining wage occupations requiring at least one year of postsecondary education.

The business services also have challenges to address. In general, how can we improve upon the labor exchange process by making more efficient and how can we assist businesses with workforce planning through the use of emerging labor market analytics. Employers are struggling with outdated approaches to reaching out and hiring within the available workforce. Smaller employers in particular are affected with dated practices and limited awareness of how to strategically anticipate their future workforce needs as well as to partner with state and local organizations, both public and private, who are available to help support their workforce needs.

STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY

(a)(2)(C) Provide an analysis of the capacity of the State entities to provide the workforce development activities identified in (A).

Within the three categories of services, capacity can be discussed from several perspectives. Three perspectives that will be covered include efficiency, market connection and funding levels.

The capacity of Minnesota's career and job seeker services from an efficiency perspective is moderate. There is opportunity for stronger coordination and consistency that would increase the efficiency of these services, possibly including a single information source that lists all workshops by providers within a region or local area; or a single approach to initial assessment, enabling a job seeker to enter the system with a consistent approach, aiding seamless transition among providers. The market connection, or capacity to serve those who need services, is difficult to gauge, although it could probably be considered low to moderate. A significant portion of the active job seekers are employed and don't consider the one-stops as a necessary or viable option for them. Funding in this area is an issue. Primarily supported by Wagner-Peyser and WIOA Adult, the dwindling resources are forcing choices to be made based on costs, and not what's best for job seekers. This is also an area where little attention is paid to by other potential funding sources.

The capacity of Minnesota's education and training services from an efficiency perspective is difficult to categorize, varying from region to region and based on the needs of individuals. A Career Pathway approach would address efficiency issues related to how timely and response it is for employers and individuals being able to focus on a tiered approach to earning a credential. In the area of market connection there is a greater need to address "working learners", with broader opportunities of when a person can start and at what time of day classes are offered. Funding to support the needs of the workforce are also limited and the capacity for individuals to take on debt for funding education and training is often not available or at odds with working toward a family sustaining wage, only to be saddle with debt to get there.

The capacity of Minnesota's business services from an efficiency perspective is moderate. The Salesforce platform is an effective means for coordinating efforts, but is underutilized and not at full potential. Strategies are being considered to broaden its use with more business services stakeholders. The market connection for business services is low to moderate, depending upon the location in the state. Larger communities and metropolitan areas are difficult to serve consistently, due to the varying size of firms and industry concentrations. As with the other categories, funding is also a challenge. The

balance between serving individuals and system strategies that, in the long run are good for individuals, is always a challenge.

As a result of these and other factors, Minnesota faces a series of strategic challenges to the workforce system both in services to job seekers and employers. Combined the challenges are high but the opportunities to address these challenges are even greater. As we consider the future, Minnesota is cognizant of these challenges and others as a uniquely effective coalition has been developed to address these challenges with a vibrant set of opportunities fully researched and designed to support the next stage of Minnesota's workforce development system. Minnesota seeks to address the needs of dual customers; job seekers and businesses to simplify navigation of an increasingly complex and and redundant slate of workforce services with a new and integrated approach to fulfill the promise of legislation contained in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

STATE STRATEGIC VISION & GOALS

VISION

(b) The Combined State Plan must include the State's strategic vision and goals for developing its workforce and meeting employer needs in order to support economic growth and economic self-sufficiency.

(b)(1) Describe the State's strategic vision for the workforce development system

The economic conditions of the 21st century require a more responsive approach to meeting the needs of business and industry; and the growing diversity of the workforce population. As economies become more global, competition will continue to increase and put pressure on the inputs of production, specifically the timely availability and skill base of the workforce. Rediscovering the value proposition of the Workforce Development System is critical to responding to the 21st century economy and to fuel Minnesota's thriving economic base.

VISION STATEMENT

A healthy economy, where all Minnesotans have or are on a path to meaningful employment and a family sustaining wage, and all employers are able to fill jobs in demand.

This vision statement was developed during Minnesota's participation in the National Governors Association Talent Pipeline Policy Academy. Minnesota's effort engaged seven State agencies and has begun to influence workforce development thinking at the system level. It is fitting to continue to move forward with this vision with the implementation WIOA under this inclusive effort.

As outlined in the State Strategy Section, Minnesota is seeking to transform the workforce development system into a "Career Pathway" system, a system that is locally responsive to the needs of employers and workers and is well aligned and supported by federal and state policies and resources.

GOALS

(b)(2) Describe the goals for achieving this vision based on the analysis in (a) of the State's economic conditions, workforce and workforce development activities.

(b)(2)(A) Include goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including preparing youth and individuals with barriers to employment and other populations

(b)(2)(B) Include goals for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers.

It is Minnesota's goal to create a "Career Pathway System" that aligns with the purposes of WIOA and the needs of Minnesota's businesses and workforce. Utilizing concepts from the Career Pathways Toolkit, strategies, goals and metrics will be developed to define Minnesota's workforce development system into a Career Pathway System.

A Career Pathway System approach will position the needs of a skilled workforce at the center of the system and recognizing the important role of a "dual customer" approach – businesses and workers.

Businesses will lead sector strategies that address the most critical growth needs in occupations that support family sustaining wages.

The diverse needs of workers will impact the design and delivery of employment and training programs and services to fulfill these employment needs and their career goals.

State level policy, guided by the Governor's Workforce Development Board, will assist with resource alignment and coordination. Local employment and training systems, coordinated by the local boards, will provide a responsive delivery system that is tailored to the local and regional needs.



PERFORMANCE GOALS

(b)(3) Include the State's expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance.

Performance measurements are negotiated annually with the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education. Minnesota is awaiting final guidance from these departments on the process for establishing expected levels of performance. Proposed measures will be developed after guidance is received and will be published through the [GWDB website](#) prior to the start of the 2016 program year.

	Projected Baseline	PY16/FY17			PY17/FY18		
		Proposed	Negotiated	Proposed Final Change in Performance	Proposed	Negotiated	Proposed Final Change in Performance
Employment 2nd Quarter After Exit							
<i>Adult</i>	82.0	82.0	82.0	82.0	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>Dislocated Worker</i>	85.0	85.0	85.0	85.0	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>Youth (OY)</i>	78.0	78.0	78.0	78.0	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>Wagner-Peyser</i>	63.0	63.0	63.0	63.0	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>Adult Education</i>	43	47	43	43	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>VRS/SSB</i>	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Employment 4th Quarter After Exit							
<i>Adult</i>	86.0	86.0	86.0	86.0	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>Dislocated Worker</i>	85.2	85.2	85.2	85.2	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>Youth (OS)</i>	88.0	88.0	88.0	88.0	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>Wagner-Peyser</i>	88.0	88.0	88.0	88.0	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>Adult Education</i>	72	73	72	72	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>VRS/SSB</i>	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter After Exit							
<i>Adult</i>	13,000	13,000	13,000	13,000	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>Dislocated Worker</i>	19,100	19,100	19,100	19,100	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>Youth (OY)</i>	5,500	5,500	5,500	5,500	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>Wagner-Peyser</i>	16,918	16,918	16,918	16,918	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>Adult Education</i>	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>VRS/SSB</i>	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Credential Attainment Rate							
<i>Adult</i>	73.0	73.0	73.0	73.0	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>Dislocated Worker</i>	69.0	69.0	69.0	69.0	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>Youth (OY)</i>	58.0	58.0	58.0	58.0	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>Wagner-Peyser</i>	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>Adult Education</i>	61	75	61	61	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>VRS/SSB</i>	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.

	Projected Baseline	PY16/FY17			PY17/FY18		
		Proposed	Negotiated	Proposed Final Change in Performance	Proposed	Negotiated	Proposed Final Change in Performance
Measurable Skill Gain							
<i>Adult</i>	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>Dislocated Worker</i>	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>Youth (OY)</i>	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>Wagner-Peyser</i>	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>Adult Education</i>	Info Pending	Info Pending	Info Pending	Info Pending	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>VRS/SSB</i>	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Effectiveness in Serving Employers							
<i>Adult</i>	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>Dislocated Worker</i>	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>Youth (OY)</i>	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>Wagner-Peyser</i>	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>Adult Education</i>	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
<i>VRS/SSB</i>	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Combined Federal Partner Measures							
<i>N.A.</i>							
State/Governor Education and Workforce Measures							
<i>N.A.</i>							

ASSESSMENT

(b)(4) Describe how the State will assess the overall effectiveness of the workforce investment system in the State in relation to the strategic vision and goals and how it will use the results of this assessment and other feedback to make continuous or quality improvements.

The Governor's Workforce Development Board, in partnership with the Minnesota Workforce Council Association and the State DEED, will be establishing an evaluation process that monitors, assesses and shares best practices as it relates to the State's vision, goals and performance goals.

STATE VISION - ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The assessment process for the State's vision will include measuring of system change indicators, such as policies, funding strategies and resources that support the development of Career Pathway systems; assessing new practices for effectiveness and designing a best practices network. The Operations Committee of the GWDB would be responsible for establishing the state vision assessment process, and would develop it in conjunction with the state administrators of the required federal titles in WIOA and the Minnesota Workforce Council Association. The process would be designed during the first 2 years planning cycle of the Regional and Local Plans and implemented during the second 2 years planning cycle.

GOALS – ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The assessment process for the State goals would be based on the state strategies and the six elements of a Career Pathway approach. Each element will include a measurement component; an assessment of new practices and a best practices report. The Operations Committee of the GWDB would be responsible for establishing the goals assessment process, and would develop it in conjunction with the state administrators of the required federal titles in WIOA and the Minnesota Workforce Council Association. The process would be designed during the first 2 years planning cycle of the Regional and Local Plans and implemented during the second 2 year planning cycle.

PERFORMANCE GOALS – ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The assessment process for the performance goals would be based on developing a deeper understanding of WIOA performance measures from the perspective of serving youth and other individuals with barriers to employment. Under the direction of the Operations Committee of the GWDB, DEED's research and development unit will prepare models of analysis that assist system partners with understanding the impact of Career Pathways and other strategies that address disparate impact populations within the WIOA programs and the system at large. The process would be designed during the first 2 years planning cycle of the Regional and Local Plans and implemented during the second 2 year planning cycle.

STATE STRATEGY

(c) The Combined State Plan must include the State's strategies to achieve its strategic vision and goals. These strategies must take into account the State's economic, workforce and workforce development, education and training activities and the analysis provided in Section (a). Include discussion of the specific strategies to address the needs of populations identified in Section (a).

(c)(1) Describe the strategies the State will implement, including sector strategies and career pathways.

Minnesota's state strategy is to evolve development of Career Pathways from programmatic models to become the foundation of the system's design. The six key areas provide a framework to look at all aspects of the workforce development delivery system.

The following table lays out a high level overview of the state strategy during this four-year plan, recognizing that revisions will be sought after the 2nd year to remain in alignment with progress being made at the regional and local level.

State Plan Year 1 of 4: Convening		1st Regional Plan Year 1 of 2: Convening	
<i>Setting the roles and responsibilities of the oversight entities; drafting a regional plan based on data and engagement activities; establish the regional sector partnerships; and engage workforce stakeholder partners to prepare for E&T Program Design requirements.</i>			
	Oversight Entities		
Focus Areas	GWDB	State Agencies	LWDB
Business Led Sector Partnerships	X	X	X
Workforce Stakeholder Engagement	X	X	X
E&T Program Design			
Funding Needs & Resources			
Policy & Program Alignment			
System Management			
State Plan Year 2 of 4: Design		1st Regional Plan Year 2 of 2: Design	
<i>The oversight entities support the needs of the Sector Partnerships in designing E&T programs that also address the socio-economic needs of workers needing skill training, with an eye toward looking at funding, policy, and program change needs for the following year of beginning implementation.</i>			
	Oversight Entities		
Focus Areas	GWDB	State Agencies	LWDB
Business Led Sector Partnerships			
Workforce Stakeholder Engagement			
E&T Program Design	X	X	X
Funding Needs & Resources			
Policy & Program Alignment			
System Management			
State Plan Year 3 of 4: Implementation		2nd Regional Plan Year 1 of 2: Implementation	
<i>The oversight entities support the implementation of the Career Pathway Sector strategies through program alignment (MOUs); updating state and local policies; and developing critical resource needs proposals. Year three is subject to revision based on the progress made during the 1st two-year cycle of the regional plans.</i>			
	Oversight Entities		
Focus Areas	GWDB	State Agencies	LWDB
Business Led Sector Partnerships			
Workforce Stakeholder Engagement			
E&T Program Design			

Funding Needs & Resources	X	X	X
Policy & Program Alignment	X	X	X
System Management			
State Plan Year 4 of 4: System Management		2nd Regional Plan Year 1 of 2: System Management	
<i>The oversight entities develop a system management approach that meets the requirements of WIOA and additional needs identified through this process. Year 4 is subject to revision based on the progress made during the 1st two-year cycle of the regional plans.</i>			
	Oversight Entities		
Focus Areas	GWDB	State Agencies	LWDB
Business Led Sector Partnerships			
Workforce Stakeholder Engagement			
E&T Program Design			
Funding Needs & Resources			
Policy & Program Alignment			
System Management	X	X	X

The following provides an overview of the six focus areas, including the role of the GWDB, the State agencies, the Local Workforce Development Boards; and a brief description of the impact sought on the employment and training services of the workforce development system.

AREA 1 – BUSINESS LED SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS

Business led sector partnerships provide a greater opportunity for sector strategies to be more responsive to the workforce development needs of business. These partnerships will focus on occupations in demand that provide family sustaining wages. This input will also drive the mapping of career pathways, based on labor market information analytics.

The GWDB and State agencies have been meeting to discuss moving toward a Career Pathway System for the state's workforce development programs and services. There has been strong support for this effort and they are ready to begin supporting the development of sector partnerships through their provider networks and regular programming and support.

The local workforce development boards within each of the six regional workforce development areas will be selecting 1-3 sectors to pursue sector partnerships. Drawing from State labor market information, these sector partnerships will focus on identifying occupations in demand that provide career pathways to family sustaining wages.

These partnerships will be responsible for mapping the career pathways, with the support of system partners, which identify the skills and credential requirements of the occupations within the pathway. This information will serve as the foundation for developing employment and training services.

The employment services will focus on developing and deploying career information about the opportunities within the selected pathways. Front line staff will receive specialized training for providing

targeted career services for these pathways that will broaden the reach of pathway opportunities beyond program eligible individuals of the workforce.

Training services development will focus on educational pipelines that link the skills and credential requirements from K-12 through Adult Basic Education and post-secondary opportunities. A key component of training services will be the inclusion and further development of connections to work and experiential learning, recognizing the value of competency development through hands-on and life experiences.

Facilitated by the local workforce development boards, core program activities will be aligned and coordinated with the sector partnerships. Career pathway information will be included in job search and career planning activities; and contextualized within Adult Basic Education, enabling greater "informed choice" by the general public and program participants who are seeking sustainable careers and family wages.

AREA 2 – WORKFORCE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The complexities of workforce development are significant and require a broad range of workforce stakeholder engagement. Just as business must be represented in sector strategy development, so must the diverse populations that make up our workforce. Equity issue strategies must be embedded at all levels of planning and implementation. Through broad stakeholder engagement we can build a locally responsive system that addresses equity issues in education, training and employment.

The GWDB and State agencies will assist with reaching out and coordinating with the service provider network and disparate impact communities, embracing the intent of the Governor's Executive Order 15-02 to create a Diversity and Inclusion Council. This is a call to action to ensure that all Minnesotans benefit from the growing economy and individual prosperity.

The local workforce development boards within each of the six regions will be identifying socio-economically disadvantaged populations through the use of data and public engagement. The goal of this process is to identify what causes barriers to successful access to employment and training services and the outcomes that these services seek to achieve. Examples would include minority populations, individuals with limited English skills, homelessness, at-risk youth, individuals with disabilities and/or others experiencing barriers to employment.

Facilitated by the local workforce development boards, the workforce stakeholder engagement will focus on identifying and recommending strategies that address barriers to success, including various population-centric perspectives of how the system itself impedes access to services, service design needs and a customer centric look at how the system is organize

AREA 3 – E&T PROGRAM DESIGN

Based on the skill requirements of occupations in demand, the employment, education and training services need to more broadly consider how competencies can be learned and demonstrated, being more inclusive of work and life-based experiences that contribute to hard and soft skill development. Services must also be more flexible, to accommodate situations that present barriers to successfully completing credentials due to current delivery structures and access to general employment services.

The GWDB and State agencies will assist with establishing and supporting the overall strategy for the redesign efforts. This effort will require creating a broad enough approach to allow for the needs of the six regions and corresponding Local Area Workforce Development Boards to provide the necessary leadership and coordination at the local level. A primary focus will be alignment and agreement on characteristics of the design elements that will require future policy and practice changes.

The local workforce development boards within each of the six regions will work with local system partners to identify the design needs across the available system partners that delivery employment, education and training activities. A primary focus will be utilizing existing career pathway experiences to assist with understanding how local areas can build off of their past success and expand the capacity of their work over time.

Facilitated by the local workforce development boards, the employment, education and training efforts will assist core program activity alignment with the Career Pathway approach. Many of the core program activities are essential in keeping the system connected through their daily work and strategy implementation. This is the phase were the needs of employers and today's diverse job seekers establish the foundation of a more responsive approach to system design and creating a Career Pathway system.

The employment services will focus on developing and deploying more culturally diverse approaches and look at how expanding the service network to other providers and online will increase access to services. Front line staff training and training for other partner staff will address the needs of more culturally diverse world views that enable a more welcoming environment.

Education and training services development will focus on expanding access and strategies that open up more opportunities for learning, through more options for starting training, shorter training periods, providing credit for prior learning and opportunities for more work-based learning opportunities. All of these strategies will support greater access and more realistic access as more and more people in postsecondary education are also working full time.

AREA 4 – FUNDING NEEDS AND RESOURCES

Understanding the complexities of workforce development through the stakeholder engagement input will assist with knowing what the system needs are and allow an assessment of available resources. Gaps need to be identified and priorities established for new approaches. This will support understanding where new resources are needed and opportunities to realign existing resources through new delivery strategies.

The GWDB and State agencies will focus on the impact of funding rules and regulations, based on the findings of the resource and needs assessment. Coordinated with the work of the Local Area Workforce Development Boards, strategies will be considered for state legislative recommendations and possible waivers at the state and federal level.

The local workforce development boards within each of the six regions will work with local system partners to map the local and regional resources that support understanding the gaps and assets to how the system is funded and coordinated at its broadest level. This effort aligns with recent Minnesota legislation that supported Regional Career Counseling Coordinators in greater Minnesota. Part of the charge for this effort is to report back to the State Legislator on the degree of alignment and coordination as it exists today.

Facilitated by the local workforce development boards, an assessment specific to the core programs will also be conducted with an underlying emphasis of how the core program interact within the one-stop centers and community related partnerships. Each local area has different resources to consider strengthening or establishing relationships with to better meet the needs of the populations not fully participating in the State's economic recovery.

The employment services of the workforce development system have already begun to look at transitioning to meet the needs of the changing labor market. Technology advances and social media are changing the way the labor exchange process works, offering new tools and techniques to connect job seekers and employers. This, coupled with the growing diversity of the workforce are creating an untenable situation that requires immediate changes to the alignment of resources dedicated to employment services.

The education and training services is funded in a variety of ways, from a variety of sources. The processes associated with these specific workforce development funds and activities need to be assessed for overall effectiveness and to look for new opportunities for funding and service delivery.

AREA 5 – POLICY AND PROGRAM ALIGNMENT

Policies must support program alignment from the perspective of the workforce, supporting the continuity that individuals need to be successful. This is both a state and local level activity and should support a more responsive system, complementing the known strategies from areas 1-4. This will create the flexibility to meet the needs of businesses and the workforce.

The GWDB and State agencies will support program alignment through the adoption of policies that reward the alignment of policies and services at the local and regional level. Based on the preceding work in areas 1-4 of Minnesota's Career Pathway system design, State leadership will work with the workforce development boards to ensure that all efforts are closely aligned and that the local boards are positioned in a strong oversight position.

The local workforce development boards will be responsible for adopting local policies that support and encourage program alignment across system partners. Existing MOUs will eventually evolve into a central component of this area of creating a Career Pathway system. Facilitated by the workforce development boards, the core program policy and program alignment with focus on the MOU, which is central to the operations of the one-stops and affiliated partner services.

The employment services will focus on aligning business outreach and job seeker services among the various providers. For business services, Minnesota has been exploring CRM products to help manage and connect business relationships with the network of outreach staff. Currently, Salesforce is being used and we will be exploring how it may be expanded on to assist with this effort. For job seeker services, Minnesota is also exploring a self-assessment tool that would enable a job seeker to understand their own preparedness for seeking employment and identify potential training needs. Once adopted, it would become a universal tool for the workforce development system and enable system partners to work more seamlessly across the system if there were a single tool for this purpose.

The education and training programs will focus on improving the seamlessness of stackable credentials, and transfer of credit and learning. This process will require full engagement of secondary and

postsecondary education; with Carl Perkins playing a major role in guiding this process based upon the selected industries and occupations.

AREA 6 – SYSTEM MANAGEMENT

The GWDB and State agencies will look at designing a system dash-board that not only complies with the requirements of WIOA, but adds additional factors that tell us how well the system is supporting each regional and the overall state economy. DEED has been exploring a foundational approach that considers workforce development, trade and innovation as the three pillars of the bench-marking system. Further work and consultation is needed with this approach. System partners will be engaged and supported in implementing the State's system management approach.

The local workforce development boards within each of the six regions will work with local system partners to integrate a system management approach that demonstrates the shared benefit and connections that programs have in working together. It will be supported by the system dash-board discussed above, and would facilitate a shared vision and mission for the core partners and other system partners who participate in the Combined State Plan.

The employment services will focus on utilizing the CRM to provide critical data on measuring performance, based on the eventual metrics established by UDOL and other state needs or requirements. For job seeker services, Minnesota will continue to evaluate co-enrollment as an approach to better manage the data and outcomes of all job seekers, across all programs.

As part of the system management approach, Minnesota will utilize its development of an analysis project called SLEDS (Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System). Minnesota developed the [Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System \(SLEDS\)](#) matching student data from pre-kindergarten through completion of postsecondary education and into the workforce. Bridging existing data with other incoming data a range of education programmatic and delivery questions can be answered to gauge the effectiveness of current programs and design targeted improvement strategies to help students.

The Minnesota P-20 Education Partnership governs the SLEDS system, with the following governance structure:

- The SLEDS Governance Committee will oversee all work with the data system.
- The SLEDS Research and Data Advisory Committee will review and develop research and evaluation proposals, provide technical expertise on data structure and linkages, and make recommendations to the Governance Committee.
- The SLEDS Coordinators and SLEDS IT staff will coordinate work of the committees and report to the Governance Committee on the research, evaluation and technical operations of SLEDS.

Stakeholders, from students to parents to state policymakers, need data to make informed decisions. The state plays a critical role in serving the diverse needs of consumers and policymakers, ensuring effective data use at all levels, and ensuring local users have access to quality data and capacity to use the information to inform decisions.

The project is managed jointly by the [Minnesota Office of Higher Education \(OHE\)](#), [Minnesota Departments of Education \(MDE\)](#), and [Minnesota DEED \(DEED\)](#), with a SLEDS Coordinator at each

agency serving to manage day-to-day functions of the project. Technical support for Minnesota's SLDS is provided by [Minnesota Information Technology Services \(MN.IT\)](#).

LEVERAGING OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESEARCH

SLEDS brings together data from education and workforce to identify the most viable pathways for individuals in achieving successful outcomes in education and work. It can be used to inform decisions to support and improve education and workforce policy and assist in creating a more seamless education and workforce system for all Minnesotans.

The general purpose of the SLEDS system is to identify and analyze the 4 P's of Minnesota's education and workforce systems:

Pathways: The movement of individual students between K-12, higher education, and workforce

- Who enrolls in college and when?
- Which levels of education lead to higher wages?

Progress: The transition points students meet or fail to meet

- How many students choose college versus work?
- What industries employ college graduates?

Predictors: The characteristics that help explain which students achieve successful outcomes and which do not

- Student demographics
- Immediate versus delayed entry into postsecondary education

Performance: How well are education and workforce aligned for individual success?

- Where can we focus additional strategies and resources?

SLEDS data provide a comprehensive foundation for assessing the performance of Minnesota's education and workforce systems. Data alone cannot improve performance but it can support the careful consideration of issues and analysis leading to action.

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

In SFY 2015, the SLEDS project achieved the following:

- **Release of [SLEDS Mobile Analytics website](#)** – The public can view data about student progress from secondary education into postsecondary education. Users can create customized displays by selecting specific graduation years, high schools and districts.
- **Outreach to stakeholder groups** –SLEDS Coordinators gave 43 presentations covering national (STATS-DC, SLDS Best Practices) and state conferences (CTE Summit, Perkins Consortium, TRiO) to individual school districts and workforce council associations.
- **Five SLEDS data/research requests approved** – SLEDS received requests from partner agencies and external researchers to study a range of student transitions, like dual credit and development education.

Policymakers, local educational agencies and Minnesotans benefit from the SLEDS project. SLEDS data is informing state level policy and planning. The Office of Higher Education's [Getting Prepared](#) report, showed that 27 percent of Minnesota public high school graduates enrolled in development education

in the first two years after high school, compared to the prevailing view that 40 percent of graduates needed development education. Access to better data assisted in informing the work of the Minnesota Legislature including the twelve bills in the 2015 session with language on regulating/evaluating developmental education placement, courses, cost to students, or instructional models. In August 2015, SLEDS expanded to secured reports allowing K-12 schools/ districts to gain access to de-identified student-level data for the purpose of evaluation in the areas of college and career readiness.

SLEDS receives a direct appropriation of \$1,764,000 (16-17 biennium) and its legal authority is captured in Minnesota statute [127A.70 Subd. 2\(b\)](#).

BUILDING ON SUCCESS

Minnesota has developed outstanding capacity to use SLEDS to inform and improve education programming and policies, and help create greater transparency. While the system has already become an invaluable tool to multiple stakeholders, we sought funding from the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) to enable us to expand use in a number of vital areas. The projects proposed focused on activities that will directly support increased use of the system, improve key stakeholders' data literacy, or add new linkages to additional data. All projects were designed to expand use of the system in ways that inform decision making by educators, policy makers and other stakeholders. Several of the proposed projects have broad, national implications and will serve as models for other states.

In September 2015, Minnesota was one of 16 states awarded an IES grant. Minnesota's strong data systems and robust data use are credited for the \$7 million award.

SECTOR & PATHWAYS STRATEGY

Under Section 101 (d)(3)(B)(D) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the State Board shall assist the Governor in the development of strategies to support the use of career pathways for the purpose of providing individuals, including low-skilled adults, youth, and individuals with barriers to employment, with workforce activities, education, and support services to enter or retain employment. In addition, the board shall assist and support the development and expansion of strategies for meeting the needs of employers and job seekers through industry or sector partnerships related to in-demand sectors and occupations.

Minnesota has been recognized as a leader in the development of career pathways models which began with the Minnesota FastTRAC program. In 2015, the Minnesota DEED, DEED expanded the capacity of the FastTRAC program to implement career pathways through the development of the Pathways 2 Prosperity program, funded through the Minnesota state legislature. Pathways 2 Prosperity serves individuals with greatest barriers to employment and represents partnerships between workforce, post-secondary education, and Adult Basic Education. DEED continues to establish career pathways through alignment and leveraging other WIOA Titles. Minnesota's strategy is to further leverage resources to serve individuals through co-enrollment.

In 2014, the GWDB released their Building partnerships to Overcome Barriers report which provided several recommendations to strengthen career pathways. The report highlighted Minnesota's increasingly disruptive and knowledge-driven economy that must support a human capital strategy to ensure its economic competitiveness, address growing disparities, and promote opportunity for business and job seekers alike. This report further established four key recommendations for Minnesota that include: 1) Develop a statewide partnership of state, regional, and local stakeholders to drive a

career pathways system. 2) Establish a shared vision, goals, and criteria. 3) Align policies. 4) Develop strategies to align resources. Minnesota's commitment to career pathways has been clearly demonstrated through the commitment of the National Governors Association's Talent Pipeline Policy Academy and CLASP's Alliance for Quality Career Pathways.

The Governor's Workforce Development Board, GWDB, under WIOA established the Career Pathways Partnership as a standing committee of the state board which established career pathways as a priority for the states' workforce development system. This Partnership provides leadership, advises the Governor, develops policy recommendations for the GWDB, and disseminates best practices for continuous improvement. The Partnership meets on a monthly basis and represents stakeholders and leaders from state, regional, and local levels. In early 2016, the Partnership will complete their strategic plan which identifies short and long term goals. A priority for the partnership is to focus on non-credentialed individuals in Minnesota and identify barriers and opportunities to broaden capacity and sustainability for sector-based career pathways in all of Minnesota's sixteen local areas and six regions. The Partnership is well-positioned to strengthen career pathways as a system through the development of an inventory of initiatives, sharing of best practices, alignment and leveraging of resources, and development of policy recommendations. These policy recommendations will be presented to the GWDB in addition to the NGA Policy Academy leadership team which represents state agency senior leadership, higher education, and Governor Dayton's office.

CORE ALIGNMENT STRATEGIES

(c)(2) Describe the strategies the State will use to align the core programs, any Combined State Plan partner programs, mandatory and optional one-stop partner programs, and any other resources available to the State to achieve fully integrated customer services consistent with the strategic vision and goals described. Also describe strategies to strengthen workforce development activities in regard to gaps identified in the State's workforce analysis.

Minnesota ranks second in the country in postsecondary attainment¹ and the state's unemployment rate is an enviable 3.5 percent, 1.5 percent lower than the national average. Yet, it continues to be among the states with the most significant educational gaps between white and minority students.*

The World's Best Workforce bill, Minnesota statute 120B.11, was passed in 2013 to ensure every school district in the state is making strides to increase student performance. Each district must develop a plan that addresses the following five goals:

- All children are ready for school.
- All third-graders can read at grade level.
- All racial and economic achievement gaps between students are closed.
- All students are ready for career and college.
- All students graduate from high school.

The NGA Talent Pipeline Policy Academy's education-related goals mirror the World's Best Workforce goals and were expanded to include five workforce-related goals, creating an education to career continuum (see diagram). Racial and economic disparities along this continuum are at the forefront of

¹ * Postsecondary attainment: Associate Degree or Higher, 2013 Minnesota Office of Higher Education. Seasonally adjusted state and national unemployment rates as of November 2015.

the policy academy's work. Strategies to achieve these goals have emerged: Systemic Implementation of Career Pathways for Adults and Experiential Learning for Youth.

Other efforts in the state include the establishment of the Diversity and Inclusion Council under Governor Mark Dayton, which seeks to improve the recruiting and retention of state employees from diverse backgrounds, improve the contracting process for businesses owned by Minnesotans from diverse backgrounds and promote civic engagement for all residents of Minnesota. The council and its committees are tasked with identifying best practices, developing a legislative agenda and moving forward with an enterprise-wide diversity and inclusion strategic plan.

The Office of Career and Business Opportunity, housed at the DEED (DEED), was recently created by Governor Dayton to provide the focus and leadership necessary to help workers and businesses of color across the state find career paths and business opportunities in Minnesota.

Under the direction of DEED's Office of Policy, a survey of employers is about to be launched that will ask 3,200 randomly selected firms stratified by WIOA region, industry sectors, and three size classes about the racial diversity of their workforce, why they seek to increase racial diversity in their workplace, and their participation in recruitment/retention initiatives and leadership practices. The data and information gathered will be used to create a "what works for employers" communication plan.

OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

STATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

STATE BOARD FUNCTIONS

The Combined State Plan must include an Operational Planning Elements Section that support the State's strategy and the system-wide vision described in Section II (c). Unless otherwise noted, all Operational Planning Elements apply to combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan as well as to core programs.

(a)(1) Describe how the State board will implement its functions under Section 101(d) of WIOA.

Under Section 101 (d) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the State Board shall assist the Governor in the development, implementation, and modification of the State plan through the review of statewide policies and programs; and of recommendations on actions that should be taken by the State to align workforce development programs in a manner that supports a comprehensive and streamlined workforce development system, including the review and provision of comments on the State plans, if any, for programs and activities of one-stop partners that are not core programs. The Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB) is the state's workforce development Board under WIOA, which seeks to improve the effectiveness of and streamline the governing structures of the public workforce system, empower elected officials and workforce Boards, establish structures for working with regional economies and engage the key stakeholders needed to lead the system to achieve the goals of WIOA.

The State Board was established prior to the passing of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) in 1997 and the Board structure was grandfathered in under WIA. With the passing of WIOA, significant changes to the composition and role of the Board are in process to ensure that there is a majority of private sector members on the Board as is now mandated by federal law. The composition and role of the GWDB are further defined by its by-laws and Minnesota statute.

OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE

The GWDB is transitioning to 41 voting members during WIOA implementation, which will continue through July 1, 2017. Membership includes the Governor and the heads of the following state agencies: the DEED (DEED), the Department of Education (MDE), the Department of Human Services (DHS) and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU); one (1) member of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House and one (1) member of the Senate appointed by the Senate Majority Leader; twenty-one (21) individuals representing business and industry; two (2) chief local officials representing cities and counties; six (6) individuals representing labor organizations; two (2) individuals representing community-based organizations; and three (3) individuals representing education.

The fourteen (14) non-voting members of the GWDB consist of the following: representative of Adult Basic Education (ABE); representative of Public Libraries; representative of the Women's Economic Security Act (WESA), Chair of the Minnesota Workforce Council Association (MWCA); Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Industry (DLI); Commissioner of the Office of Higher Education; Commissioner of the Department of Corrections (DOC); Commissioner of the Office of Management and Budget (MMB); two (2) representatives of community-based organizations; district superintendent of a public school district; representative of school-based service learning; minority leader of the House of Representatives; and minority leader of the Senate.

The Governor appoints all members of the Board, with the exception of legislative members. State and local leadership, GWDB staff and representatives of local areas encourage potential candidates from specific sectors, organizations and regions to apply for open positions in alignment with the state vision.

In consultation with DEED's Labor Market Information (LMI) Office, criteria were proposed and approved by the GWDB for prioritizing private sector representation on the Board:

- Industries with the largest number of jobs statewide
- Industries with the highest wages and greatest opportunities for workers' wealth generation
- Industries with the greatest potential for positive job growth
- Industries that are aligned with regional and state economic development priorities

After several months of discussion during committee and full Board meetings, five (5) industries for private sector membership on the GWDB were identified:

- Health Care & Social Assistance
- Manufacturing
- Professional & Business Services
- Construction
- Natural Resources (including Agriculture and Mining)

DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

GWDB committees and functions as of December 2015 are as follows:

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is a standing committee of the GWDB made up of the Board Chairperson (who shall also be the Chairperson of the Executive Committee), the Vice Chairperson, the Chairs of standing committees appointed by the Chairperson, the commissioner of DEED, the commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), a labor representative, an education representative and an at-large member.

The Executive Committee is empowered to meet on an interim basis between regular full Board meetings and make emergency or time-sensitive decisions when necessary. The Executive Committee has all the authority of the full Board when Board action is required. Immediate notification to the full Board will take place whenever any action is taken without prior consent of the Board. Discussion and formal approval of the action will take place at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board. The Executive Committee shall monitor the work of other Board committees and the Board staff, develop agenda items, work on legislative issues and make policy recommendations to the Board.

Operations Committee

The Operations Committee is a standing committee of the GWDB, which reviews, recommends, and approves the necessary reports, information, and all requirements under the functions listed above. State agency staff members provide subject matter expertise, data, information, and recommendations to the committee. Committee members are members of the GWDB who represent business and industry, state agencies, education and community-based organizations.

Career Pathways Partnership

The Career Pathways Partnership (CPP) is an ongoing committee of the GWDB, formed to establish state leadership and an operational framework to support sector-based Career Pathways. It is a foundational group that provides an exchange of information and, through the development of short- and long-term goals, impacts Career Pathways programs and policies from a state, regional, and local perspective. The CPP is chaired by two members of the GWDB and includes a broad spectrum of members from all regions of the state, including business and industry, state agencies, education, higher education and community-based organizations.

National Governors Association (NGA) Talent Pipeline Policy Academy

The National Governors Association (NGA) Talent Pipeline Policy Academy is a cross-agency leadership team that is working to institute shared goals and strategies across the state's education and training pipeline. The GWDB is responsible for convening and coordinating the activities of the policy academy, with technical assistance provided by NGA staff. Senior leaders from the following entities meet monthly and represent Minnesota at cross-state conferences with national experts and other policy academy participants:

- The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)
- The Minnesota Office of Higher Education (OHE)
- Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU)
- The Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)
- The Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI)
- The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS)
- The Minnesota Department of Human Rights (DHR)

In addition to aligning the efforts of state government, the policy academy also seeks to coordinate, enrich, and expand existing partnerships across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, while developing new partnerships to address Minnesota's unique workforce challenges and opportunities. The policy academy's work will conclude in July 2016.

Additionally, ad hoc committees or task forces may be initiated to address specific workforce development needs. The following are additional summaries of the work of the GWDB.

- **Development of Minnesota's Combined State Plan** - The GWDB establishes a broad vision for workforce development in Minnesota, and this vision helps guide the development of Minnesota's Combined State Plan.
- **Workforce Development System Strategic Plan and Continuous Improvement** - The Executive Committee of the GWDB is required to submit a report to the legislature regarding the performance and outcomes of Minnesota's WorkForce Centers in January of each odd-numbered year.
- **Designation of Local Areas** - The GWDB reviews and approves Local Workforce Development Area designations.
- **Development of Allocation Formulas** - The GWDB reviews and approves the allocation plans development by DEED for the distribution of funds for adult employment and training activities and youth activities to local areas.
- **Preparation of the Annual Report to the Secretary of Labor** - The GWDB provides input on the annual report to the Secretary of Labor.

- **Statewide Employment Statistics System** - The GWDB works closely with DEED's LMI Office and program managers within the agency to ensure Minnesota's statewide employment statistics system meets the needs of state- and local-level policy makers.
- **Incentive Grants and Other Federal Grants** - The GWDB plays an integral role in setting the vision for and the managing of the incentive grant application process. The GWDB convenes Board members, program partners and key stakeholders to identify how incentive funds can be used to meet the demands of employers and job seekers. The GWDB plays a similar role in the development of proposals for other federal grant opportunities, where appropriate.
- **Sunshine Provision** - The Board shall make available to the public, on a regular basis through electronic means and open meetings, information regarding the activities of the Board, including information regarding the State Plan, or a modification to the State Plan, prior to submission of the plan or modification of the plan, respectively, information regarding membership and, on request, minutes of formal meetings of the Board. The GWDB's accessible web site includes notices of upcoming GWDB meetings, minutes and materials from past meetings and information on each of the GWDB committees.
- **Conflict of Interest** - A member of the Board may not vote on a matter under consideration by the Board regarding the provision of services by such member (or by an entity that such member represents); or that would provide direct financial benefit to such member or the immediate family of such member; or engage in any other activity determined by the Governor to constitute a conflict of interest as specified in the State Plan. A Conflict of Interest statement is to be signed by Board members at the time of their appointment and on an annual basis thereafter.
- **Board Staff** - The GWDB staff shall be attached to the Minnesota DEED (DEED) for administrative and staff purposes. The GWDB may ask for assistance from other units of state government as it requires in order to fulfill its duties and responsibilities.
- **Funding** - The DEED commissioner shall develop recommendations on a funding formula for allocating Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funds to the GWDB with a minimum allocation of \$350,000 per year.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGY

(a)(2) Describe how the lead State agency with responsibility for the administration of each core program or Combined State Plan partner program will implement the State Strategies.

Minnesota has established a "One-Stop System Design" work group. This work group is made up of the state administrators of the federal titles and programs; and local board directors and staff who are participating in the creation of the WIOA implementation plan. This work group meetings regularly to discuss and address strategic issues and opportunities that will assist with implementation of Minnesota's Career Pathway system.

CORE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES TO IMPLEMENT THE STATE'S STRATEGY

(a)(2)(A) Describe the activities the entities carrying out the respective core programs will fund to implementation of the State's strategies. Also describe how such activities will be aligned across the core programs and Combined State Plan partner programs and among the entities administering the programs, including co-enrollment and other strategies.

Minnesota's vision is a call to action for the state to continue to demonstrate national leadership in its ability to anticipate future workforce demands and articulate leading strategies designed to meet those

needs for dual customers - job seekers and employers of the state. To accomplish this goal Minnesota has developed the Combined State Plan that is essential in outlining strategies and approaches toward meeting the future workforce development needs of the state and region.

Minnesota has had another strong year in pursuing these strategies as it has continuously improved and added valuable new elements to its workforce development system. In supporting the career exploration, job search, skill acquisition and reemployment of adults and youth, the Workforce Development Division operates as a multifaceted team designed to serve the evolving needs of job seekers and businesses statewide. In 2015, the Minnesota's workforce development system successfully served over 400,000 Minnesotans in providing coordinated employment and training services for individuals served through multiple programs areas and the administration of over \$200 million in state and federal funding.

Strategic alignment with key Department of Labor goals has included the development of career pathways as a foundational element to the majority of programs offered by DEED and its core and combined partners. State staff from DEED, DHS and MnSCU contributed toward the development of the Career Pathways Toolkit published by the Department of Labor and increasingly is used as a guide for the majority of Minnesota's collective program activity.

A significant part of this strategic alignment is Minnesota's commitment to support job driven strategies including work-based learning and quality business services. A primary component of this activity is to increase the use of industry recognized credentials in redeveloping our approach to on-the-job training and incumbent worker retraining. A leading strategy developed by Minnesota is to take these two elements of work-based learning and further align on-the-job training activities with competency-based education activities consistent with the development of nationally recognized industry credentials. Efforts are underway to partner with colleges and universities statewide who are recipients of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) Grant Program with the goal of applying for credit for prior learning which will provide additional support for quality career pathways.

Apprenticeships are also a key strategy for Minnesota's workforce development system. Developed in partnership with the Department of Labor and Industry, DEED submitted a successful \$5M apprenticeship proposal designed to anticipate the growth of apprenticeship-able occupations as well as the opportunity to link these occupations for nationally recognized instance Street credentials and credit for prior learning where appropriate.

Addressing youth employment challenges on multiple levels is also a key goal of the Combined State Plan. Unacceptably high rates of youth leaving high school prior to graduation and before the acquisition of marketable skills continue to exist in Minnesota. The Combined State Plan addresses this dilemma through a series of progressive activities designed to reach out to out of school youth and equip them with resources to return to high school and to ask successfully engage in post-secondary education options.

Committed to addressing racial disparities through its workforce development system, state and local staff enhanced outreach activities in cultivating new relationships, deploying multiple grant programs, and increasing community engagement with the goal of increasing program participation from communities of color through program services designed to secure meaningful employment at family sustaining wages.

Minnesota is also committed Key program areas include: Adult Career Pathways; Job Seeker Services; including statewide Field Operations and Employer Services; Vocational Rehabilitation; State Services for the Blind; Veterans Reemployment Services; Dislocated Worker and TAA services; administration of the state Workforce Development Fund, providing national leadership for the federal [careeronestop website](#); federal and state Youth Services; and administering MinnesotaWorks.net, the state's largest online labor exchange.

During the past 12 months, the states workforce development system has focused its activities in broadening its collaboration in implementing career pathways activities through multiple state and federal programs. Identified as the Pathways 2 Prosperity program in Minnesota, this national strategy is providing more in-depth programming leading to an identified the career path with the use of skilled career counselors, integrated developmental and skills training, application of appropriate sources and comprehensive placement assistance.

In addition, for the second year in a row, the state of Minnesota has achieved all federally negotiated performance standards for Workforce Investment Act, Wagner-Peyser programs. As one of only three states in the country who achieved these exacting standards, the state of Minnesota received a \$3 million in incentive grant from the U.S. Department of Labor.

Minnesota has always pursued discretionary funding as a means to identify and implement future focused workforce development activities. Consistent with this approach has been our successful response to multiple competitive grant funding opportunities. The following summary provides a partial list of competitive grant awards received by state:

- \$5 million - National Apprenticeship Grant
- \$3 million - WIA Performance Incentive Award
- \$5.7 million - National Emergency Grant
- \$500,000 - Supplemental Veterans Services grant
- \$70,000 - Youth Program Social Innovation Fund Grant
- \$650,000 - for various Job Services income agreements
- \$6 million - Workforce Innovation Fund Grant

To anticipate changes within the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, administrative operations have been streamlined including the development of employer-based services and providing Trade Adjustment Assistance Act services through our one-stops in multiple regions of the state. In addition, the state has made a major commitment to redeveloping employment programming for public assistance recipients. In collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Human Services, DEED and DHS staff are actively engaged in redeveloping the SNAP Employment & Training program along career pathways guidelines as a major opportunity to increase federal resources going toward reemployment activities of qualified individuals focusing on employment at family sustaining wages.

Another key goal has been the development of competitive federal funding to align on-the-job training retraining efforts through our dislocated worker programs to enhance incumbent worker retraining that qualifies for national skills standard recognition and becomes eligible for credit for prior learning programs in concert with the Minnesota State College and University system.

In order to emphasize nationally recognized credential attainment, Minnesota's workforce development partners from the state and local levels will set credential goals for each of Minnesota's workforce development programs, devise plans to reach those goals and measure progress over time. Credential plans will include setting goals for helping students meet momentum points for student success that fall along a continuum, from basic academic skills through postsecondary credential attainment. These "momentum points" will be evidence-based and linked to student labor market success. These momentum points will include, but not be limited to, the completion of stackable credentials, including certificates, diplomas and degrees. Plans to increase credential attainment will also involve expanding collaborations with the Adult Basic Education (ABE), workforce development partners, non-governmental workforce partners and educators, and human services providers to develop and expand access to academic programs, including career, technical and general education programs and student support services that support the success of low-skill adult learners.

Significant strategic planning has also included securing \$6 million in federal funding to anticipate the needs of future job seekers who are increasingly using technology and especially social media to manage their job search activities and to interface with employers. The Workforce Innovation Fund grant will sponsor agency-wide planning to help anticipate our technology direction going forward, as well as demonstrating leading approaches in using technology to build job seeker and employer connections.

Employer services have also been enhanced through the development of proactive statewide services to the business community including the completion of staff retraining in strategic workforce planning, multiple recruitment engagements which are effectively collaborating with area workforce development boards and Business and Community Development colleagues. Emphasis in this area also has provided significant results in statewide strategic planning around the branding of the state workforce system as well as preparing proactive responses for acute workforce shortages.

In addition, Division leadership worked with agency Leadership, Legislative Affairs, and Youth Services team members to successfully advocate for increased funding for Youth Program Services. Youth Services team members demonstrated recognized national leadership in effectively enhancing their focus on out of school youth consistent with changes in federal legislation. This emphasis has resulted in multiple new partnerships and approaches designed to support the needs of out of school youth who are migrating toward additional secondary and post-secondary education, career planning and entry into the labor force.

Division activities are consistent with planning associated with the implementation of WIOA. Division staff are deeply involved in supporting multiple efforts associated with the implementation of new legislation. Workforce Development Division activities operate in support of DEED's strategic priorities in leading Minnesota's workforce system to anticipate the needs of our twin customers, job seekers and businesses well into the future. The following information details specific program area activities accomplishments:

Minnesota's vision for the implementation of WIOA builds upon the Minnesota GWDB's *All Hands on Deck: Fifteen Ideas for Strengthening Minnesota's Workforce* reissued in 2012, the seminal document points to three realities of the new economy that remain relevant for the implementation of the new federal workforce legislation. Key among the recommendations included in the document are the following:

- The growing demand for skilled workers requires that Minnesota strengthen the skills of **all its citizens**, especially those underrepresented in the workforce.
- Skill shortages and unemployment are challenges that require a **statewide and system-wide response**.
- Engaging a **diverse array of stakeholders** is the best way for the workforce investment system to develop inclusive and effective workforce strategies.

Minnesota's Combined State Plan for the implementation of WIOA builds upon these previously articulated strategies and moves into significantly new areas of strategic importance for the evolution of Minnesota's workforce development system. As a state that combines multiple state and federal employment and training activities as core partners, the Minnesota DEED provides leadership and administration for WIOA required titles, including Wagner-Peyser, Vocational Rehabilitation, State Services for the Blind, Veterans Employment Training Programs, and the Senior Community Service Employment Program. DEED also administers the SNAP Employment and Training Programs and the reintegration of ex-offenders in partnership in collaboration with the Minnesota Departments of Human Services and Corrections respectively.

In addition, DEED also houses the state Unemployment Insurance system. The co-location and integrated structure of key core services is critical to the past successes of Minnesota's workforce development system and will be key to the future success of the implementation of WIOA. Minnesota is well-positioned to provide the systemic and programmatic leadership that brings together for the first time major state actors charged with supporting the state workforce development system. Under the WIOA legislation core and combined plan partners have coalesced planning efforts to jointly engage in programs and services in new and meaningful ways designed to support developing a future oriented workforce development system. The state agencies and local partners included in combined state workforce system represent including the following partners:

- Career and Technical Education (Carl D Perkins)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
- Employment & Training (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)
- Work Programs (Food and Nutrition Act)
- Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers
- Jobs for Veterans State Grants
- Senior Community Service Employment

Minnesota's combined plan demonstrates a unified vision for how the state will move forward in anticipating many of the demands on the state workforce system. Minnesota works very closely with and has a long and successful track record in partnering with the organizations included in our states combined plan.

In preparation for the new legislation, the GWDB in Minnesota fulfilled the WIOA requirement to establish Regional Workforce Development Areas, creating six regions. The goal of creating regions is to strengthen regional strategies for a skilled workforce that align with regional economic growth goals and personal economic self-sufficiency. While respecting the current boundaries of existing Local Workforce Development Areas and recognizing the foundational benefits of local Workforce Development Boards articulation of area workforce needs, the regional alignment will permit growth in area workforce planning that is critical to the increased focus on specific economic sectors as well and is to anticipate

shifting regional labor force needs and opportunities to address those challenges and new and creative ways.

Economic sectors Identified by the GWDB include advanced manufacturing, healthcare, information technology, construction, transportation and agriculture. Key to Minnesota's economic growth, identified economic sectors encourage focus on career pathways that support economic growth and individual and family self-sufficiency.

The new legislation provides the opportunity to anticipate Minnesota's current and future workforce needs. The movement of the state's labor force from a supply side to a demand side approach has had significant implications for the state's current workforce system and requires greater alignment and anticipatory activities to engage in a variety of state and local actors in state workforce planning. In addition, Minnesota needs to operate more often from regional foundations that articulate shifting labor sheds in more proactively meet the needs of our dual customers – job seekers and employers in developing the skilled workforce of tomorrow.

The "core" and "combined" partners jointly planned the activities outlined in this document recognizing the need to significantly shift toward future workforce needs that include a lessened emphasis on place-based programs, movement toward populations that are more geographically distributed and services that offer more high-tech and high touch approaches.

Minnesota's Pathways to Prosperity program includes a focused effort on creating multiple Career Pathways that are applied to a variety of state workforce development programs including WIOA adult services, SNAP recipients, youth programming and specialized grant services utilizing both state and federal resources. Minnesota has been on the forefront of the development of career pathways for the last eight years. Beginning with the Joyce foundation grant, the concept has steadily evolved toward its present format which is consistent with the definition and components included in the recently released career pathways toolkit.

The Components and Minnesota career pathways program framework include the following: Career Navigation; career development services; developmental education embedded within skills training; financial supports; and comprehensive assistance into employment placement with retention services.

A key part of this initiative is the Bridge Programming which includes contextualized education and work readiness skills within an occupational sector that focuses on enhancing foundational skills and preparing individuals for postsecondary coursework. Minnesota's approach to career pathways may include entry level credentials but will offer a demonstrated career path into more advanced training and placement into higher wage occupations consistent with this education.

Enhanced Academic Instruction: Provides enhancements to traditional educational programming such as integrated instruction, concurrent ABE with CTE, concurrent Dev. Ed. with CTE, etc. Education activities Includes credit bearing coursework, articulation to credit or credit for prior learning towards certificates, degrees, and diplomas within in-demand occupations.

Employment Placement & Retention: Job search and job placement assistance, supportive services to aid in search and employment retention. The following graphic represents Minnesota's adult career pathways program framework:

Another key facet of Minnesota's combined plan is to provide greater integration of field-based services sponsored through Wagner-Peyser job seeker services and WIOA field-based operations. Activities are focused working in partnership with Regional Workforce Development Areas to consider the future needs of the job seeking public served through WIOA programs. A part of this review will consider:

- Strategic Service Design
- "Hub and Spoke" Model with Greater Use of "Affiliates"
- Technology needed to serve the evolving needs of job seekers and employers
- Increased use of skills training along career pathways guidelines
- Improvements in Job Seeker services and related activities

DEED mandates standard sets of services, also called core services, for WorkForce Centers. These services are primarily self-service or informational in nature, and include:

- access to computers, phones, fax machines, printed materials or other information to conduct a job search, or to learn about jobs available within a local area
- information on careers, training, and community resources
- skills assessments
- job seeker orientation
- eligibility determination
- income support or referrals to other available resources

Every WorkForce Center is required to house a resource area that contains computers with Internet access and job seeker resources including resume and cover letter assistance, interviewing tips, and training information. Current services to businesses include seminars, a skills-based list of job seekers, customized recruitment, local labor market information and rapid response services.

Many web-based tools are available to all individuals with Internet access. Minnesota's most prominent tool for both job seekers and employers is [MinnesotaWorks](#), "your NO FEE online job bank for finding jobs and employees in Minnesota." It includes a database maintained by DEED that allows job seekers to list their resumes and search for job openings while employers can post a list of job openings and search for job candidates.

Additional web-based tools include:

- The DEED [website](#), which directs users to employment- and business-related resources available through the WorkForce Centers and DEED
- An online registration system for the general public to register for WorkForce Center workshops and seminars
- The [Internet System for Education and Employment Knowledge \(ISEEK\)](#), which provides access to career planning, job search, and education resources. DEED is a partner in this statewide collaboration among education, employment and training, and business partners.
- [Creative Job Search](#), a comprehensive curriculum that teaches the skills needed to conduct a successful job search. Written with the help of professionals and job seekers throughout Minnesota, this tool continues to be a highly regarded resource. DEED is committed to providing a high-quality publication that continues to strive for excellence.

- [CareerOneStop - Pathways to Career Success](#), a partner of the American Job Center network. Individuals who have lost their jobs can access several tools through CareerOneStop, including mySkills myFuture; MY NEXT MOVE; Worker ReEmployment; and Veterans ReEmployment.

In addition to the web-based tools, other key tools available in the Resource Areas of WorkForce Centers include:

- WinWay Resume software
- Typing tutor software
- Focus on Ability, an online and/or CD-ROM-based training program to improve services to individuals with disabilities.

All WorkForce Centers have a resource area open to the public, providing computers with Internet access available to the universal customer. In order to track use of these resources, all resource areas computers have a common tracking system called the Customer Registration System (CRS). DEED purchases and maintains the hardware and licensing of software so that each location provides personal computers with a customer interface designed to link the user quickly to relevant tools and websites for job search, resume writing, business research, career planning, and education resources. Assistive technology is available for users who have disabilities. All sites have staff available to assist customers. All resource areas have phones, fax machines and copiers available to support job search activities. All resource areas offer a library of books, videos, and newspapers related to job search and career research, based on the core materials standards. Most WorkForce Centers also offer workshops on resume writing, interview preparation, job search and career planning.

Staff who work in the resource area are required to complete the [Reception and Resource Area Certification Program](#) (RRACP). This program certifies staff in the knowledge and competencies needed to provide a high level of service in the roles of receptionist and/or resource area attendant. DEED also developed and maintains a [Reception and Resource Area Forum](#) (RRAF) website.

WorkForce Centers use the "customer service protocol" to simplify and clarify the process of assisting customers effectively in the resource areas. The steps are to greet the customer, assess needs and expectations with the customer, take action on expressed needs and confirm customers' needs were met. Each WorkForce Center differs depending on available staff, staff expertise, a customer's computer comfort level and the specific needs or interests of the customer. To conduct the needs assessment portion of the protocol, different locations have developed approaches that are meaningful for their sites. DEED has developed material that includes a checklist and menu of services that WorkForce Centers can use as an alternative or in addition to their material.

Minnesota's business services initiative is a key component of the state's transformation into a demand-driven workforce development system. DEED created the positions of business services representatives (BSR) to serve as single points of contact for businesses in the workforce development system. Minnesota hired, trained and continues to deploy business services representatives in Minnesota WorkForce Centers throughout the state.

Increasingly, these specialists are working as a part of an integrated team structure with our dislocated worker rapid response and trade adjustment assistance teams to provide maximum flexibility of staff equipped to assist job seekers and companies in a full range of activities all designed to contribute to the

states workforce development system. The staff establish business relationships with local business decision-makers, assess business needs and identify business solutions.

Business service representatives work with their regional labor market analysts and their Local Workforce Development Boards to identify and target key industries. WorkForce Center business services teams coordinate business outreach, brainstorm solutions to business needs and communicate business needs with staff and partners in career guidance and individual customer services. Business services representatives engage in regional economic development, workforce development, and education issues and initiatives.

All WorkForce Centers must provide a staffed resource area to serve the public without regard for eligibility. Minnesota maintains strong, inclusive eligibility policies that also address services available to the universal customer, ensuring that all individuals can access core services. Each year, Local Workforce Development Areas review and update their local plans to ensure availability of immediate core services. As outlined in WIOA law and enhanced in Minnesota, services available to the public must include:

- Outreach, intake, and orientation to Minnesota's WorkForce Center System services
- Eligibility determination for additional services under WIOA
- Initial assessment of skill levels, aptitudes, abilities, and supportive service needs
- Career exploration resources
- Information on supportive resources and other WorkForce Center services
- Labor Market Information from DEED including:
 - occupations in demand and skill requirements for such occupations
 - employment statistics including the provision of accurate information relating to local, regional, and national labor market areas including job vacancy listings and information on job skills necessary to obtain those jobs
- Job listings, including access to MinnesotaWorks
- Job search and placement assistance resources, including ISEEK
- Information on how to file an account for Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits

The youth services strategy fits into the overall vision and strategic direction for workforce development established by the Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB). Local Workforce Development Areas ensure that youth participants can plan employment and career paths using current regional labor market information, such as targeted growth industries in the region, in-demand occupations, and employers hiring for jobs with above average earnings. Services are provided through a network of public and private nonprofit agencies and WorkForce Centers. Youth service providers are held accountable to the LWDB and youth council, which are responsible for program oversight, coordination of services and selection of youth service providers. DEED's network of business services representatives serve as liaisons between the business community and the workforce development system, helping to identify the needs of local employers. Strong relationships among the partner agencies in the local WorkForce Centers provide ease of access and referral between programs. The youth councils help to assure collaboration across agencies responsible for workforce development, education, social services, corrections, housing, health, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, State Services for the Blind, Job Corps, the business community and Chambers of Commerce. Collaborative efforts lead to shared outcomes for all youth serving partners.

ALIGNMENT WITH ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE PLAN

(a)(2)(B) Describe how the activities will be aligned with programs and activities provided by mandatory one-stop partners and other optional one-stop partners and activities provided under employment, training (including Registered Apprenticeships), education (including career and technical education), human services and other programs not covered by the plan, as appropriate, assuring coordination of, and avoiding duplication among these activities.

The GWDB serves as the convener of all partner agencies, both state and local, that compose the career pathways system in Minnesota. The GWDB's membership with regard to the combined plan and programs represented serve as a voting or non-voting member of the board. In addition, through the GWDB Career Pathways Partnership and MWCA, stakeholders are encouraged to participate in strategic conversations and development of plans that address not only WIOA but also opportunities to innovative program design and service delivery. Specific initiatives are in place to support sector partnerships and career pathways and the events and committees are open to all interested parties.

During year one, all partners and stakeholders will engage in strategic conversation followed by the development of plans and program design. All partners will be invited and the planning and design phases will be coordinated to ensure all existing initiatives are aligned and adequate opportunity has been allowed for all agencies to participate. As discussed above, all one-stop partner programs will be invited to participate in industry-led sector partnership discussions and strategies with DEED's business services teams to focus on coordination and duplication reduction.

COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS

(a)(2)(C) Describe how the entities carrying out the respective core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs, and mandatory and optional one-stop partner programs will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality, customer-centered services, including supportive services to individuals including those populations identified in Section II(a)(1)(B). The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

Job seekers in Minnesota are served by the statewide network of WorkForce Centers as well as by the myriad government, education, and nonprofit organization locations of one-stop partner programs. All comprehensive WorkForce Centers offer the full range of WIOA Title I-B, Wagner-Peyser, Veterans, and TAA, state youth and state dislocated worker services in a co-located model, with many centers across the state including other partners from WIOA titles represented in this plan.

All Minnesota WorkForce Centers serve customers of the public workforce system with highly-trained professional staff. Both job seekers and businesses have access to services designed to meet their specific needs. DEED developed a training program called the Reception and Resource Area Certification Program for staff who work at WorkForce Center reception desks and resource areas. To date, 327 staff from Title I and Title III partners have been trained and certified through this program. Within the parameters of each statutorily defined program, Minnesota has implemented special initiatives to provide comprehensive, customized and coordinated services to targeted populations with barriers to employment.

UI Claimants, Long-Term Unemployed, Under-Employed, Dislocated Workers, Trade Displaced Workers, Displaced Homemakers

- Workforce Development Programs/UI Strategic Partnership – The Minnesota DEED, which includes Unemployment Insurance, provides for co-location of staff members to coordinate reemployment initiatives for claimants and the long-term unemployed.
 - *Design and Implementation of Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) and Links to Reemployment:* Links to Reemployment and RESEA focus on engaging Unemployment Insurance claimants within the first weeks of their first UI Benefit payment, and provide earlier workforce engagement and increased services through Job Service staff to help expedite their return to work.
- Sector Partnership National Emergency Grant – Minnesota was awarded a \$5.5 million Sector Partnership National Emergency Grant (SPNEG) in 2015 to temporarily expand capacity to serve dislocated workers and meet the increased demand for employment and training services with the goal of quickly reemploying laid off workers and enhancing their employability and earnings. This grant will utilize sector strategies to advance and complement the more integrated and comprehensive dislocated worker services envisioned by WIOA. The specific activities targeted by this grant, which continues through 2017, include regional sector planning and strategies, enhanced career services to dislocated workers, and work-based training opportunities.
- Displaced Homemaker Program - In addition to services available through Wagner-Peyser and the WIOA Dislocated Worker formula programs, State funds are utilized to provide employment and training services to eligible displaced homemakers who, through divorce, separation, widowhood, or ineligibility for other public assistance, have lost their source of economic support.

Low-Income Individuals

- Minnesota Displaced Homemakers Program (DHP)
 - DHP participants are typically 25 to 54 years old, and the majority of those individuals are in the 25-34 age range. Approximately 30 percent have never been employed outside of the home, or have been removed from the workforce for an extended period of time, and have multiple barriers to finding and keeping employment. The participants need to identify, address and resolve multiple barriers before they can be competitive in the workforce. Often they are worried about basic needs such as facing eviction, having utilities services shut off, or caring for a spouse or child with a disability.
 - Displaced homemakers are likely to experience any combination of the following barriers to employment: little or no work history, lack of child care, the lack of job-search skills and interviewing techniques, inadequate benefits (e.g., no medical insurance), housing and transportation issues, child support and custody issues, or grief over a recent death. There is also a disproportionate number who have survived physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Common challenges are low self-confidence and a high level of anxiety concerning entry into the labor market. The DHP addresses these issues, providing mentoring, encouragement, and support to participants to build the self-confidence they need to succeed.
 - A limited number within this population qualify for other programs offering comprehensive services to prepare participants for economic stability. Twenty-two percent of DHP participants received Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP/TANF) services and less than one percent received Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Federal mandated Adult Jobs and Training services in SFY 2014.
 - Coordinated program services include:
 - Individual and/or Family Stabilizations:

- assessment and peer counseling, the initiation of individuals and group support, exploration of community resources to assist people in transition from dependency to self-sufficiency, Referrals are made to appropriate community resources for basic social services such as food and shelter, mental health counseling, remedial education, child care, legal assistance, health issues, and other identified service needs.
- Transportation, child care, work and school expenses, and emergency needs are covered when funds are available.
- Life Transition Navigation: case management and supportive services are essential to the success of individuals in the Displaced Homemakers Program. These career development and supportive services are available to participants throughout the entire program. Such services include personal assessment and peer counseling, vocational counseling, post-secondary educational counseling and college funding options, referral to Dislocated Worker Program or the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation as deemed appropriate.

WIOA Young Adult Program

- Minnesota's WIOA Young Adult Program provides comprehensive employment and training services to opportunity youth, including work-based learning, an introduction to career pathways, attainment of recognized credentials and wrap-around support services. Participants are at-risk youth ages 16-24 who are not attending any school, and in-school youth ages 14-21 who are low-income and at-risk. Baseline data indicates that youth served under the federal program are basic skills deficient (70 percent); those with a disability (39 percent); public assistance recipients (31 percent); system-involved youth – foster youth and juvenile offenders (15 percent); pregnant or parenting teens (10 percent); homeless or runaway youth (10 percent); and youth of color (49 percent).
- Minnesota's commitment to improving services to the neediest youth is reflected in its Shared Vision for Youth (SVY) vision statement: "By age 25, Minnesota's young people will be ready for the responsibilities and rewards of economic self-sufficiency, health, family and social relationships, community involvement, stable housing and lifelong learning." This vision is supported by an interagency workgroup (22 agencies) whose mission is: "State agencies will collaborate to assure that Minnesota's neediest youth acquire the talents, skills, and knowledge necessary to ensure their healthy transition to successful adult roles and responsibilities." Minnesota supports partnerships at the State and regional levels so that a variety of funding sources can be leveraged, blended and integrated to better address the needs of opportunity youth.
- DEED posted a [Shared Vision for Youth \(SVY\) web page](#) to provide the contact information for the State-level interagency workgroup and the capacity of ongoing interagency projects which further the goals of serving opportunity youth and achieving successful youth outcomes. This webpage includes samples of interagency projects underway at the LWDA level to improve transition outcomes for all at-risk youth with a particular emphasis on: dropouts and potential dropouts; youth in foster care and those aging out; homeless youth and runaways; and youth with disabilities. Minnesota encourages co-enrollment of WIOA youth participants in other State and federally funded youth programs to increase the quality of services to in-school and out-of-school youth. To facilitate co-enrollment of WIOA-eligible youth in TANF and Pre-Employment Transition Services (e.g., Vocational Rehabilitation Services), Minnesota is seeking a waiver (see Section XX).
- Minnesota's successful implementation of the WIOA Young Adult Program builds new relationships with private sector employers who play a variety of roles in supporting youth

workforce development goals in high-growth industries, including: 1) identifying the skills and competencies needed in the workplace; 2) creating work experience opportunities and internships; 3) Providing mentoring opportunities and support for youth entering high-growth industries; and 4) developing industry certification and employer commitments to hiring opportunity youth.

Individuals with Disabilities

- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) — the focus of the VR program is to provide individualized and customized services and supports to individuals with disabilities. VR staff are subject matter experts who will commit to work with the staff of core and combined plan program partners to support their efforts to provide effective services to individuals with disabilities. VR will strive to coordinate individualized VR plans for employment with the plans developed for individuals by other core and combined plan partners, and assure that the VR plan is complementary to these other plans, whenever feasible.
 - Coordination between programs will be supported by working and, as appropriate, formal partnership agreements with state community partners to create referral processes and jointly deliver services to customers, including customers from unserved and underserved populations. At the local level, VR will work with core and combined plan partners as well as other community resources, to reach out to unserved and underserved populations. Particularly, VR will focus efforts on underserved youth (youth from the foster care, juvenile justice, and mental health systems), homeless individuals, and individuals with limited education.
- DEI Career Pathways Model – DEI Projects funded in 2014 support job-driven approaches in career pathway systems and programs to equip youth and adults with disabilities (including individuals with significant disabilities) with the skills, competencies, and credentials necessary to help them obtain in-demand jobs, increase earnings, and advance their careers.
 - Three local workforce development boards: Anoka County, Central, and Southwest Private Industry Council serving Adults with Disabilities, (including subgroups, such as disabled Veterans, TANF recipients, English as a Second Language recipients, and Ex-offender population).
 - Project Description - MNDEI will hire three Disability Resource Coordinators in LWDBs operating career pathways in manufacturing, health care, and business administration information technology sectors and will strengthen partnerships with Vocational Rehabilitation, disability agencies, and employers and modify career pathway education and employment for individual success. MNDEI will achieve this through five key objectives: 1) Increase employment and wage outcomes of 110 individuals with disabilities through aligned services and expanded partnerships; 2) Increase credential attainment of 114 through strengthened academic transitions incorporating innovative program design and delivery for adults with barriers to achieve career education and employment success; 3) Increase work-based training approaches for 155 adults in career pathway programs, including customized employment and service strategies; 4) Increase partnerships to strengthen alignment of service, braid and blend resources, integrate expertise, and actively engage with 55 employers to improve services and outcomes in support of individuals with disabilities through existing career pathway systems; and 5) Refine MN AJC policies and practices to increase participation in existing job training and career pathways programs by all Minnesotans including adult learners and job seekers with disabilities and others with unique career development needs.
- Strategic Service Delivery Components

- Developing collaborative partnerships across multiple service delivery systems;
- Blending and braiding of funds;
- Providing flexible opportunities to individuals with disabilities for training and employment; and
- Creating systemic change.

Adult Learners

- Minnesota Pathways to Prosperity: 2015 Pathways to Prosperity funding will support increased participation of enrollees in career pathway programming to strengthen development of increased career awareness, acquisition of basic skills education, participation in skills-training programs, and placement into positions in high growth, high demand industries capable of long-term employment at wages permitting family self-sufficiency. In 2015 DEED, in partnership with MN Department of Human Services, Adult Basic Education and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, selected 33 grantees under the Pathways to Prosperity framework with the goal of serving 3,187 individuals.
 - In 2015, the Joyce Foundation released their [Shifting Gears Report](#) analyzing the Adult Career Pathway efforts in Minnesota, in conjunction with 2 other states. These results demonstrate the positive impact we have had via career pathways. Highlights of this report include: Minnesota doubled the number of programs offered between 2012 – 2014, Minnesota implemented important policy changes including an increase in state allocations towards career pathway programming, and Minnesota's work in career pathways positively influenced the national efforts in workforce development by shaping the importance of adult learners receiving credentials (as demonstrated in WIOA legislation).
 - Gov. Dayton proposed a statewide "Pathways to Prosperity" program, which would combine DEED's existing programs and focus them exclusively on a common goal: combining remedial education and skills-based training to help people find and keep jobs that pay high enough wages to sustain families.
 - Pathways to Prosperity programs focus on assisting low-skill, low-wage adults obtain occupational credentials and find employment. The initiative is supported by local partnerships between workforce development and human services programs, Adult Basic Education, and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities.
 - MN Pathways to Prosperity (P2P) supports increased participation of enrollees in career pathway programming to strengthen development of increased career awareness, acquisition of basic skills education, participation in skills-training programs, and placement into positions in high growth, high demand industries capable of long-term employment at wages permitting family self-sufficiency.
- WIOA Adult: Funding for the WIOA Adult program was allocated via formula to 16 local workforce development boards. The total funding amount was \$6,988,343. This program provides services to individuals who are economically disadvantaged, unemployed, etc. by assisting with academic and technical skill enhancements and job search related activities. WIOA Adult providers have been partnering with Adult Career Pathway programming to ensure individuals have access to family sustaining wages or beyond.
- Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) helps families with children meet their basic needs, while helping parents move to financial stability through work. Parents are expected to work, and are supported in working with both cash and food assistance. Most families have a lifetime limit of 60 months on MFIP. The DEED (DEED) work with the Department of Human Services (DHS) Economic Assistance and Employment Supports Division (EAESD) to ensure the program goals of MFIP are met.

- In 2014:
 - The Joint Counselor Training was held in Rochester MN. DEED and DHS worked together to provide training to over 500 employment services providers throughout the state of MN during the two day training.
 - Provide monthly reports to assist Counties and providers in meeting Federal participation requirements.
 - Provided bi-monthly 3-day MFIP training to employment service workers.
 - Worked in collaboration with the University of Minnesota Humphrey School of Public Affairs develop training and guidelines to implement an outcome-based measure, instead of the current performance measure.
 - Updated forms, brochures, trainings, and 500+ page MFIP Employment Services Manual to align with legislative changes.
- SNAP Employment and Training Program: SNAP E&T is jointed supervised by DHS and DEED with DEED taking the lead in E&T management. The program has two current approaches: county supervised and project supervised. SNAP recipients who are required to participate in E&T in order to continue receiving SNAP benefits are the crux of those served. The program also serves SNAP recipients who volunteer for E&T services. County supervised programs usually are contracted out to WIOA providers across the state. Project supervised programs are overall seen by DEED/WDD staff. DEED contracts directly with these providers and is reimbursed by DHS for project expenditures. Overall budget for SNAP E&T for FFY16 for these two project types is \$2.19 million.
 - In 2015, there were 16 county providers and 6 project providers.
 - In 2015, SNAP E&T enrolled 4046 participants in county programs and 652 in project programs. 100 percent of the individuals received assistance via SNAP benefits
 - 48.5 percent of the individuals served enrolled in SNAP E&T were at or below a High School Diploma or GED in FFY15.
 - 49 percent of the individuals served identified themselves as American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hawaiian Native or Other Pacific Islander, or Multi-race.
 - SNAP E&T participant outcomes for FFY15 are 41 percent placement working 32.1 hours per week at \$11.02 per hour.
- Senior Community Service Employment Program: The SCSEP program fosters economic self-sufficiency through community service activities for unemployed, low-income persons who are 55 years of age and older and have poor employment prospects.
 - Clients are Minnesotans 55+ years-old, with an income of less than 125 percent of the federal poverty levels, who want or need additional income. Services include work in part-time jobs at senior citizen and day care centers, schools, and hospitals; fire-prevention programs; beautification, conservation, and restoration projects; and programs for individuals with disabilities. Annual physical examinations, personal and job-related counseling, job training (if necessary), and - in some cases - placement into regular unsubsidized jobs are included. Service providers include five Local Workforce Development Areas, three community action agencies, three counties, two national sponsors, and one Native American tribe. Program operations are sub-granted to 11 local agencies that serve workers in 60 counties throughout the state; remaining counties are served by national sponsors.
 - In SFY 2015, DEED awarded eleven program providers throughout Minnesota's 60 counties to deliver the above services, in addition to 4 national SCSEP sponsors.
 - In SFY 2015, the SCSEP provided services for over 320 men and women.

- Those who received services 55.8 percent entered unsubsidized employment (federal target was 52.6 percent).
 - The average hourly wage of the newly employed clients was \$14.03.
 - This \$1.06 million grant was awarded to DEED from the U.S. Department of Labor (federal funds) to serve individuals 55 and older.
 - The total number of community service hours was 156,123.
 - 15 percent of those individuals served were Veterans.
- Women in High-Wage, High Demand Nontraditional Jobs Grant Program: This program seeks to increase the number of women in high-wage, high-demand, nontraditional occupations including but not limited to those in the skilled trades, science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) occupations.
 - Grant funds serve women, especially low-income women and women over 50 years of age. Services include the recruitment, preparation, placement, and retention of women in registered apprenticeships, secondary or postsecondary education programs, on-the-job training, and permanent employment in high-wage, high-demand, nontraditional occupations; best practices that stimulate interest and awareness about high-wage, high-demand, nontraditional occupations and related education and training opportunities; training and other staff development for job counselors; incentives for employers and sponsors of registered apprenticeship programs to retain women in high-wage, high-demand, nontraditional occupations.
- Minnesota HB 15-4541, Workforce Development: DEED currently has two programs focused on helping individuals facing barriers to employment achieve success in the workforce (including the Career Pathways Program and the Adult Workforce Competitive Grants).
- Minnesota HB 15-4541, Customized Training Pilot Program: The State directly appropriated funds for a Customized Training Pilot Program (CTPP) for the second time for three MN State Colleges and University System (MNSCU) institutions. The goal of the CTPP is develop and administer customized training programs in the skilled manufacturing industry that integrates academic instruction and job-related learning in the workplace.
- As the entity responsible for management and oversight of Title II funds, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) will work collaboratively with partners within the Combined State Plan to ensure effective and efficient career pathways for Minnesotans.
- Minnesota was one of three states to receive WIA Incentive funding last year. Minnesota is investing much of the earnings into WIOA implementation through better alignment and leveraging of resources and opportunities within the six regions in Minnesota. Through Minnesota's 44 Adult Basic education consortia and Minnesota's 48 WorkForce Centers, ABE Transition Coordinators and Local Workforce Development Area directors will convene meetings, identify opportunities for collaboration and planning, and host regional venues to meet the needs within their regions.

Veterans

Minnesota will continue its strong tradition of promoting the training, hiring and retention of veterans, plus ensuring veterans priority of service in all U.S. DOL funded programs. This will be accomplished through close working relationships with workforce system partners to make sure that veterans are represented to potential employers and business owners as qualified and professional employees who bring a unique set of skills to the workplace. The state workforce system delivers the full array of labor and employment services to Minnesota veterans at State and County-run full-service WorkForce Centers (AJC's) and satellite offices around the state. Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Specialists (DVOPS) at the centers provide eligible veterans with employment services such as job matching and referral to

posted job openings, vocational and career guidance, labor market information, plus workshops on resume preparation and conducting effective job searches. DVOPS also refer eligible and qualified veterans to appropriate WIOA-funded training programs and discretionary initiatives, as well as registered apprenticeship programs throughout the state. Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVER) specialize in promoting veterans to employers, educating AJC partners on current law, changing regulations, and the value veterans bring to an employer. DVOP and LVER staff work strategically, side by side, to match veterans with jobs.

In addition to State, County and partner WorkForce center employees, who provide career services and Priority of Service in all aspects to all veterans, MN-DEED currently employs 19 full-time Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists and 9 full-time Local Veteran Employment Specialists (LVER) assigned to Local Workforce Development Areas around the state. These positions are funded through a U.S. DOL Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) grant and fulfill all responsibilities mandated by the grant programs. Services include the provision of intensive case management services by DVOPS to CH31 Veterans, Special Disabled Veterans, Disabled Veterans, homeless veterans, economically or educationally disadvantaged veterans, and veterans with "significant barriers to employment" as defined by DOL (VPL 03-14), The Jobs for Veterans State Grants 5 YR Plan is included under Section VII.

JVSG grant staff also serves other populations of veterans in the State through Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs). Those populations include:

- National Guard and Reserve members returning from overseas deployment (e.g.: Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)). In particular, Virtual Job Fair Technology and social media are being utilized to connect and assist this group with veterans' resource sites, services accessed while they are still overseas, and actual virtual job fairs when they return to this country. Minnesota also stages an annual Veterans Career Fair each July (proclaimed by the Governor as "Hire a Veteran" month) which attracts over 180 businesses, and 1000 job seeking veterans.
- Service-connected disabled veterans, who are identified through various Veterans Service Organizations (VSO) such as Disabled American Veterans, VFW etc., as well as outreach activities at Veteran Centers, Veterans Administration Medical Centers, and Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs.)
- Recently separated veterans, who are identified at various reintegration events, job fairs, and through partner referrals.
- Wounded and injured veterans, who are identified through the outreach activities of our DVOPS, local VSO's, and partner staff in our local AJC's.
- Incarcerated veterans, who are identified and contacted through "in-reach" activities conducted within correctional facilities managed by the Minnesota Department of Corrections, and community based "halfway houses" and similar facilities. DVOP and LVER staff will also work in partnership with the Veteran Offender initiatives described in detail below under Ex-Offenders, including a JVSG special initiative grant. (Minnesota has dedicated DVOP staff that serve veterans being released from correctional facilities, and those with a criminal history via this special initiative.)
- Homeless Veterans - DVOP Specialists work in partnership with the Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP) grantee to provide one-on-one employment assistance and supportive services to homeless veterans. These services may include resume and interviewing preparation, employment workshops, job clubs, job search assistance and job referrals. The

supportive services provided include, but are not limited to, rent assistance, food, and transportation funding, legal assistance and "Standdown" activities throughout the state.

Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers

- Many migrant farm workers travel to Minnesota each year to help with the cultivating and harvesting of several crops in specific regions of the state. Other workers come in search of longer-term, higher-wage jobs in non-agricultural industries. Whether the job is on or off the farm, through our Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Program we help farm workers and the employers who hire them.
- In specially designated WorkForce Centers in key regions of the state, our Migrant Labor Representatives focus on helping farm workers find jobs and providing referrals to other community services. Because the vast majority of migrant workers farm workers are Hispanic, all of our labor reps are proficient in English and Spanish. (see the complete plan under Section VI)

Ex-Offenders

- Over the past several years, DEED has designed, implemented and managed highly successful ex-offender employment and training programs in collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Corrections. DEED employs four dedicated Offender Specialists whose sole job is to provide employment services to ex-offenders both prior to and after release. These staff conduct pre-release workshops at all 11 state correctional facilities and provide 1:1 assistance to ex-offenders after release. From July to December 2015, the Offender Specialists assisted 2,045 offenders prior to release with 98 visits to the correctional facilities.
- For ex-offenders after release, DEED designed and offers a series of "New Leaf" workshops in 20 WorkForce Centers across the state. This workshop is designed specifically for job seekers who must address a criminal record in their job search process and are having a difficult time obtaining employment due to their barriers and/or records. This workshop combines DEED's Creative Job Search course with special strategies for overcoming barriers to employment, including how, when and why to disclose your record, addressing concerns from employers, answering tough interview questions, WOTC, Federal Bonding and "Ban the Box." Seventeen of these workshops were conducted for 161 ex-offenders from July to December of 2015.

Workforce Assessments for Job Seekers

Staff from all WIOA titles use a variety of assessments for job seekers depending on the program. The assessment tools available on DOL's [careeronestop website](#) such as My Next Move, the Skills Profiler, My Skills My Future, and O*NET are commonly used. Minnesota offers ACT's National Career Readiness Certificate assessments along with Key Train training to all Minnesotans through the WorkForce Centers. In calendar year 2015, 6,595 assessments for Applied Mathematics, Locating Information and Reading for Information were conducted. In many parts of the state, the NCRC is a key component of a regional economic development strategy and is recognized by hundreds of employers. The NCRC is also offered to minority and women applicants for transportation and heavy equipment operator occupations with the Minnesota Department of Transportation to assist them with their diversity recruiting efforts.

Minnesota Department of Labor & Industry (DLI) is committed to supporting Minnesota's economy by fostering and promoting work-based career development through registered apprenticeship programs that provide structured training, development and credentialing of highly skilled employees.

Strategies:

1. Develop and oversee registered apprenticeship programs.
 - Minnesota Apprenticeship Initiative:
 - In 2015, the United States Department of Labor awarded the State of Minnesota a \$5 million dollar grant to expand registered apprenticeship into the industries of advanced manufacturing, agriculture, healthcare, information technology and transportation. The DEED is administering the grant and DLI is engaging industry, labor, and community-based organizations to develop programs. DLI is engaging 100 employers on the creation of apprenticeships in 29 new occupations for more than 800 new apprentices over a 5 year period.
 - PIPELINE Project:
 - The Private Investment, Public Education, Labor and Industry Experience known as the PIPELINE Project was established by the Minnesota legislature in 2014 to expand dual-training and apprenticeship programs in Minnesota. Through HF3172, Sec. 3, DLI was appropriated one-time funds to convene industry experts, employers, higher-education institutions, and labor to develop competency standards acceptable to advanced manufacturing, health care services, information technology, and agriculture industries.
2. Promote workforce diversity through registered apprenticeship programs.
 - LEAP Grants (Minnesota statute 178.11):
 - DLI has established the labor education advancement grant program (LEAP) for the purposes of facilitating the participation of minorities and women in apprenticeship-able trades and occupations. Grants appropriated by the legislature are distributed annually to community-based organizations serving the targeted population.
 - Construct Tomorrow Program:
 - DLI partners with the state construction trades and apprenticeship coordinators association to bring to high schools a hands-on experience which exposes young men and women to opportunities in the construction trades.
3. Ensure portability and support the career development of apprentices and graduates.
 - Apprentice Retention:
 - DLI works with programs to promote and retain apprentices and increase participation rates.
 - Completion Certificates:
 - DLI issues a nationally recognized completion certificate to apprentices who successfully complete his/her program.
 - Program Alignment:
 - DLI continues to collaborate with Minnesota Department of Education on youth apprenticeship and DEED on workforce development.

COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS

(a)(2)(D) Describe how the entities carrying out the respective core programs, any Combined State Plan partner program, mandatory and optional one-stop partner programs will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high quality services to employers to meet their current and projected workforce needs. The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

Our mission in Employer Services is to deliver response-driven workforce strategies and solutions that meet the need of Minnesota businesses today and in the future, so the business can succeed and grow. Minnesota's business services initiative is a key component of the state's transformation into a demand-driven workforce development system. A portion of the Wagner-Peyser funds are dedicated to serving

employers and fund the statewide business services representatives (BSR) which are strategically located in the WorkForce Centers. Wagner-Peyser funding supports 24 statewide Job Service BSR's. BSR's meet with businesses to help determine their labor exchange, talent attraction, recruiting, job retention, workforce development and job growth needs. BSR's provide innovative and timely workforce solutions and brokers connections to appropriate resources to meet business needs. Their primary function is to build relationships with local business decision-makers, assess business and workforce needs while identifying potential business solutions. BSR's convene and facilitate WorkForce Center business services teams that include other partner employees who provide services to businesses. The goal of the WorkForce Center business services team is to better serve business with an integrated, coordinated, and single point-of-contact approach to LWDBs' targeted industries and employers. DEEDs Policy, Planning and Measures Unit is helping us in developing valid measures and outcomes of the services to businesses that can be calculated.

The BSR's coordinate their outreach with the DEED's (DEEDs) Business and Community Development (BCD) Division and the local veteran employment representatives (LVERs).

While the Business Services function is central to the state's strategy, every region and community has public, private and non-profit organizations providing similar services to employers. BSR's have the responsibility to coordinate their work with others in their communities who are doing similar work. At the one-stop level, BSR's typically have regular meetings with WIOA-funded staff and other WorkForce Center partners to share information and coordinate outreach efforts. BSR's share their information with all other staff, including job counselors, in a variety of ways. Most do regular email blasts or messages highlighting key job opportunities and with or hiring businesses. They often attend partner staff meetings to share information. Many BSR's in coordination with DEED's Communication team produce monthly or quarterly newsletters that are sent to all one-stop partners and other community partners. Job Service managers and BSR's provide reports to WIBs on BSR activities along with information about business needs from numerous sources such as Labor Market Information (LMI) office and CareerOneStop. Since each local area and WIB are different, the integrated strategies may be unique, but coordinating services are key for all one-stop partners and are a requirement of Job Service managers and BSRs in their position.

BCD, BSRs, and LVERs share a common employer customer relationship management (CRM) system, Salesforce and share this database with the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, Greater Minneapolis St. Paul Regional Economic Development Partnership (Greater MSP) and the Minnesota Trade Office, Communication Outreach and Rapid Response team. On a statewide basis, business needs and services are documented in Salesforce by several public and private entities. The costs of Salesforce are shared by the organizations that use this platform to document their business service activities: DEED's Wagner-Peyser program, Rapid Response, Business and Community Development, Community Outreach and Minnesota Trade Office; the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, the Minneapolis St. Paul Regional Economic Development Partnership, local Chambers, cities and counties. The Salesforce platform allows these organizations to collaborate on business visits, share information and communicate to reduce duplication of services. It collects statewide data on business needs from multiple organizations who traditionally have not shared information with each other. Staffs from these organizations typically query Salesforce before visiting a business to see if the business is working with another organization and to gather information on their needs. The state can and does run customized reports from Salesforce that provides data on business needs and services.

Various economic development programs and specialists work in collaboration with other Business Services outreach teams (VRS, SSB, Wagner-Peyser, MnSCU, Veteran's, LWDBs, MTO) to coordinate business visits and contacts to provide higher-value engagements.

Wagner-Peyser funds pay for 24 statewide business service representatives, whose primary job is to assist employers in key industries, identified by local and regional workforce development boards who are facing workforce challenges with referrals, resources, and skilled talent and workforce solutions. The BSR helps employers assess their challenges and workforce needs, provide information on potential workforce solutions including the state labor exchange, MinnesotaWorks.

Our BSR's, Veterans Senior Employer Representatives (LVER) and Rapid Response teams are and will continue to work together to provide innovative workforce strategies including layoff aversion and a pipeline of talent to Minnesota businesses. These teams have received extensive education on workforce planning strategies and techniques which help to address the labor shortage in Minnesota. We are and will be providing this training to businesses as a statewide initiative.

With new requirements in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) we are looking at a service delivery model that we believe will better align our Wagner-Peyser services with the Governor's Workforce Development Board's six Workforce Development Areas (WDAs) and five industry sectors. This will help us to provide more in-depth workforce consultations with businesses. Our regional alignment would allow our Business Services team to coordinate, lead and develop response-driven regional and statewide workforce planning strategies and complex solutions for Minnesota businesses so they continue to grow in today's environment. In addition, we would identify industry sector specialists in the state's high-growth and targeted industries in alignment with the GWDB identified sectors to deepen employer engagement. We are moving from business services measurements and indicators that are more transactional to transformational; giving more credit for more complex and meaningful work with businesses. BSRs would continue to provide everyday workforce solutions that include solutions such as on-site hiring events to businesses and resource referrals primarily via phone and email.

PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

(a)(2)(E) Describe how the State's Strategies will engage the State's education and training providers, including community colleges and area career and technical education schools, as partners in the workforce development system to create a job-driven education and training system.

As Minnesota works toward establishing its Career Pathway system, it will have multiple existing educational partnerships to draw from, several which have been a part of career pathway projects or have contributed to our development of career pathway thinking. Existing partnerships at the state agency level, as well as throughout public and private school systems in all regions of the state include the following:

- State agencies engaged in the talent pipeline
 - Minnesota Department of Education
 - Minnesota DEED
 - Minnesota Office of Higher Education
 - Minnesota Department of Human Services
 - Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry

- Minnesota Department of Human Services
- Minnesota Department of Human Rights
- Higher Education Entities
 - Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
 - University of Minnesota
 - Minnesota Private College Council
- Other Systems and Providers
 - Adult Basic Education
 - Career and Technical Education
 - Community-Based Organizations
 - Philanthropy
 - Local Workforce Boards
 - Organized Labor
 - Economic Development
 - State Legislature

Experiential learning opportunities, or sometimes called "work based learning" (WBL) in Minnesota is an educational strategy designed to provide career and college preparation for all learners through real world experiences, such as workplace skills, career information and planning, job/career exploration and development and readiness. These experiential learning opportunities can be in the form of mentorships, internships, apprenticeships, job shadowing, service learning, and embedded state-approved work-based learning.

An area that the state can expand program improvement and learning outcomes for students is to identify quality WBL models currently in place within Minnesota and across the nation. Additionally, the state would benefit from establishing exemplars and a shared rubric around program quality indicators for continuous improvement efforts. Currently, the state does not identify nor collect program quality or student outcome data related to work based learning.

While there is not currently a data collection system established to document or evaluate student learning outcomes related to work based learning, there are initiatives in place to promote WBL and other experiential learning opportunities. Carl D. Perkins federal grant, spearheads a number of initiatives and performance measures for both secondary and postsecondary career technical education students in Minnesota. As an integral part of the state's Carl D. Perkins Grant activities, Minnesota has formed 26 consortia made up of secondary districts and postsecondary institutions. Perkins priorities require each consortia offer the opportunity, where appropriate, for secondary students to acquire postsecondary credits. Experiential learning is an effective method to nurture career awareness and exploration for students to discover their career interests and aptitudes. The consortia model requires that each consortium have a business and industry advisory council made up of secondary, postsecondary and business and industry community partners to inform and guide the development and evaluation of career technical education programs. In alignment with state-wide consortium plan goals, the local CTE Advisory Committee assists on prioritizing and integrating the WBL components into their annually written, local consortium plan. Schools and districts also leverage other funding streams, resources and programs to offer experiential learning to students.

With a renewed focus on the importance of career technical education and its valuable role in preparing the Minnesota's workforce, the legislature established the requirement for Minnesota to begin collecting information on career technical education courses taken concurrently by high school students

for both high school and postsecondary credit. These data will be published as a part of an annual legislated Rigorous Course Report starting in February 2017. It is feasible to explore how Minnesota could collect additional relevant work-based information to enhance this annual report with work based relevant data collection.

Another dimension of useful information could be to collect the types and of participating employers and individuals participating in work-based learning, as well as other experiential learning opportunities for both CTE students, and all students in relevant course or program pathway options.

The overarching umbrella to WBL and other experiential learning leading to career and college readiness and success, is guided by the state's overall accountability framework for districts to design and implement teaching and learning goals, strategies, and performance measurements called the World's Best Workforce. New ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) also calls for every student to be career and college ready, and requires states to determine new outcome indicators for career readiness; in Minnesota, this could feasibly be supported by experiential learning options and outcomes for students.

LEVERAGING RESOURCES TO INCREASE EDUCATIONAL ACCESS

(a)(2)(F) Describe how the State's Strategies will enable the State to leverage other Federal, State and local investments that have enhanced access to workforce development programs at the institutions.

As Minnesota has for the past several decades, we plan to continue increasing access to customers to seek out, enroll in, and complete training. DEED works closely with training providers all over the state, including MnSCU, to offer credentialed, occupational, and customized training to job seekers.

WIOA encourages states to enhance these linkages. Large numbers of our customers engage in training every year, and we plan to continue this trend.

Minnesota's implementation of the Eligible Training Provider List changes is key to enhancing access to education for our workforce development system customers. DEED maintains an updated list of training providers that are licensed, registered, or otherwise exempt by the Minnesota Office of Higher Education. We then select a subset of these training programs based on their capacity to award credentials. If completion of the training results in attainment of a credential, we "WIOA certify" the program, meaning that we can use WIOA funding to pay for the training and count the individual in the denominator of the credential performance metric. By PY16, we will have an efficient mechanism in place for the training providers of WIOA certified programs to update their program performance outcomes every other year. This will arm job seekers and counselors with the information they need to make wise investments in training. The performance outcomes will mirror the core WIOA Title I performance metrics: employment (second quarter after exit), employment retention (fourth quarter after exit), median earnings (second quarter after exit), credential attainment, measurable skills gain (once we have a definition of this), and effectiveness in serving employers (once we have a definition on this).

IMPROVING ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS

(a)(2)(G) Describe how the State's strategies will improve access to activities leading to recognized postsecondary credentials, including Registered Apprenticeship certificates. This includes credentials that are industry-recognized certificates, licenses or certificates, and that are portable and stackable.

In early PY15, Minnesota received \$5.75M to support dislocated workers through the job-driven national dislocated worker grant program. A component of this grant structure is to award academic credit and in many cases, credentials, for completion of on-the-job, work-based, and apprenticeship related training. DEED also received a \$5M grant to serve 814 apprentices. This funding serves as "seed money"; the employers are the primary contributor of training and salaries for the apprentices, and benefit from a supported workforce. Further, Minnesota is looking for ways to award academic credit for the completion of steps of apprenticeships. Minnesota's policy of only "WIOA certifying" training programs that result directly in an industry-recognized credential narrows the scope of training programs in order to focus job seekers on earning those credentials.

Non-profits and community-based organizations who partner with DEED to support job seekers continue to design short-term credentialed training opportunities. Due to the skills training being conducted within a shorter time frame, more job seekers are likely to complete the training. These workforce system partners have worked very diligently with industry credentialing groups and academic institutions to ensure their shorter-term training results in portable, transferable, recognized credentials.

COORDINATING WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

(a)(2)(H) Describe how the activities identified in (A) will be coordinated with economic development entities, strategies, and activities in the State.

In Minnesota, under Minnesota statute 116L.665, created the structure whereas DEED is responsible for supporting the GWDB. DEED is Minnesota's state agency responsible for the states' workforce system and home to a majority of the programs within WIOA. DEED is also the agency responsible for Minnesota's economic development programs and activities including the Minnesota's Trade Office. Through our Minnesota Jobs Skills Partnership (MJSP) program, which is housed at DEED, works strategically with businesses and educational institutions to train or retrain workers, expand work opportunities, and keep high-quality jobs in the state. The MJSP Board also has statutory authority over the state and federal Dislocated Worker Program (DWP), which provides training and services to laid-off Minnesota workers who meet specific eligibility requirements. The GWDB works in alignment with the MJSP board. Four of the GWDB members also serve on the MJSP board to ensure that we are meeting our goals and avoiding duplication in programming or investments.

Additionally, the GWDB and DEED senior leaders meet regularly to identify new opportunities or challenges for Minnesota businesses growing or retaining a highly-skilled workforce. One such example is the creation of the Workforce Housing Development Program. Minnesota acknowledges the importance of affordable housing for workers and this program targets communities in Greater Minnesota where a shortage of housing makes it difficult for businesses to attract the workers they need. The Executive Director of the GWDB and several of the board members are also members of the Economic Development Association of Minnesota and the Regional Economic Development group of the McKnight Foundation. These two organizations represent leaders and stakeholders engaged in addressing the regional and statewide economic needs in the state.

STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES

(b) The Combined State Plan must include a description of the State operating systems and policies that will support the implementation of the State strategy described in Section II Strategic Elements. This includes:

(b)(1) The State operating systems that support the implementation of the State's strategies. This must include a description of:

(b)(1)(A) State operation systems that support coordinated implementation of State strategies (e.g., labor market information systems, data systems, communication systems, case-management systems, job banks, etc.).

The State's operating systems support coordinated efforts of the State's strategies in several ways. The following narrative describes the use of LMI, data, communications, case management and the State's job bank.

The mission of Minnesota's Labor Market Information (LMI) Office is to collect, compile, and deliver high quality data and analysis about the state's economy. Our work supports Minnesota's businesses, its workforce and economic development system, and the workers of today and tomorrow to make informed decisions. We gather, analyze, and disseminate economic data on Minnesota's business community, workforce, and job market. We also provide key economic indicators, employment projections, job vacancy data, and regional and statewide industry and workforce analysis along with information aimed at helping individuals make informed career decisions.

The LMI Offices' key customers include businesses, job seekers, students, economic developers, education and training planners, workforce development professionals, policymakers, researchers and economists, government entities, media, and the general public.

Because our customers range from researchers to job seekers, we work hard to make our information as accessible and easy to use as possible. For job seekers and career counselors specifically, but also for employers looking to set wages in a tight labor market, we have developed web tools that combine a range of data and information that is relevant to career decision making. Three key tools are listed below:

- Career Profile, developed specifically for job counselors and seekers, provides a wide range of occupational information in a single easy-to-use online tool including wages, demand, job opportunities, outlook and education and training options. It also provides the Eligible Training Provider listings including WIOA-certified trainings.
- Graduate Employment Outcomes, a WDQI-based data tool developed for education planning, shows how many Minnesota graduates found jobs and at what wages.
- Cost of Living tool provides a yearly estimate of the basic-needs cost of living in Minnesota by county, region, and statewide. The audience for this includes employers looking to set wages that avoid turnover.

Beyond data and data tools, we provide extensive analysis, grant and other project support and training on our data and tools. Our two periodical magazines provide analysis on topics of interest. The December 2015 issue of Minnesota Economic Trends, for example, tackles the issue of racial wage and employment disparities in Minnesota. This topic rose to prominence in Minnesota in fall 2015 with the release of 2014 ACS data tables showing black income in Minnesota fell over a year ago.

Moreover, our team of [six Regional Analysts](#) provide analytical and grant writing support, and support to organizations involved in regional planning. They also provided almost 300 presentations and trainings to over 11,000 individuals in the past 12 months.

Based on our customer satisfaction survey, 99 percent of respondents said they would recommend our services to a colleague.

We believe that access to high quality, up-to-date labor market information and analysis has been instrumental in making Minnesota one of the strongest job markets in America and that it will continue to play an important role in our economic future.

MinnesotaWorks (MNW) is DEED's online job bank for finding jobs and employees in Minnesota. It features online resume and job matching technology launched in 2007, and enhanced with multiple updates, based on the needs of employers, job seekers and staff. This technology is designed to provide a faster and easier way to match employers' job openings with top applicants' resumes, and drive the economy by efficiently and effectively connecting employers and job seekers. The system generates results of job postings matched to resumes by identifying the closest qualifying applicants using a five-star rating scale. The search and match technologies build bridges between employers and job seekers, providing the ranked matches and results they can easily review to determine the best fit candidates and job openings.

The MNW system collects data on employer and job seeker characteristics, demographics, numbers of job openings and resumes, numbers of new employer and job seeker accounts and web analytics. The data is used to determine the growth of the customer base and which demographics, industries, occupations and regions demonstrate changes. These quantitative measurements are collected, analyzed and reported upon for the purposes of understanding and optimizing the usage and growth of MNW, and to determine the direction and focus of future outreach activities, developments and strategies.

The numeric data is also published in the MinnesotaWorks Annual Report, a four-color outreach and informational brochure, which is distributed to employers, job seekers, legislators, partners and staff, both to inform and to promote the system's effectiveness, and to generate new and continued use of the labor exchange system. Publishing and disseminating information on the upward growth of total job openings, even during recessionary times, served to illustrate MNW's acceptance and value—even during periods of overall declining job numbers, the job openings posted on MNW continued to increase by double-digit percentages.

The quantitative performance data helps to inform the work of Business Services Representatives (BSR's) and Regions in the efforts to focus on businesses, industry associations and economic developers that can benefit from workforce employer services. The data is also used to generate reports on employer job postings by Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA's) to learn the market penetration of specific regions. Similar labor market insight reports are generated for WorkForce Center BSR's to plan employer outreach activities; and resume information is used to generate occupational data on job seekers and provided to employers researching expansion or relocation to areas where required job skill sets may be available.

The monthly Minnesota WorkForce Center Satisfaction Survey collects qualitative data from employers and presents the information biannually. The data is analyzed to learn how well MNW met employers' needs and to help determine the direction for improvement and technological enhancements. Survey questions include: Have you posted one or more job openings on MNW in the last 6 months? Did you post the job opening(s) by contacting a WFC, listing it via self-service or by requesting the [US.jobs](#) indexing service to deliver it to MNW? Did you fill the last position that you posted on MNW? Was the

new hire a job applicant from MNW? How satisfied are you that the resumes you reviewed on MNW gave you the information you needed? Would you recommend MNW to a colleague needing to post a job opening? Open-ended questions are included to learn what employers liked or did not like about MNW and they are invited to provide additional comments.

Web analytics is part of the data collection and analysis currently of great interest to help reveal the technology practices and mind-set of our marketplace, and to provide a front row look into the activities of MNW customers and prospective users. Information on the MNW audience, their behavior, characteristics and technologies (system, devices...) is valuable in determining future renovations and enhancements, including the development of new technologies, mobile capability and to determine new workforce services that may be required, for example, to expand digital literacy training and offer additional online training options. The analytics confirmed that 29 percent of MNW customers access the labor exchange system using a mobile device. This data emphasizes the relevance of web analytics and is instructive for planning new system upgrades and virtual services.

CUSTOMER DATA SYSTEM

ABOUT WORKFORCE ONE

Launched originally in 2004 and again in 2014 with an overhauled system for many of the programs, Workforce One (WF1) is a web-based case management application used by 2,000 state, city, county, and non-profit employees to track services to more than 100,000 customers across Minnesota's county offices, WorkForce Centers, and Rehabilitation Services Offices. WF1 was created through a partnership of two Minnesota state agencies – the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the DEED (DEED). The following programs track their customers in WF1:

- Adult (State Grants and WIOA*)
- Custom Programs
- Dislocated Worker Program (State, National Emergency Grants (NEG), WIOA)
- Displaced Homemaker
- Diversionary Work Program
- Heading Home
- Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker
- Minnesota FastTRAC Adult Career Pathways
- Minnesota Family Investment Program
- State Services for the Blind (SSB) Senior Services
- SSB Workforce Development
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training
- Trade Adjustment Assistance
- Veterans Program
- Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- Youth Programs (MN and WIOA*)

In terms of customers served during a quarter, the three largest programs using WF1 are (in order): MFIP, Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Dislocated Worker.

Some of the improvements that are part of the new WF1 include:

- Electronic document storage functionality that will allow users to upload the documents that would typically be part of a customer's paper case file

- More efficient navigation tools and functions to save case managers time
- Establishing and enhancing connections to other systems such as SWIFT (the State of Minnesota's accounting system) MinnesotaWorks.net, Unemployment Insurance, and Minnesota Department of Human Services' public assistance eligibility system (known as MAXIS) which allows case managers to make informed decisions about what services to offer
- Streamlining programs to avoid duplicate data entry, while still maintaining fiscal accountability
- Restructuring security to maintain integrity, while allowing the users to login in once, but access multiple profiles reflective of their permissions
- Overhauling canned reports to provide more complete and accurate information
- Adding ad-hoc reporting through an enhanced advanced search
- Creating an online employment plan for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs
- Streamlining credential capture so providers can easily tell if they need to capture one, thus improving their performance outcomes
- Adding extensive online help
- Ensuring accessibility for reader and dictation software

WF1'S UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS

- Tracking customer services for all employment and training programs in a single system helps to ensure consistency in service delivery and data collection.
- As a web application, WF1 is accessible to authenticated users anywhere with an Internet connection.
- Managing cases electronically reduces costs for providers because it reduces paper storage requirements and they can easily access customer information between locations without having to mail documents back and forth.
- Case managers are able to view enrollments and services in programs beyond what they work on, allowing them to target precious resources where customers need them most. (Vocational Rehabilitation Services, including Senior Services and State Services for the Blind, customer data is limited to case managers within those programs by law.)
- The team that built and maintains WF1 is housed within Minnesota's DEED, the state agency that oversees most of the programs listed above. The WF1 Team's proximity to and close collaboration with program staff and providers increases their knowledge of program requirements and allows them to be responsive to policy and law changes in a cost effective manner.
- For many programs, WF1 links financials to program services, allowing for better fiscal oversight.
- Providers are able to closely monitor their customer's outcomes and deliver additional services when necessary to ensure the best outcome.
- WF1's flexibility allows providers to track special grants without having to pay for special programming.
- Meeting federal and state employment and training reporting requirements is more efficient and less expensive because of standardized data collection and reporting within WF1.

(b)(1)(B) Data collection and reporting processes used for all programs and activities, including those present in one-stop centers.

Enhanced program performance data is one key element of DEED's data driven policy initiative to better address some of the most critical policy challenges. In its 2013 session, the Minnesota Legislature passed

a Workforce Program Outcomes bill ([M.S. 116L.98](#)) requiring DEED to report performance outcomes for adult-oriented programs funded by the state's Workforce Development Fund. Programs include those administered by Local Workforce Development Areas, awarded by a competitive grant process, and direct appropriations to non-governmental organizations. DEED must report the total number of people served in programs the number who obtained training, the number who completed training and earned a credential, the number who found employment, and the average wages earned.

This workforce program outcome report card provides uniform definitional measures allowing outcomes to be viewed and compared across different program models and by additional layers of disaggregation, including participants' educational level, race, gender and geography. The [report card](#) is available online and is updated quarterly.

These performance measures have also been adopted by a collaborative group of state agency, non-profit and philanthropic groups in the Twin Cities region, led by MSPWin, to ensure continued momentum towards consistent and transparent performance outcome tracking across the entire workforce development and training system, regardless of funding source.

The Minnesota statute reference above also require a workforce program net impact analysis to include the impact of workforce services on individual employment, earnings and public benefit usage outcomes and a cost-benefit analysis for understanding the monetary impacts of workforce services from the participant and taxpayer points of view. The 2015 [report](#) found that WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker (both WIOA and state-funded) programs were responsible for large net impacts on annual earnings and employment likelihood during the two cohorts (2007-2008 and 2009-2010) examined. The next iteration of the report will include an updated cohort of the original programs and expand the analysis to DEED's career pathways programs. This report is due to the Minnesota Legislature in January 2017.

Additionally, performance data are helping to informing the agency's work on a system-wide approach to addressing racial and class employment disparities. Data confirms racial and class employment disparities exist among participants in workforce development programs administered by DEED and targeted to low-income and recently laid-off adults, particularly among common barriers to employment—including low educational attainment, criminal background, limited work experience, and limited English skills. While we can make tangible progress to serving people of color more intentionally and engaging with employers around how to successfully employ individuals with barriers, we must also find performance solutions to serving participants with barriers.

In addition to increasing the transparency of workforce development program performance across DEED, there is a continued emphasis on defining and documenting customer outcomes using a result-based accountability (RBA) framework, which measures:

- How much did we do?
- How well did we do it?
- Is anybody better off?

While transactional measures (customer counts, number of jobs posted) provide a quantitative lens in which to show the reach of DEED's programs, it's the movement towards the transformational measures (training in an in-demand occupation, consistent employment, wage levels that support a typical Minnesota family) that inform policy decisions. New efforts are underway in 2016 to apply an RBA lens to our interactions with one-stop customers and employers.

(b)(2) The State policies that will support the implementation of the State's strategies (e.g., co-enrollment policies and universal intake processes).

Under the Workforce Investment Act, DEED operated as the lead on writing, soliciting feedback, publishing, and enforcing policies. Now, under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, DEED will still perform many of these duties, but will engage partner state agencies to ensure continuity and shared awareness. The Governor's Workforce Development Board will provide high-level consult on new draft policies that will touch multiple core programs.

When it comes to co-enrollment, DEED plans to publish policies that address cross-agency program co-enrollment. In practice, most core programs use Workforce One, Minnesota's Customer Management Information System, to encourage co-enrollment across programs. The allowable co-enrollment in this system serves as Minnesota's policy. DEED staff will follow-up to publish formal guidance on program co-enrollment.

Universal intake processes have some layers in Minnesota. While all individuals who access job seeker support services in the WorkForce Centers and through Minnesota's Job Bank are accessing programs funded through Wagner-Peyser, many of them seek deeper services with counselors that then require program enrollment. To that end, the majority of WIOA enrolled customers were also Wagner-Peyser customers; the opposite is not true. Service providers in Minnesota will continue to work to make the program enrollment process as seamless as possible to the customer.

Minnesota has few policies that dictate how we deliver services in the WorkForce Centers, but we will publish a policy that provides a thorough definition of the layers of WorkForce Centers.

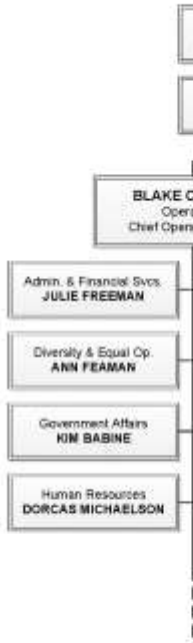
STATE PROGRAM AND STATE BOARD OVERVIEW

STATE AGENCY ORGANIZATION

(b)(3)(A) Describe the organization and delivery systems at the State and local levels for the programs covered in the plan, including the organizational structure. Include an organizational chart.

Minnesota's designated state agency for the administration of WIOA is the Department of Employment & Economic Development (DEED). DEED's primary provision of workforce and economic development services are overseen by the Deputy Commissioner of Workforce Development and the Deputy Commissioner of Economic Development. Within each division are the individual programs, both state and federal, for which DEED provides oversight. DEED's Organizational Chart details of the breakdown of the State agency's structure.

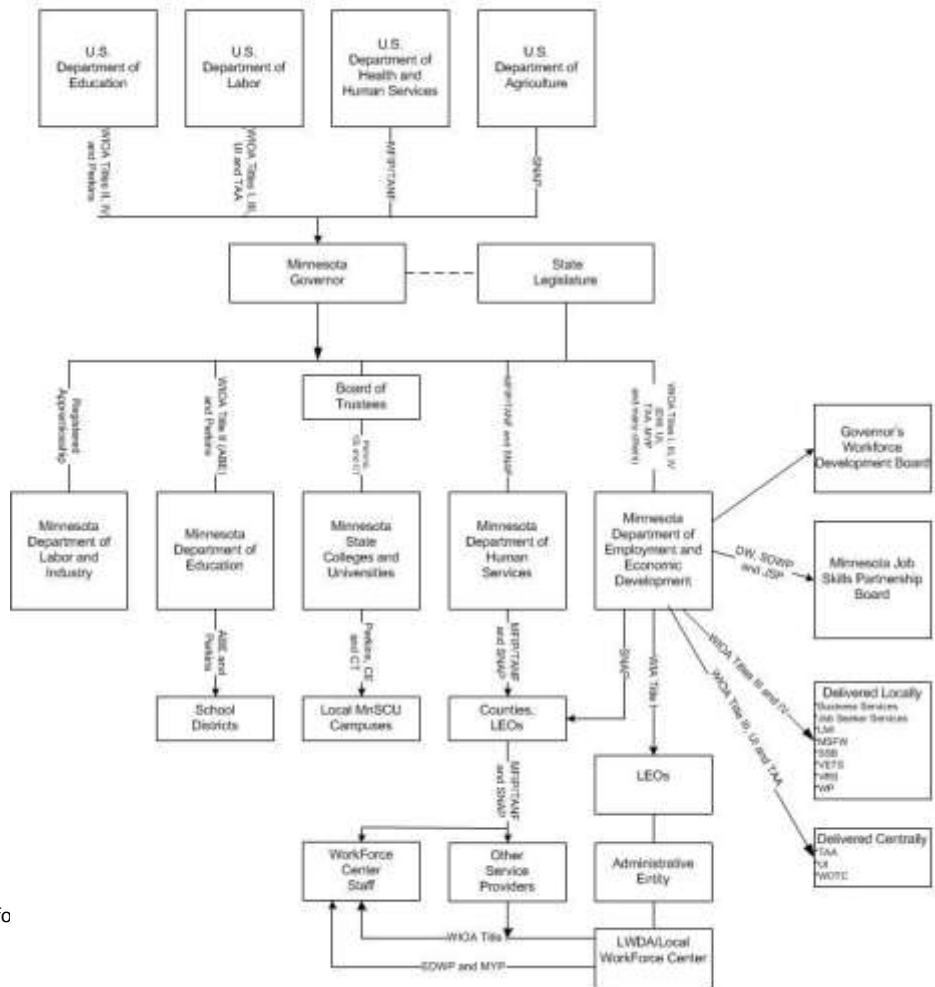
MINNESOTA



Funding Streams for Workforce Development System

January 2016

At the local level, Minnesota has 16 Local Workforce Development Areas overseen by the Local Area Workforce Development Boards. In greater Minnesota, 5 regions have been created that combine the efforts of two Local Area Boards for regional planning purposes. The Twin Cities metropolitan area has six Local Workforce Development Areas and combines the efforts of those six Local Area



Boards for regional planning purposes.

The illustration on the right provides an overview of the state of Minnesota's workforce development system and the flow of resources.

STATE BOARD

(b)(3)(B) Provide a description of the State Board, including a membership roster and board activities.

MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

BOARD ACTIVITIES

ASSESSMENT OF PROGRAMS AND ON-STOP PROGRAM PARTNERS

ASSESSMENT OF CORE PROGRAMS

(b)(4)(A) Describe how the core programs will be assessed each year based on State performance accountability measures described in Section 116(b) of WIOA. This State assessment must include the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of programs broken down by local area or provider.

DEED is the state's principal economic development agency. DEED programs promote business recruitment, expansion, and retention; international trade; **workforce development (including its One-stop system)**; and community development.

Minnesota has many partners, programs, and funding sources as part of its One-stop system. While Minnesota has the required WIOA partners and services, DEED also maximizes its services with state funded resources, including but not limited to, its State Dislocated Worker Program, a Displaced Homemaker Program, a Pathways 2 Prosperity (Adult Career Pathways and FastTRAC programs) program, WESA (Women's Economic Security Act), Minnesota Youth Program, state youthbuild and youth competitive programs, customized training programs, Opportunities Industrialization programs, etc. Along with its standard federal awards, Minnesota has recently also been awarded a federal apprenticeship grant, a workforce innovation fund award, numerous national emergency grants, etc.

DEEDS service delivery provides direct service to its customers throughout the state. Delivery of service may be through its own employees and/or leveraging its resources by contracting with subgrantees or partners to deliver services that help DEED achieve its mandates. And, to incent innovation, DEED awards grants to qualified entities to deliver service in a new way or resolve unmet needs.

Programs are assessed in various ways and through different methods:

- [Mandated Reports](#) to the Legislature for those programs funded by state workforce, general fund, and other special state funds.
- [Annual Program Results/Reports](#) for both federal and state programs, which in several cases, provides the federal negotiated performance goals/outcomes.
- [Customer Satisfaction](#) for job seekers and employers.

- A [Uniform Report Card](#) for specific workforce development programs.
- For many programs, solicitations for services ([requests for proposals](#)) are conducted/posted on DEEDs website and through the state register in order to take a proactive approach to identifying the best possible entities to serve Minnesota participants.

Not only are programs assessed, subgrantees and partners are analyzed in several ways. It does not matter if the subgrantee receives one award or multiple awards from DEED or the funding source of the award/s. The Workforce Development arm of the agency has standardized and consistent processes in place as part of conducting assessments as part of its internal controls.

Prior to awarding a subgrantee a DEED grant, a Risk Analysis is conducted by DEED. In addition, in the early part of the new year, each subgrantee completes an electronic annual assessment and a fiscal monitoring guide. These assessment tools tell us information including, but not limited to, how the subgrantee will serve and provide priority services to veterans, policies regarding their conflicts of interest process, analyze longevity of key directors and/or stakeholders, review their customer complaint process and physical and program accessibility, the assurance of separation of accounting duties, ensure a positive cash flow through third party audit reports, review of debt ratio, including federal and state tax debt, etc.

Also during the duration of the each grant, monitoring and technical assistance take place, so that compliance and outcomes can be met to ensure the funding is carrying out the intent of the award and performance goals are achieved. Monitoring is usually on-site, furthering review of compliance in the program, monitoring the progress, appropriate expenditures, conducting financial reconciliations, assuring proper eligibility of customers, case management of participants, equal opportunity, further preparing job seekers for high-demand areas of local economies, review options of co-enrollment with other partners and programs, review of monthly and quarterly financial reports, etc. Technical assistance may be provided thru monitoring, on-site visits, training case managers to further ensure positive outcomes and successes, training fiscal staff for each subgrantee so that state and federal regulations are being met, etc.

An important tool for monitoring and technical assistance, specifically case management, the use of Workforce One (WF1) is required by most subgrantees and programs, in order to ensure a consistent method of tracking participants who are being served. Workforce One is used by the following programs: Adult, Dislocated Worker, Displaced Homemaker, Diversionary Work, Heading Home, Minnesota Family Investment Program, Minnesota FastTRAC Adult Career Pathways, Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker, State Services for the Blind (Senior Services and Workforce Development), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Veterans, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Youth, and many small, locally-operated employment and training grants. It is a web-based client management application used by nearly 2,000 state, city, county, and non-profit employment and training providers to track employment and training services to more than 100,000 customers across Minnesota's one-stop network. WF1 was created through a partnership between the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the DEED and is maintained by MN.IT@DEED and a five-year rebuild was recently completed Labor Day weekend 2014.

ASSESSMENT OF ONE-STOP PROGRAM PARTNER PROGRAMS

(b)(4)(B) Describe how other one-stop delivery system partner program services and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan will be assessed each year.

PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

(b)(4)(C) Provide the results of an assessment of the effectiveness of the core programs and other one-stop partner programs and Combined State Plan partner programs during the preceding 2-year period. Describe how the State is adapting its strategies based on these assessments.

WHAT DOES THE UNIFORM REPORT CARD SHOW?

ABOUT

The [uniform report card](#) is available on DEED's website. The uniform report card legislation (Minnesota statute 116L.98) is available [online](#).

THE PROGRAMS

As of August 2015, the uniform report card includes the following programs:

- Minnesota Dislocated Worker
- FastTRAC
- Adult Workforce Development Program
- Customized Manufacturing Training Program
- Minnesota's Opportunities Industrialization Centers
- Twin Cities RISE!
- MJSP Low-Income Worker Training Program (NEW in August 2015)
- Women's Economic Security Act grant program (NEW in August 2015)

THE PARTICIPANTS

We include all participants in each of the included programs who have been served since SFY14. Outcomes are available by fiscal year.

THE MEASURES

PROGRAM ENROLLMENT & ENROLLMENT IN TRAINING

Program enrollment includes all participants served at any point in the chosen timeframe, including those first enrolled prior to the chosen timeframe. Enrollment in training includes participants who engaged in training through the program. These are the Workforce One activities we included in the definition of training:

- Adult Internship
- Apprenticeship
- Basic Skills Training
- Classroom Training
- Classroom Training - Academic
- Classroom Training - Occupational Skills
- CLIMB Training
- CTPP-Pilot Program - Skilled Manufacturing
- Customized Training
- Entrepreneurial Training
- ESL Training
- Financial Education Service

- GED Training
- GED Training (in Conjunction with Credentialed Training)
- Literacy Training
- Non-Credentialed Training
- Occupational Skills Training
- OJT - Public or Private
- OJT Credential Waiver
- Remedial Training
- Work Readiness Skills Training

Not all of these training activities would result in a credential (e.g., Non-Credentialed Training and OJT), and fewer would result in a postsecondary credential as spelled out in the legislation (e.g., GED Training).

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS ENROLLED IN TRAINING, BY OCCUPATION

WF1 requires the ONET code for some of the activities listed above, and allows but does not require it for others. We know the occupations associated with about 40 percent of training programs; these tend to be the training programs geared toward a specific career rather than those applicable to multiple careers (think Certified Nursing Assistant training versus computer proficiency training). Even where the training is too broad to tie to a specific career, it is always tied to the customer's employment goal.

PRE-ENROLLMENT: MEDIAN EARNINGS OF EMPLOYED PARTICIPANTS

Pre-enrollment earnings are drawn from the second, third, fourth, and fifth quarters prior to program enrollment. Among all served participants, the median earnings calculation excludes those with no earnings. In other words, participants must have earned at least \$1 in the year prior to enrollment to be included in this calculation.

This measure uses UI's Wage Detail, so it does not capture self-employment income or income earned in other states.

PRE-ENROLLMENT: NUMBER OF UNEMPLOYED PARTICIPANTS

The number of unemployed participants includes all participants with no earnings for a full year before enrollment (technically, in the second, third, fourth, and fifth quarters prior to enrollment). They may or may not be receiving unemployment insurance benefits and may or may not fit the government's definition of "unemployed" as "actively seeking work." This measure uses UI's Wage Detail, so it does not capture self-employment or employment in other states.

NUMBER EXITED, NUMBER COMPLETED TRAINING, & NUMBER ATTAINED A CREDENTIAL

Number exited includes all participants who exited in the chosen timeframe. Program exit occurs when the participant no longer receives intensive employment or training support from the program. Number completed training and number attained a credential are only among those exited, even though a participant may complete training and attain a credential before exit. Participants who complete training may or may not have also attained a credential; likewise, a participant who attained a credential may or may not have engaged in training.

These are the credential types we included in our definition of a credential:

- AA or AS degree
- BA or BS degree

- Master's Degree
- Occupational Skills Certificate/Credential
- Other Recognized Credential
- Technical/Occupational Skills License

GED and HS diploma are the only credential types we do not include in our definition, because the legislation stipulates "postsecondary" credential.

AVERAGE ENROLLMENT DURATION, IN MONTHS

Average enrollment duration excludes participants still enrolled in the program.

NUMBER CONSISTENTLY EMPLOYED AFTER PROGRAM PARTICIPATION, BY TRAINING COMPLETION

Consistent employment means the participant showed earnings in each of the first, second, and third quarters after exit. Participants who did not complete training may have dropped out of training or may have never engaged in training through the program.

Number consistently employed is **not comparable** to the number exited, because employment outcome information is only available for a subset of exiters. Specifically, it is only available for exiters who exited more than three quarters ago.

This measure uses UI's Wage Detail, so it does not capture self-employment or employment in other states.

NUMBER CONSISTENTLY EMPLOYED AFTER PROGRAM PARTICIPATION, BY INDUSTRY

Consistent employment means the participant showed earnings in the first, second, and third quarters after exit.

This measure uses UI's Wage Detail, so it does not capture self-employment or employment in other states. Employers report their industry in Wage Detail. People may have two or more employers in a single quarter, or may switch employers from quarter to quarter. We report the industry of the employer from which they earned the **most** wages in the **first** quarter after exit.

Number consistently employed is **not comparable** to the number exited, because employment outcome information is only available for a subset of exiters. Specifically, it is only available for exiters who exited more than three quarters ago.

MEDIAN NINE-MONTH EARNINGS AFTER PROGRAM PARTICIPATION, BY TRAINING COMPLETION

We calculate median earnings only among participants who are consistently employed in the first, second, and third quarters after exit. Participants who did not successfully complete training may have dropped out of training or may have never engaged in training through the program.

A rough estimate of yearly earnings would be to increase nine-month earnings by a third.

This measure uses UI's Wage Detail, so it does not capture self-employment income or income earned in other states.

DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

(b)(5) Describe the methods and factors the State will use in distributing funds under the core programs in accordance with the provisions authorizing such distribution.

TITLE I – ADULT, YOUTH AND DISLOCATED WORKER

(b)(5)(A) Describe how Title I programs have written policies that establish the State's methods and factors used to distribute funds to the local areas.

TITLE I – ADULT

Minnesota will obligate 85 percent of its WIOA Adult program formula allocation to local service providers, reserving 15 percent for administration and "10 percent" allowable activities for statewide goals.

When distributing the remaining amount to local service providers, staff take into account the following elements by converting them into shares of Minnesota as a whole and weighted equally:

- The number of economically disadvantaged adults in each Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA)
- The total number of unemployed individuals
- The number of excess unemployed individuals (above the state average) in areas of substantial unemployment

DEED staff then adjust as necessary to maintain a 90 percent hold-harmless provision as well as a 130 percent funding cap.

TITLE I - YOUTH

Similar to the WIOA Adult program, Minnesota will obligate 85 percent of its WIOA youth formula allocation to local service providers.

First, staff take into account the following elements by converting them into shares of

- Minnesota as a whole and weighted equally;
- The number of economically disadvantaged youth in each WDA
- The total number of unemployed individuals

The number of excess unemployed individuals (above the state average) in areas of substantial unemployment DEED staff then adjust as necessary to maintain a 90 percent hold-harmless provision as well as a 130 percent funding cap.

TITLE I – DISLOCATED WORKER

Minnesota will obligate 60 percent of its WIOA Dislocated Worker program formula allocation to local service providers using a combination of labor market information, census data and unemployment insurance information. DEED first reserves five percent of the total allocation for administration, ten percent for allowable statewide activities, and the fully allowable 25 percent for rapid response activity (grants to fund mass layoff projects and statewide rapid response staff).

Three factors to distribute the 60 percent are weighted equally, impacting the preliminary share to local providers:

1. The share of the state's unemployed persons living in a WDA
2. The share of the state's permanently separated unemployed persons living in that WDA
3. The share of statewide total weeks paid of UI to permanently separated claimants

Minnesota then adjusts the share by job and earnings density, measuring a LWDA's standard deviation from the state average, and adjusts the dollars up or down accordingly. Finally, Minnesota includes a 90 percent hold-harmless provision as well as a 130 percent funding cap to minimize any significant changes in funding.

TITLE II – ADULT LITERACY

(b)(5)(B) Describe (i) how the eligible agency will award multi-year grants or contracts on a competitive basis to eligible providers in the State, including how eligible agencies will establish that eligible providers are organizations of demonstrated effectiveness; and (ii) how the eligible agency will ensure direct and equitable access to all eligible providers to apply and compete for funds and how the eligible agency will ensure that it is using the same grant or contract announcement and application procedure for all eligible providers.

TITLE II - AEFLA PROVIDER SELECTION AND FUNDING ALLOCATION PROCESS

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) is the State's Eligible Agency for Adult Education and Literacy programs. MDE is responsible for administering funds and providing program/performance oversight to grantees.

Adult Education and Literacy eligible providers approved under Workforce Investment Act of 1998 requirements will continue to receive funding through June 30, 2017, as long as they adhere to state and federal grant expectations, as measured through annual applications, financial reports, and program performance reports.

During grant year 2016–17, the Minnesota Department of Education will implement a new competitive application process for all federal AEFLA funding that will determine what local providers will be grantees starting July 1, 2017. The local AEFLA program grant process will rate responses to the 13 considerations in Title II of WIOA and include additional state ABE priorities and context.

TIMELINE

The following steps will be taken in the WIOA AEFLA competition:

February 2017	MDE publishes and promotes WIOA-aligned federal AEFLA grant application request for proposals (RFP)
February 2017 - ongoing	MDE provides technical assistance to inquiries from eligible providers
February-March 2017	MDE recruits reviewers to score and rate WIOA-aligned federally-funded AEFLA grant applications
March 2017	Due date for WIOA-aligned federally-funded AEFLA grant applications
March-April 2017	Reviewers to score and rate WIOA-aligned federally-funded AEFLA grant applications
April 2017	MDE decides which applicants will be approved as providers based on reviewer scores and ratings and application's response to the conditions and criteria in the RFP
April-May 2017	MDE announces WIOA-aligned federally-funded AEFLA grant applicants that will receive funding
July 1, 2017	WIOA-aligned federally-funded AEFLA grant providers begin grant cycle, programming and funding

ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS

An eligible local provider is an organization that has demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education activities to eligible individuals and may include:

- A local education agency;
- Community-based or faith-based organization;
- Volunteer literacy organization;
- Institution of higher education;
- Public or private nonprofit agency;
- Library;
- Public housing authority;
- Nonprofit institution with the ability to provide adult education and literacy services;
- Consortium or coalition of agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described above; and
- A partnership between an employer and an entity described above.

APPLICATION PROMOTION AND PUBLICATION

In February 2017, the grant competition for the 2017-18 grant year will be publicized in compliance with federal law, Minnesota statute, and Minnesota Department of Education policy in order to ensure that all eligible providers have direct and equitable access to apply and compete for grants. A fair and equitable process will be followed for the federal AEFLA grant funding that follows other federal grant procedures. The Minnesota Department of Education publishes and promotes all grant opportunities on its website. Any eligible entity (described above) can submit a proposal.

ALLOCATIONS

The Minnesota Department of Education will dedicate 82.5 percent of the state allocation of federal AEFLA funding to grants to eligible providers. This amount will be divided based on scope of service (number of prior year contact hours for eligible service), accountability aid, and regional aid to help local programs implement AEFLA initiatives.

In addition, 12.5 percent of the state allocation to Leadership Activities to provide support for activities such as: professional development; volunteer recruitment and training; technology; serving students with disabilities; distance learning and digital literacy; program quality support; assessment training; and career pathway and other transitions-related collaborations.

13 CONSIDERATIONS

The Minnesota Department of Education will use the considerations specified in Section 231(e) of WIOA and listed below as the criteria for selecting and funding eligible providers. As part of the RFP process, agencies will be required to provide narrative detail describing how they will meet each consideration.

1. Needs Assessment: The degree to which the provider is responsive to (A) regional needs as identified in the local plan under Section 108; and (B) serving individuals in the community who are identified in such plan as most in need of adult education and literacy activities, including individuals who have low levels of literacy skills and who are English language learners.
2. Individuals with Disabilities: The degree to which the provider is able to serve eligible individuals with disabilities, including eligible individuals with learning disabilities.
3. Past Effectiveness: The degree to which the provider demonstrates past effectiveness in improving the literacy of eligible individuals, to meet State-adjusted levels of performance for

the primary indicators of performance described in Section 116, especially with respect to eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy.

4. Alignment with One-stop Partners: The degree to which the eligible provider is responsive to, and demonstrates alignment between, proposed activities and services and the strategy and goals of the local plan under Section 108 as well as the activities and services of the one-stop partners.
5. Intensity, Quality, and Instructional Practices: The degree to which the eligible provider's program is of sufficient intensity and quality, and based on the most rigorous research available so that participants achieve substantial learning gains; and uses instructional practices that include the essential components of reading instruction.
6. Research Based Educational Practices: The degree to which the eligible provider's activities including reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, and English language acquisition instruction, are based on the best practices derived from the most rigorous research available and appropriate, including scientifically valid research and effective educational practice.
7. Effective Use of Technology: The degree to which the eligible provider's activities effectively use technology, services, and delivery systems, including distance education in a manner sufficient to increase the amount and quality of learning and how such technology, services, and systems lead to improved performance.
8. Integrated Education and Training: The degree to which the eligible provider's activities offer learning in context, including through integrated education and training, so that an individual acquires the skills needed to transition to and complete postsecondary education and training programs, obtain and advance in employment leading to economic self-sufficiency, and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
9. Qualified Staff: The degree to which the eligible provider's activities are delivered by well-trained instructors, counselors, and administrators who meet any minimum qualifications established by the state, where applicable, and who have access to high quality professional development, including through electronic means.
10. Partnerships and Development of Career Pathways: The degree to which the eligible provider's activities coordinate with other available education, training, and social service resources in the community, such as by establishing strong links with elementary schools and secondary schools, postsecondary educational institutions, institutions of higher education, local workforce development boards, one-stop centers, job training programs, and social service agencies, business, industry, labor organizations, community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and intermediaries, for the development of career pathways.
11. Flexible Schedules and Coordination with Support Services: The degree to which the eligible provider's activities offer flexible schedules and coordination with Federal, State, and local support services (such as child care, transportation, mental health services, and career planning) that are necessary to enable individuals, including individuals with disabilities or other special needs, to attend and complete programs information management system that has the capacity to report measurable participant outcomes (consistent with Section 116) and to monitor program performance.
12. Information management system: The expectation will be that the eligible provider will use the State-administered designated MIS for all grant-related data collection and reporting; and
13. English Language Acquisition and Civics Education: The degree to which the eligible provider has a demonstrated need for additional English language acquisition programs and civics education programs.

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA

In addition to the above considerations, the grant application will require description of applicants:

- Location, service area, the scope of the program, a description of the population to be served, fiscal management procedures, and audit history;
- Capacity to offer day, evening, and distance education programming including evidence of the organization's AEFLA-eligible activity services in the prior year.
- Budget, as well as programmatic information regarding statutory requirements;
- Coordination with other service providers to provide wrap-around services to participants (e.g., child care, transportation);
- A description of how the program will align activities to the Local Plan for WIOA providers and supportive services; and
- The ability to match federal funding with other funding from state, local, organizational or other sources that would directly go to providing AEFLA-eligible activities.

REVIEW PROCESS

Proposals are rated and scored by teams of reviewers approved by the Minnesota Department of Education Grants Office, which will be completed in April 2017. The review process for selecting successful applicants includes formally scoring applications on their responses to each of the 13 considerations of WIOA, the programming proposed and its alignment to the four instructional components, the articulated use of funds, and additional criteria listed above. The Minnesota Department of Education will select applicants for federal AEFLA funding based on proposals with the highest scores, noting also the additional criteria listed above. Applicants selected for federal AEFLA funding that is WIOA-aligned will be notified in May-June 2017 and will be eligible to start programming July 1, 2017.

APPLICATIONS BEYOND 2017

Beyond 2017, all approved and potential new providers will be required to comply with all state and federal regulations, policies and expectations for AEFLA grantees with routine reporting. This routine reporting includes:

1. Reporting and use of the state AEFLA database system;
2. Annual reporting requirements with performance data;
3. Reauthorization every five years with an updated description of programming, articulated implementation of accountability procedures and policies, performance analysis, and plans for continuous improvement; and
4. Additional requirements or reporting upon request by state and local agencies.

TITLE IV - VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

(b)(5)(C) In the case of a State that, under Section 101(a)(2)(A)(i) of the Rehabilitation Act designates a State agency to administer the part of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services portion of the Combined State Plan under which VR services are provided for individuals who are blind, describe the process and the factors used by the State to determine the distribution of funds among the two VR agencies in the State.

The distribution of Minnesota's allotment of VR110 funds between the General and Blind agencies is based upon a methodology submitted to the Rehabilitation Services Administration in 1975. This methodology, still being used today, distributes 82 percent of Minnesota's allotment to the General Agency and 18 percent to the Blind Agency.

PROGRAM DATA

DATA ALIGNMENT AND INTEGRATION

(b)(6)(A) Describe the plans of the lead State agencies with responsibility for the administration of the core programs, along with the State Board, to align and integrate available workforce and education data systems for the core programs, unemployment insurance programs, and education through postsecondary education, and to the extent possible, the Combined State Plan partner programs. The description of the State's plan for integrating data systems should include the State's goal for achieving integration and any progress to date.

(b)(6)(A)(i) Describe the State's plans to make the management information systems for the core programs interoperable to maximize the efficient exchange of common data elements to support assessment and evaluation.

Currently, in Minnesota, four of the six required titles share the same management information system. This system is called Workforce One and is described in more detail in other Sections of this Combined State Plan.

Conversations have begun with the two partners not currently in this system. Adult Basic Education's management information system serves purposes beyond just participant data. The approach being considered is an API that would share pertinent data with Workforce One and allow for program staff to see basic enrollment information to assist with coordinating participant activities. Job Service's participant data requirements are currently a part of MinnesotaWorks, the State's job bank. A possible API between these two applications is also under consideration.

(b)(6)(A)(ii) Describe the State's plans to integrate data system to facilitate streamlined intake and service delivery to track participation across all programs included in this plan.

Currently, in Minnesota, seven of the 13 participating titles share the same management information system. This system is called Workforce One and is described in more detail in other Sections of this Combined State Plan.

Minnesota will continue to explore the possibilities of additional titles sharing the same management information system. A study will need to be conducted to address data element and security requirements that may create challenges in achieving a total merger.

(b)(6)(A)(iii) Explain how the State board will assist the governor in aligning technology and data systems across mandatory one-stop partner programs(including design and implementation of common intake, data collection, etc.) and how such alignment will improve service delivery to individuals, including unemployed individuals.

The State Board, through its functions under WIOA, will lead the management information system study to ascertain to practicality and functionality of such a broad based system and make a recommendation to the Governor.

(b)(6)(A)(iv) Describe the State's plans to develop and produce the reports required under Section 116, performance accountability system.

Until U.S. DOL/ETA releases new WIASRD specifications, Minnesota plans to continue integrating the data reported in the LEPR (Labor Exchange Participant Report, which includes services to Veterans, Job Bank users, and WorkForce Center Resource Areas, and Migrant Seasonal Farmworker Program participants), Workforce One, and UI wage detail. Every quarter, several key staff work together to create WIASRD files, which we then submit to the EDRVS for vetting and acceptance. We plan to continue with this process.

Under WIOA, we can make adjustments to the performance windows to account for the new measures (from first to second quarter, third to fourth quarter, and so on.) Minnesota also plans to continue its performance tracking with FutureWorks – MN Performs.

ASSESSMENT OF PARTICIPANTS' POST-PROGRAM SUCCESS

(b)(6)(B) Describe how lead State agencies will use the workforce development system to assess the progress of participants who are exiting from core programs in entering, persisting in, and completing postsecondary education, or entering or remaining in employment. States may choose to set additional indicators of performance.

Currently, Minnesota includes "continued into post-secondary education" as an exit reason in Workforce One. Our state-funded programs such as Pathways to Prosperity, emphasized educational attainment as a program outcome in addition to employment outcomes.

Under [Minnesota statute 116L.98](#), we have established additional indicators of performance. While this applies to our state-funded workforce development programs, we have the capacity with our agency-wide office of performance management to view the program outcomes for our federally funded programs, as well. The statute is as follows:

USE OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) WAGE RECORD DATA

(b)(6)(C) Explain how the State will meet the requirements to utilize quarterly UI wage records for performance accountability, evaluations, and as a source for workforce and labor market information, consistent with Federal and State law.

DEED uses Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage Record data to populate all of its employment-related performance outcomes for state and federally-funded programs. We are currently implementing a more viable method of data element validation to ensure that we are pulling this data into our performance reporting mechanisms consistently and accurately.

PRIVACY SAFEGUARDS

(b)(6)(D) Describe the privacy safeguards incorporated in the State's workforce development system, including safeguards required by Section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g) and other applicable Federal laws.

PRIORITY OF SERVICE FOR VETERANS

(b)(7) Describe how the State will implement and monitor the priority of service provisions for veterans in accordance with the requirements of the Jobs for Veterans Act, codified at Section 4215 of 38 U.S.C., which applies to all employment and training programs funded in whole or in part by the Department of Labor. States should also describe the referral process for veterans determined to have a significant barrier to employment to receive services from the Jobs for Veterans State Grants program's(JVSG) Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist.

Priority of Service to Veterans will be provided to ensure Veterans receive first consideration for all opportunities for which they qualify in the WFC.

- **Point of Entry** – Signage requests that new clients identify themselves if they are a Veteran,
- **Questionnaire** – given to Veterans to assist reception to identify Veterans with significant barriers to employment.

- **SBE Veterans** – will receive assistance/intensive services from a DVOP or in the absence of the DVOP, a designated intensive services provider.
- **Referral Process** – All other non-SBE Veterans will be referred to a trained partner staff person within the WFC who will provide job search information/assistance, program information and priority referral to services and resources.
- **Access to U.S. DOL funded programs** – Veterans and other eligible persons entitled to POS will be referred to U.S. DOL funded programs immediately. If a waiting list for the program exists, the Veteran will be put at the top of the list for service.
- **Workshops** – All workshops available in the WFC will have open slots available to Veterans up to the day the workshop is scheduled
- **State Job Bank** – Veterans (current and former Military members) are able to identify themselves as such, and are listed at the beginning of searches done by recruiters and employers. Employers are also able to self-designate as "Veterans Friendly Employer" so that Veterans can do keyword searches to find employers seeking Veterans for hire.
- **Training of Partner Staff** – Non DVOP staff are trained specifically as the point-of-contact for Veterans not receiving intensive services from DVOPs.

Several processes will be used to monitor POS statewide and within each area of the State in which covered programs operate: 1) Information provided by DVOP/LVER staff or customers, 2) DVET onsite visits (including U.S. DOL-VETS audits with the State Director of Veterans Employment Programs, 3) Managers Quarterly Reports.

Services are made available and provided within the WFC and through other service providers to eligible Veterans, transitioning service members, CH31 participants, other eligible persons and other such groups targeted for special consideration, including Veterans with significant barriers to employment.

MOUs have been developed with VR&E and the Jobs for Vets Program in providing referrals and priority services for Veterans.

ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM

(b)(8) Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners), will comply with Section 188 of WIOA (if applicable) and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) with regard to physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities. This also must include a description of compliance through providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. Describe the State's one-stop certification policy, particularly the accessibility criteria. (This Operational Planning element applies to core programs.)

DEED meets its ongoing obligation not to discriminate on the basis of disability by developing system wide policy and procedure initiatives that comply with Section 188 of WIOA. These policies include physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology and materials to serve the needs of customers with disabilities.

The **Determining the Location of a Minnesota WorkForce Center policy** requires that the "The WFC location will be accessible to all populations including individuals with disabilities." Workforce Development is the final authority in determining if a location meets the criteria to be certified as a WorkForce Center.

The Minnesota WorkForce Center System Certification Standards policy provides guidance on the implementation standards for the equal access obligations under WIOA. WorkForce Centers must be universally accessible to all populations including but not limited to various racial and ethnic groups, persons for which English is not their first language, ex-felons, Veterans. Different age groups, both sexes and individuals with disabilities.

All partners are covered by Title II of the ADA and the equal opportunity and nondiscrimination elements of Section 188 of WIOA and, therefore are subject to the same standards.

PROVIDE ARCHITECTURAL ACCESSIBILITY FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

The WorkForce Center System provides integrated program services through the development and maintenance of an accessible environment. All facilities open to the public as well as administrative offices must be accessible to and useable by the broadest population. All partners are covered by Title II of the ADA and the equal opportunity and nondiscrimination elements of Section 188 of WIOA and, therefore, are subject to the same set of standards.

The *Determining the Location of a Minnesota WorkForce Center* policy states, "DEED must ensure that all services are compliant with applicable laws, regulations and policies. DEED may therefore, withhold certification and/or funding from a location that does not meet the criteria established in this and related policies and laws." The Policy goes on to state, "the WFC location will be accessible to all populations including individuals with disabilities (see Site Selection document for guidance.)"

The Section of the Policy titled *Minnesota WorkForce Center System Certification Standards* provides detailed information regarding the criteria and the process for selecting, remodeling or moving a WorkForce Center. WorkForce Centers must meet the standards set forth in the Policy. The Policy identifies the tools used to assist in evaluating and determining access requirements. They include:

- The [ADA Site Selection Criteria and Access Standards](#) – The standards were developed to assess the accessibility of potential WorkForce Center (WFC) locations and identify the building elements that are critical to program access. The *Standards* address the obligation by all WFC partners under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 188 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).
 - The site and building element descriptions are intended to help determine if a site location has the most basic accessible features to ensure equal access to participants with disabilities. If the site does not have the required features, modifications can be made to create improved access. It is imperative that a review be conducted prior to lease negotiations so that access issues can be addressed and remediated.
 - It is the responsibility of DEED and its partners to choose sites that are accessible to and usable by the broadest population. DEED, as the designated state agency for WIOA implementation, is responsible for oversight and implementation of access standards regardless of the WIOA entity that holds the lease.
- The [Building Access Survey](#) is a tool developed by the Minnesota State Council on Disability that is a comprehensive review of a building site including all components both exterior and interior. The Survey incorporates both the Minnesota Building Code and the ANSI Code in its standards. The Survey categorizes the site features. All aspects of a building site are identified including parking, pathways and entrance, common elements of the building, accessible route and features specific to a WorkForce Center. The tool is available online and provided to site managers prior to a review.
- [Access Survey](#) – The worksheet developed by DEED to use with the Building Access Survey.

DEED developed a review schedule for all Comprehensive WorkForce Centers. Site visits for recertification of the 48 WorkForce Centers are scheduled on a three-year cycle. Comprehensive WorkForce Centers that are newly developed, remodeled or relocated are included in the review and are prioritized. There is generally an eighteen month lead time on remodeling or relocation.

Affiliate WorkForce Centers are required to provide full access and opportunities to all job seekers including serving individuals with disabilities. Physical locations, services and programs must comply with Section 188 of WIOA and provisions of the American with Disabilities Act of 1990.

DEED will work closely with Affiliate WorkForce Centers to have them provide an annual assessment on architectural and programmatic accessibility for individuals with disabilities. A review schedule for Affiliate WorkForce Centers will occur during Program Monitoring Visits.

PROVIDE PROGRAMMATIC ACCESSIBILITY FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

DEED has developed a variety of methods to ensure that its programs and activities are universally accessible to individuals with disabilities. They include:

- The *Minnesota WorkForce Center System Certification Standards* discussed earlier identifies both physical and programmatic accessibility requirements. Customers with disabilities must be able to participate and benefit from the services available in the WorkForce Center System, as do all customers. In addition to the site accessibility standards, the Policy identifies the following requirements:
 - Development of an evacuation and safety plan
 - Notice displayed and available in alternate formats upon request
 - Inclusion of tag lines
 - Identification of TTY numbers or Minnesota Relay
 - Availability of accommodation and modifications
 - Staff knowledge of assistive technology
 - Use of auxiliary aids and services
 - Community resources
- Technology standards have been developed for all WorkForce Centers. Assistive technology available in the WorkForce Centers includes Pocket Talker, Zoom Text, Jaws, and TV/VCR with built-in captioning decoder, OVAC 210, Optelec CCTV (in selected sites), large screen monitor, and UbiDuo. Each WorkForce Center has an accessible computer station that includes software and hardware that provides access enhancements. The notice of the availability of these products and services is widely distributed among WorkForce partners for use by all consumers. As Resource Area equipment is updated, the access stations also receive updated hardware and software. In 2014, DEED did an assistive technology upgrade in all the WorkForce Centers. The JAWS software and Zoom Text was upgraded to the most recent version.
- DEED's Policy and Procedure Manual (PPM) Chapter 215, Office Identification, was updated in August, 2014. The policy includes requirements for interior signage. The policy provides information on character proportion, character height, raised/Brailled characters, contrast, placement height and pictorial symbols.
- The DEED Telecommunications Policy (PPM 210) has been updated to either require that a TTY or other alternative assistive technology for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing be used in every building in which a DEED office is located. If a TTY number is available it should be included on letterhead, brochures, meeting notices and resource information. If a TTY is not

available a tagline stating "upon request this information can be made available by calling xxx-xxx-xxxx or by contacting your preferred relay service" should be used.

ARE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE WITH INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AS EFFECTIVELY AS WITH OTHERS

Public entities are required to ensure that applicants, participants and members of the public with disabilities have communication access that is equally as effective as that provided to people without disabilities. Since the majority of information in today's environment is available primarily through electronic means, DEED's public website provides program and customer information in a user-friendly venue. Sample pages from the DEED home page "contact us" link illustrate how individuals can contact any of our programs by using a TTY number.

MN.IT's [Office of Accessibility](#) provides services and technical support to the State of Minnesota executive branch. MN.IT has set standards for IT Accessibility. On their website a page is devoted to accessibility information for state agencies. It includes information on creating electronic documents, an information implementation toolkit for accessibility, and tools, training and testing information for creating accessible videos, podcast and webinars. The Chief Information Accessibility Officer is a dedicated position within MN.IT that is focused solely on assisting state agencies in identifying solutions to technology access issues.

Accessibility has been a central focus for the web development team. DEED's accessibility resources in the Vocational Rehabilitation Unit as well as staff at State Services for the Blind continue to be involved in any webpage updates ensuring accessibility for the blind and visually impaired, as well as users with hearing impairments, mobility impairments, and those with cognitive and reading disorders. DEED's web development team strives for accessibility that extends beyond minimum compliance. If, however, users are unable to access information, they may request information in alternate formats and it will be provided in a timely manner.

STAFF TRAINING AND SUPPORTS

[Focus on Ability](#) is a DEED education and training initiative designed to increase employment among individuals with disabilities. The training initiative consists of eight webinar training modules. The modules are titled, *The Wants and Needs of People with Disabilities*, *People with Disabilities and Work*, *What Employers Want and Need*, *Disability and the Law*, *WorkForce Center Staff Training*, *Assistive Technology in the WorkForce Center*, *Topics of Interest* that includes Universal Design History, Ex-Offenders, Outreach to the Disability Community, Veterans, and *Manager Training: Coaching and Reinforcement*. There is also information on common disabilities and a directory of resources on where to find service providers that offer employment-related assistance to individuals with disabilities.

The training modules are recommended for WorkForce Center staff that provides services to the universal customer, including individuals with disabilities. The professional training is also available to private employers who can opt out of the two units that are specifically about the WorkForce Centers.

The Resource and Reception Area Certification Program ensures that all staff working in the Resource/Reception Area are trained in the use of the assistive technology equipment. Staff are provided personal development opportunities to learn about the challenges that face customers with disabilities.

DEED and the Minnesota Department of Human Services sponsor the Counselor/Case Manager Conference held every year in June. There is always a session on working effectively with customers with disabilities at the conference. Topics can include:

- Mental Health First Aid
- Effective Communication with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Customers
- Accommodations in the Workplace
- My responsibility under the American with Disabilities Act

DEED's Workforce Coordination Training Team is able to provide on-demand training for all WorkForce Center staff and partners. These trainings can be in person or webinar based depending on the topic and need.

COORDINATION WITH PROGRAMS

If the State is submitting a Combined State Plan, describe the methods used for joint planning and coordination of the core programs and the other programs and activities covered by the Combined State Plan.

The state of Minnesota has a long standing history of activities being coordinated among the State Combine Plan partners. This is the primary reason for the robust participation of the required WIOA titles. Engagement of the core required titles began in January, 2015 with a broad review of the law and comment submission.

During the summer of 2015 we began to expand the conversation to other WIOA required titles. These conversations explored the details of their required planning elements and the relationship to WIOA and alignment with the State's emerging vision for a Career Pathway System. Commitments to the Combined State Plan began in the fall of 2015 and program administrators began to participate in a series of individual and group meetings.

The overall state strategy approach was reviewed and adoption recommended by the GWDB Operations Committee in December of 2015, and shared with Combined State Plan partners, with input used to refine the high level overview of our four year plan and serve as the basis for participating in the WIOA National Convening event, for which Minnesota sent 18 representatives.

Monthly meetings with the state level administrators, GWDB members and local workforce development board representatives throughout the first year of the implementation of the WIOA plan. These meetings will most likely move to quarterly meetings in the subsequent years of the four year plan with a series of focused meeting to consider modifications for years 3 and 4.

COMMON ASSURANCES

The State of Minnesota provides the following assurances, as required by the U.S. Department of Labor.

1. The state has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a State Board or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts;
2. The State has established a policy to provide the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of the State Boards and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes;
3. The lead State agencies with the responsibility for the administration of core programs reviewed and commented on the appropriate operational planning elements of the Combined State Plan, and approved the elements as serving the needs of the populations served by such programs;
4.
 - (a) The state obtained input into the development of the Combined State Plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administering the core programs and the other Combined State Plan programs, other primary stakeholders, and the general public, and that the Combined State Plan is available and accessible to the general public.
 - (b) The State provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by the State Board, including State agency official(s) for the Unemployment Insurance Agency, if such official(s) is a member of the State Board.
5. The State has established, in accordance with WIOA Section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for adult, dislocated worker, and youth programs to carry out workforce investment activities under chapters 2 and 3 of subtitle B;
6. The state has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA Section 188, as applicable;
7. The Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program;
8. The State will pay an appropriate share (as defined by the State board) of the costs of carrying out Section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs;
9. The State has a one-stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all one-stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA);
10. Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate; and
11. The State will conduct evaluations and research projects on activities under WIOA core programs; that such projects will be coordinated with, and designed in conjunction with, State and local boards and with State agencies responsible for the administration of all respective core programs; and further, that the projects will be coordinated with the evaluations provided for by the Secretary of labor and the Secretary of Education under WIOA.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

The State must address all program-specific requirements in this Section for the WIOA core programs regardless of whether the State submits either a Unified or Combined State Plan.

ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE I-B

The Combined State Plan must include the following with respect to activities carried out under subtitle B.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

REGIONS AND LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS

(a)(1)(A) Identify the regions and the local workforce development areas designated in the sSte.

This map identifies the local workforce development areas and the six regional workforce development areas in Minnesota:

Region 1: LWDA 1 (NW MN Private Industry Council); LWDA 2 (Rural MN CEP);

Region 2: LWDA 3 (NE MN Office of Job Training); LWDA 4 (City of Duluth);

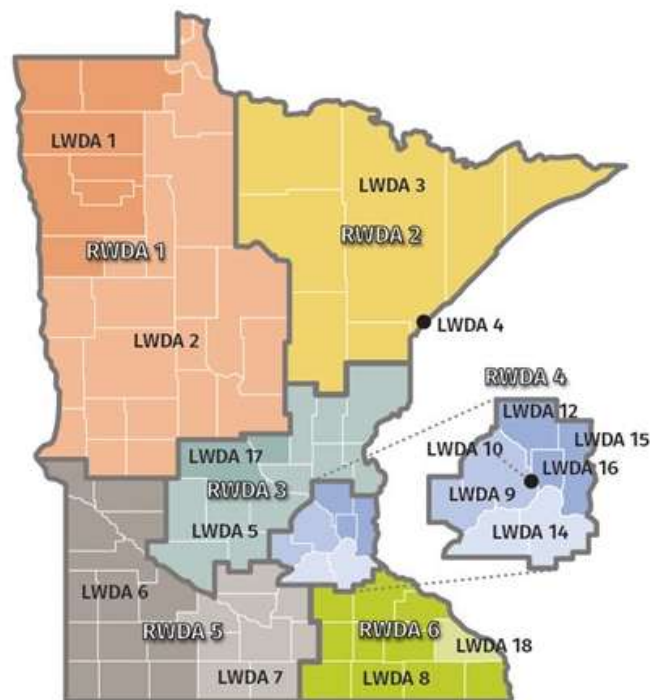
Region 3: LWDA 5 (Central MN Job & Training Service); LWDA 17 (Stearns Benton Employment & Training);

Region 4: LWDA 9 (suburban Hennepin and Carver Counties); LWDA 10 (Minneapolis Employment and Training); LWDA 12 (Anoka County Job Training Center); LWDA 14 (Dakota & Scott Counties); LWDA 15 (Ramsey County- Workforce Solutions); LWDA 16 (Washington County);

Region 5: LWDA 6 (SW MN Private Industry Council); LWDA 7 (South Central Workforce Council/MN Valley Action Council)

Region 6: LWDA 8 (SE MN Workforce Development, Inc.); LWDA 18 (Winona County Workforce Council)

RWDA – Regional Workforce Development Areas
LWDA – Local Workforce Development Areas



(a)(1)(B) Describe the process used for designating local areas, including procedures for determining whether the local area met the criteria for "performed successfully" and "sustained fiscal integrity" in accordance with 106(b)(2) and (3) of WIOA. Describe the process used for identifying regions and planning regions under Section 106(a) of WIOA. This must include a description of how the State consulted with the local boards and chief elected officials in identifying the regions.

The designation of the local areas followed the requirements in WIOA. The State, through review and consultation with the Minnesota Workforce Council Association, which represents the chief elected officials and the private sector leadership of the local boards, accepted requests for initial designation, based on satisfactory performance and sustained fiscal integrity.

Satisfactory performance was defined as meeting or exceeding performance standards for the two most recently completed program years. Sustained fiscal integrity was defined as having no audit exceptions for the two most recently completed program years. Documentation included published performance reports and audit letters issued by the State of Minnesota.

The designation of regions followed the requirements in WIOA. The State, through review and consultation with the Minnesota Workforce Council Association, which represents the chief elected officials and the private sector leadership of the local boards, considered various options based on the criteria contained in WIOA law. The proposed regions were approved by the GWDB and MWCA and adopted in 2015.

(a)(1)(C) Provide the appeals process referred to in Section 106(b)(5) of WIOA relating to designation of local areas.

The State will review and modified its existing policies related to designation of local areas to align with Section 106(b)(5) of WIOA the final regulations, once they have been issues. The policy will be submitted to the GWDB for approval.

(a)(1)(D) Provide the appeals process referred to in Section 121(h)(2)(E) of WIOA relating to determinations for infrastructure funding.

The State has had a cost allocation policy that has been in place since 2010. This policy is currently be updated and will be modified to address any conflicts with the final regulations, once they are issued. The policy will be submitted to the GWDB for approval.

STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES

(a)(2)(A) Provide State policies or guidance for the statewide workforce development system and for use of State funds for workforce investment activities.

When the local plans are submitted, a team of reviewers (within their areas of expertise) from WDD carefully read and approve or reject Sections of the local plans. When a local plan is approved, the WDD director sends an approval letter to the LWDA, and funding is released. When a local plan or parts of a local plan are rejected, a corrective action notice is sent to the LWDA with a deadline to submit an acceptable answer. If a local plan does not meet the guidelines and standards outlined in the planning guide, funding can be withheld. This process ensures that LWDAs are submitting plans that are following consistent strategies and goals that are set by the state and the U.S. Department of Labor.

The policies that are in place are strategically designed to address the potential issues and opportunities that counselors will encounter in working with a wide array of dislocated workers. The following is a descriptive list of policies in place for dislocated workers.

Dislocated Worker Policies

- Apprenticeship Training
- Case Management

- Contract Modifications
- Cost Category Definitions and Budget Guidance
- Credentials and Training
- Data Entry Content and Timeliness Requirements
- Definition of Self-Sufficiency
- Early Readjustment Assistance Grants (ERAG)
- Eligibility
- Exit Policy
- Financial Assistance for Computer Hardware and Similar Technology
- Incumbent Worker Training
- Performance Standards
- Pre-Feasibility Grants
- Priority of Service; Veterans' Priority of Service
- Procedures for Awarding Small Layoff Funding Independent Grantees
- Program Provider Certification/Decertification
- Project Specific Plan (PSP) for Dislocated Worker Funds
- Projects and Competitive Process
- Rapid Response
- Support and Follow-Up Services
- Support Services
- WIA Certification for Training Programs
- WIA Funds Transfer Between Dislocated Worker and Adult Funding Streams
- WIOA Certification for Training Programs
- WIOA Funds Transfer Between Adult and Dislocated Worker Funding Streams

(a)(2)(B) Describe how the State intends to use Governor's set aside funding. Describe how the State will utilize Rapid Response funds to respond to layoffs and plant closings and coordinate services to quickly aid companies and their affected workers. States also should describe any layoff aversion strategies they have implemented to address at risk companies and workers.

Due to the funding restrictions placed on the Governor's set aside budget, only those activities that are required by WIOA will be pursued. The final allocation of these funds will not be known until final regulations are issued, clarifying what activities will be required and allowed, and by Adult, Dislocated Worker or Youth funds.

RAPID RESPONSE

(Insert)

LAY-OFF AVERSION

(Insert)

(a)(2)(C) Describe the State policies and procedures to provide Rapid Responses in cases of natural disasters including coordination with FEMA and other entities.

(Insert)

(a)(2)(D) Describe how the State provides early intervention (e.g., Rapid Response) to worker groups on whose behalf a Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) petition has been filed.) This description must include how the State disseminates benefit information to provide trade-affected workers in the groups identified in the TAA petitions with an accurate understanding of the provision of TAA benefits and services in such a way that they are transparent to the trade-

affected dislocated worker applying for them. Describe how the State will use funds that have been reserved for Rapid Response to provide services for every worker group that files a TAA petition.

(Insert)—Maybe a Deb S./TAA Team Section?—Maybe Jason's team could add something too?

Adult and Dislocated Worker Program Requirements

ALTERNATIVE TRAINING MODELS

(b)(1) If the State is utilizing alternative training models (e.g., on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, transitional jobs, and customized training) as part of its training strategy and these strategies are not already discussed in other Sections of the plan, describe the State's strategies for how these models ensure high quality training for both the participant and the employer.

The Sector Partnership National Emergency Grant (SP NEG) is a federal grant for dislocated workers, among other grants that addresses the use of alternative training models to better serve Minnesotans facing unemployment and barriers to employment. The State applied for the SP NEG grant because it was a great opportunity to embark on an innovative way of viewing and implementing work-based training models. U.S. DOL awarded the State with \$5,750,000 to serve over 1,000 dislocated workers. Trainings models such as on-the-job training, credentialed training, transitional jobs skills training, and incumbent worker training can be expensive and staff intensive which often times can be discouraging for WDAs, especially smaller WDAs to embark on. The SP NEG grant provides the opportunity to leverage funds with existing dislocated worker dollars to accomplish the goals that the governor and president have set to increase achievement and decrease the gap between those who face barriers to employment and those who do not. Minnesota has a strong economy, relatively low unemployment rate, and high education attainment. However, that does not apply to the entire population in the state. Not all Minnesotans benefit equally from the current robust economy. Meeting the needs of those individuals require funds, regional coordination, strong partnerships, and innovative and inclusive models that allow dislocated workers with various backgrounds and experiences to enter an industry that can provide a sustainable living. The SP NEG addresses the employer and job seeker need and bridges the gap between the two. The State used current Labor Market Information data to determine five sector-based occupations on which to focus: manufacturing, health care, transportation, IT, and agriculture. All expected outcomes in this project are guided by current federal law and regulations as well as supporting metrics related state statutes, policies and procedures. This Sector Partnership grant along with other programs and strategies exhibit the State's commitment to cater to the needs of employers and participants.

MN Pathways to Prosperity (P2P) will support increased participation of enrollees in career pathway programming to strengthen development of increased career awareness, acquisition of basic skills education, participation in skills-training programs, and placement into positions in high growth, high demand industries capable of long-term employment at wages permitting family self-sufficiency.

The State directly appropriated funds for a Customized Training Pilot Program (CTPP) for the second time for three MN State Colleges and University System (MNSCU) institutions. The goal of the CTPP is develop and administer customized training programs in the skilled manufacturing industry that integrates academic instruction and job-related learning in the workplace.

REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

(b)(2) Describe how the State will incorporate Registered Apprenticeship into its strategy and services.

Minnesota was awarded funds for the American Apprenticeship Initiative Grant, at \$5 million to build new apprenticeship programs and serve 814 new apprentices over the next five years. More than 100 employers statewide are participating in the Minnesota Apprenticeship Initiative to bring more than 800 individuals into newly registered apprenticeship programs in 29 high-growth occupations spanning five industries: advanced manufacturing, agriculture, healthcare, information technology and transportation. Minnesota apprenticeship Initiative activities include outreach and recruitment, co-enrolled program intake, assessment, adult basic education where necessary, wrap-around support services, career guidance, life skills coaching and counseling, structured on-the-job training, competency based technical instruction and state-issued industry-recognized credentials. Guidelines for apprenticeships are outlined in state policy to assist with any questions that WDAs may have in using these funds to serve Minnesotans.

TRAINING PROVIDER ELIGIBILITY PROCEDURE

(b)(3) Provide the procedure for determining training provider eligibility, including Registered Apprenticeship programs.

WIOA requires that a training program or course whose completion results in a recognized credential must be "WIOA-certified", in order to use WIOA training dollars and get credit for that credential. Program providers, interested training providers, and their partners should comply with this policy to ensure high-quality training experiences for customers of WIOA programs.

To be listed on the state's eligible training provider list (ETPL), a training institution's programs must be licensed, registered, or otherwise legally exempt through the Minnesota Office of Higher Education. There are a few programs that are authorized by other state agencies (for example, nursing assistant training programs are authorized by the Minnesota Department of Health, not OHE).

If a training provider is not sure of their status, they are to contact OHE to obtain full information about what if anything, is required of them for full legal authorization.

The State is updating the Career Profile Tool to with WIOA (displaying required performance metrics, cost, completion rates, etc.) and to better meet the needs of the state's customers and counselors.

The State's policy of WIOA Certification for Training Programs that providers definitions, detailed procedures, general and performance reporting requirements, is available online.

(Should I summarize the Registered Apprenticeship policy?)

YOUTH PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

(c) With respect to youth workforce investment activities authorized in Section 129 of WIOA,

(c)(1) Identify the State-developed criteria to be used by local boards in awarding grants for youth workforce investment activities and describe how the local boards will take into consideration the ability of the providers to meet performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance for the youth program as described in Section 116(b)(2)(A)(ii) of WIOA in awarding such grants.

Adult Support, Structure and Expectations

- Initiatives that connect young people with adults who are willing to advocate and broker on their behalf, mentor and connect them to the broader institutions of society and who have the training and skills to help them develop and grow.
- Services that stress coherence and structure, offer challenging content and give youth responsibilities that may develop civic responsibility, self-worth and leadership skills while establishing rules and setting practical limits for young people.
- Committed/skilled adults who can continue to set clear, high and yet attainable expectations over an extended period of time.

Career Pathways

- Initiatives that incorporate basic and high-level skills that align with the skill needs of industries in the local economy and prepare youth to be successful in secondary or postsecondary education options, including apprenticeships as appropriate.
- Services that emphasize experiential learning and work-based learning as a tool in creating an effective learning environment for youth.
- Counseling to support youth in achieving the individual's education and career goals.
- Services that result in the acquisition of industry sought and recognized credentials.
- Access to academic program that are grounded in standards, clear performance expectations, and graduation exit options based on meaningful, accurate and relevant indicators of student learning and skills.

A Combination of Guidance and Connections to the Workplace

- Use of readily accessible and understood Labor Market Information (LMI) to assess employment opportunities in high-growth industries and in-demand occupations.
- Activities that support and demonstrate strong employer engagement, involvement of the business community.
- Initiatives that provide opportunities to learn how to work, stimulate growth as a result of work experience, success or failure and develop a sound perspective on work and learning.
- Activities that can show the correlation between work and learning.
- Support that extends beyond the initial job placement point and interpersonal involvement with adults who can assist youth in reaching for success in employment.

Support and Follow-Up

- Activities that establish trust, particularly for opportunity youth who have weak institutional ties and lack positive adult and peer relationships.
- Activities with strong built-in follow-up mechanisms to design better participant outcomes
- Effective case management skills that provide comprehensive guidance, counseling and referrals to coordinate a progression of services and activities.
- Policies that stress the quality of individual initiatives and the richness of the youth support network.
- Activities that involve parents, families and other caring adults who are involved in the young person's life and can support their ability to achieve independence and self-sufficiency.

Youth as a Resource

- Initiatives that build skills in self-advocacy and conflict resolution and recognize young people are an important resource in improving their own lives.
- Activities that empower youth to contribute to their community's growth.
- Activities that promote youth leadership and peer support.

Implementation Quality

- Activities with well thought out implementation designs that are followed and tracked through a continuous improvement process.
- Initiatives requiring flexibility to both regional needs and proven methodologies.
- Initiatives that incorporate evaluation components including customer satisfaction.

(c)(2) Describe how the State will use funds to carry out Youth Program elements described in WIOA Section 129(c)(2).

Minnesota supports partnerships that help young people – the future workforce – attain the skills, knowledge and aptitudes to become productive workers in the 21st century economy. Minnesota is committed to providing the highest quality programming for youth. Program quality increases participant satisfaction and retention of youth which increases the positive impact that youth workforce programs have on our young people, their families and communities. Investments in quality youth programs reduce future costs of out-of-home placements, public assistance and the juvenile justice system. Minnesota's vision for providing quality services to youth includes:

- Coordinate resources at the state and local level;
- Connect youth with quality educational, experiential learning and work-based learning opportunities;
- Introduce youth to career pathways and in-demand jobs important to regional economies;
- Performance accountability; and
- Improving services to the neediest youth.

Minnesota's commitment to improving services to at-risk youth is reflected in its Shared Vision for Youth (SVY) vision statement: "By age 25, Minnesota's young people will be ready for the responsibilities and rewards of economic self-sufficiency, health, family and social relationships, community involvement, stable housing and lifelong learning." This vision is supported by an interagency workgroup whose mission is: "State agencies will collaborate to assure that Minnesota's neediest youth acquire the talents, skills, and knowledge necessary to ensure their healthy transition to successful adult roles and responsibilities." Minnesota supports partnerships at the state and local levels so that a variety of funding sources can be leveraged to address the needs of opportunity youth (e.g., youth who are disconnected from both schools and jobs). DEED posted a Shared Vision for Youth web page to provide the contact information for the state-level interagency workgroup and to provide information on ongoing interagency projects which further the goals of serving opportunity youth and achieving successful, shared outcomes (see [Minnesota Shared Vision for Youth](#)). The web page features samples of interagency projects underway at the Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) level to improve transition outcomes for all at-risk youth with a particular emphasis on: dropouts and potential dropouts; youth aging out of foster care; youth with disabilities; and homeless youth and runaways.

Through the leadership of the Local Workforce Development Boards and Youth Committees, Minnesota's WIOA Young Adult Program provides comprehensive services to youth who are experiencing an opportunity gap. Minnesota's youth unemployment rate was 13 percent for all youth in 2015, and double that for youth of color, youth with disabilities and economically disadvantaged youth.

Minnesota's Local Workforce Development Areas provide high quality services for youth and young adults beginning with career exploration and guidance, support for educational attainment, opportunities for skills training in in-demand industries and occupations, and a job along a career pathway or enrollment in post-secondary education.

The WIOA Young Adult Program serves at-risk youth, ages 16-24, who are not attending any school, and in-school youth, ages 14-21, who are low-income and at-risk. WIOA improves job and career options for youth through an integrated, job-driven workforce system that supports the development of strong regional economies. WIOA Youth program elements include: dropout recovery and prevention; paid and unpaid work experience; tutoring; occupational skills training; leadership development, mentoring; comprehensive guidance and counseling; financial literacy education; entrepreneurial skills training; tutoring; study skills training; entrepreneurial skills training; labor market information on in-demand industry sectors/occupations; alternative secondary school services; education offered with workforce preparation activities and training; support services and follow up.

The State is pursuing a waiver to support co-enrollment of WIOA youth participants in other federally funded youth programs to increase the quality and flexibility of services to in-school and out-of-school youth (see Section XX). Given that WIOA broadens the required program elements and focuses on a more difficult to serve population, local workforce development boards (LWDBs) will partner with:

1. Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services to assist In-School Youth with disabilities. Three pilot sites will be established in Rural Minnesota CEP, Anoka County and Southwest Minnesota in April of 2016 (will expand to other Local Workforce Development Areas at later date). The pilot sites will provide direct services in the form of work experience, introduction to career pathways and support services to VRS-eligible youth ages 14-21, who are attending secondary school (including alternative schools). The pilot sites will demonstrate effective intra-agency collaboration and local partnerships, best practices and co-enrollment strategies that can be shared across states and local youth workforce system providers and youth-serving agencies.
2. Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide youth employment services to Teen Parents, 16 through 24 years of age, who are receiving Minnesota Family Investment (MFIP) benefits; and Youth ages 14 through 18, who are on the grant in the MFIP household. Thirteen Local Workforce Development Areas will participate projects that focus on work readiness, work experience, introduction to career pathways and preparation of youth for long-term employment.

The WIOA Young Adult Program is designed to support the shift under Title I of WIOA to expend at least 75 percent of funds on Out-of-School Youth. The cost per participant under WIOA will increase as many Out-of-School Youth require more intensive and costly services. Consequently, fewer participants will be served under the WIOA Young Adult Program due to the more intensive and costly services for the increased emphasis on the Out-of-School Youth population.

(c)(3) Provide the language contained in the State policy for "requires additional assistance to complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment" criterion specified in WIOA Sections 129(a)(1)(B)(iii)(VIII) and 129(a)(1)(C)(iv)(VII).

Local workforce development boards must define in their Local Youth Plan their definition of "an individual who requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure

or hold employment." This definition must be reasonable, quantifiable, and based on evidence that the specific characteristic of the youth identified objectively requires additional assistance. Examples may include, but are not limited to: Migrant youth, incarcerated parent, behavior problems at school, family literacy problems, domestic violence, substance abuse, chronic health conditions, one or more grade levels below appropriate age, immigrant/refugee.

(c)(4) Provide the States' definition of "alternative education."

Per Minnesota statute, 123A.05, a school district may establish an area learning center, an alternative program, or a contract alternative program. In order for the State to approve such an alternative set of services (Minnesota statute 123A.06), the program "must focus on academic and learning skills, applied learning opportunities, trade and vocational skills, work-based learning opportunities, work experience, youth service to the community, transition services, and English language and literacy programs for children whose primary language is a language other than English."

Minnesota statute 123A.06 also provides that applied learning, work based learning, and service learning be developed in collaboration with a local education and transitions partnership, culturally based organizations, mutual assistance associations, or other community resources. This alternative educational program may provide educational services to students who are within the compulsory attendance age (in Minnesota, age 17) and who are involved in severe or repeated disciplinary action.

Per Minnesota statute 123A.06, a state approved alternative program must provide programs for secondary school pupils. Area Learning Centers provide programs and services for elementary pupils to assist them in being successful in school. An individualized education program may identify a state approved alternative program as an appropriate place to the extent such a program can provide the student with the appropriate special education services described in the plan. Pupils eligible to be served under alternative education include (Minnesota statute 124D.68):

- Individuals who are performing substantially below the performance level for pupils of the same age in a locally determined achievement test;
- Individuals who are behind in satisfactorily completing coursework or obtaining credits for graduation;
- Individuals who are pregnant or are parents;
- Individuals who are chemically dependent;
- Individuals who have been excluded or expelled;
- Individuals who are victims of physical or sexual abuse;
- Individuals who have experienced mental health problems;
- Individuals who have experienced homelessness sometime within six months before requesting a transfer to an eligible alternative program;
- Individuals who speak English as a second language or are English language learners;
- Individuals who have withdrawn from school or have been chronically truant;
- Individuals who are being treated in a hospital in the seven county Metropolitan area for cancer or other life threatening illness or are siblings of eligible pupils who are being currently treated, and reside with the pupils' families at least 60 miles beyond the outside boundary of the Metropolitan area; and
- Individuals eligible to receive special education services.

(c)(5) Include the State definition, as defined in State law, for not attending school and attending school as specified in WIOA Section 129(a)(1)(B)(i) and Section 129(a)(1)(C)(I).

In Minnesota, school is defined as a "public school, or nonpublic school, church or religious organization, or home school in which a child is provided instruction in compliance with Minnesota statute 120A.22, subdivision 4 and Section 120A.24." The compulsory age of school attendance is 17 (Minnesota statute 120A.22.subdivision 5).

In Minnesota, the following are included in the definition of dropout/not attending any school: 1) students with 15 consecutive days of unexcused absences (excluding school breaks and official days off of school); 2) students who are "voluntary" withdrawals from school (as described in Minnesota statute 120A.22); 3) expelled students (as described in Minnesota statute 121.A.45).

(c)(6) If utilizing the portion of the basic skills deficient definition contained in WIOA Section 3(5)(B), include the specific State definition.

The term "basic skills deficient" means, with respect to an individual:

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

SINGLE STATE REQUIREMENTS

N/A

WAIVER REQUESTS

Indicators of PY16 performance for youth who are 1) co-enrolled in WIOA youth program and TANF summer innovation project; and for 2) youth co-enrolled in WIOA youth program and the pre-employment transition services (PETS) pilot project

Date: January 2016
State: Minnesota
Agency: DEED (DEED)
Title of Project: TANF Summer Innovation Project/Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) Pilot Project

(Please note: This TANF waiver request was previously granted to Minnesota for PY15 and has been continually granted since 2009 under the WIA program. The request to co-enroll youth in WIOA and PETS is new).

Summary of Waiver Request: 1) As part of a joint Minnesota DEED (DEED) and Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) 2015-2017 TANF Innovation Project, the State is requesting the following waiver through December 31, 2016, for project enrolled individuals:

- Waive the PY16 WIOA Youth performance measures for youth who are co-enrolled in WIOA Youth Activities and the 2016 TANF Summer Innovation Project;

- Use the Work Readiness Indicator as the only indicator of performance for the co-enrolled summer program participants;

2) As part of a joint DEED Office of Youth Development and DEED Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) partnership, DEED has developed a project involving youth co-enrolled in the WIOA Youth Program and VRS services. For the Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) pilot program, the State is requesting the following waiver through December 31, 2016, for such youth:

- Waive the statutory PY16 WIOA Youth performance measures for such co-enrolled youth;
- Use the Work Readiness Indicator as the only indicator of performance for such co-enrolled youth.

Background Behind the Waiver Request: 1) DEED and DHS are operating a \$900,000 TANF Innovation Project (\$300,000 per year) to address the workforce preparation needs of two targeted youth groups:

- Teen parents, 16 through 24 years of age, who are receiving Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) benefits (MFIP is the TANF program in Minnesota);
- Younger youth, 14 through 18 years of age, who are on the grant in MFIP households

The TANF Summer Innovation Project is designed to improve the 2015-2017 work participation rates for the teen parent target group as well as the employment outcomes for both target groups.

The State is requesting the waiver (through December 2016) to allow flexibility in youth program design for youth co-enrolled in the TANF Summer Innovation Project and the WIOA Youth Program. Specifically, this waiver will allow the State to design a project that focuses on work readiness, work experience, introductory career pathways and preparation of youth for long-term employment opportunities. This emphasis will allow Minnesota to design a program that meets a set of performance measures that truly align with the purpose of the TANF Summer Youth Innovation Project.

2) DEED is asking for a NEW waiver for youth co-enrolled in the WIOA Youth Program and VRS under the Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) pilot program. The co-enrollment is designed to better serve In-School Youth (ISY) with disabilities who need pre-employment transition services. This effort is in accordance with WIOA mandate encouraging pro-active engagement between the youth workforce development system and Vocational Rehabilitation. The joint service will enable local workforce boards to better coordinate with Vocational Rehabilitation agencies and to strengthen services provided to ISY with disabilities. PETS eligible youth must meet all of the following criteria to be served:

- Age 14 – 21;
- Attending secondary school (including alternative schools);
- Eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Services; and
- Referred by the Vocational Rehabilitation Services counselor.

Statutory and/or regulatory requirements to be waived: Minnesota is requesting WIOA 116(b)(2)(A)(ii) be waived to dismiss from consideration the WIOA statutory performance measures and use the work readiness portion of the skill attainment rate as the only indicator of performance for 1) youth co-enrolled for summer 2016 and summer or 2017, in the WIOA Youth Program and the 2016-17 TANF Summer Innovation Project and 2) youth co-enrolled in the WIOA Youth Program and the PETS pilot project.

It should be noted that the participant work readiness portion in this summer program is completed by worksite employers on pre- and post- program basis and thus supports the mission and goals of these projects.

Actions undertaken to remove state or local barriers: We are unaware of any state or local barriers to implementing the requested waiver.

Goals and expected programmatic outcomes of the waiver: The goals of this waiver are:

- *TANF Innovation Project:* To support Minnesota's efforts to improve services to the neediest youth as stated in past state unified plans, and evidenced by our state's longstanding participation in the Shared Youth Vision initiative and now the successor collaboration, the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs; and
- *PETS Project:* To support Minnesota's efforts to improve services to students with disabilities as evidenced by the state's past actions in both the regular WIA/WIOA youth program (service levels far above the national average) and in the recently concluded youth oriented federally funded Disability Employment Initiative grant.

TANF Innovation Project: In addition, this waiver will allow us to further the goal of TANF-WIOA cooperation and collaboration as clearly indicated in the recent federal policy issuance from HHS of TANF-ACF-IM-2012-01, March 22, 2012 (Use of TANF funds to support summer jobs for youth):

Subsidized employment can provide valuable skills and work experience for young people, and serves as a stepping stone on the path to unsubsidized employment. By allocating TANF resources to summer youth employment programs, TANF jurisdictions have the potential to bring additional subsidized job opportunities to low-income youth across the nation.

As we look forward to next summer, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) reminds TANF jurisdictions of the opportunity to use Federal TANF and State maintenance of effort (MOE) funds for the creation and expansion of subsidized summer employment programs for low-income youth. We encourage State and local TANF agencies to work with State and local workforce development boards to explore ways to combine resources in developing or expanding subsidized employment programs. Where appropriate, programs may co-enroll youth in the TANF and applicable Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs so that participants in TANF-funded subsidized employment opportunities can benefit from additional WIOA services such as supportive services, occupational skills training, and other relevant services.

Moreover, Minnesota's 2015-2017 TANF Summer Innovation Project is an effort to improve MFIP outcomes, particularly the Work Participation Rate (WPR), for the targeted teen parent group through participation in a structured summer youth employment program. For the younger group, the Project will greatly enhance employability and, in the future, help participants secure unsubsidized employment.

Flexibility in program performance standards will allow a simplified and streamlined delivery of services that will allow local areas to serve a greater number of youth during the summer months of co-enrollment participation. Co-enrolled youth participating in the TANF Summer Innovation Project will have more time to focus on career planning, to have an introduction to career planning, to identify

employment goals, and to participate in additional workforce development activities that better prepare them for securing long-term future employment.

The waiver will allow Minnesota's local workforce development areas/local workforce development boards (LWDAs/LWDBs) to leverage TANF funds through DHS to pay summer participant wages, fringe and direct service costs for teen parents who are unlikely to be otherwise employed during the summer months just as the above cited HHS issuance recommends.

Youth participants in the TANF Innovation Project will gain work experience at a wage of at least \$9.00 per hour (Minnesota's new minimum wage effective August 1, 2015. Minnesota's minimum wage will go up to \$9.50 effective August 1, 2016 and youth wages will go up accordingly) for up to 30 hours per week for up to 12 weeks during the summer. Older youth may work additional weeks or hours. The wages, fringe and direct service costs will be funded from TANF funds. WIOA funds would be used to pay for other allowable services that cannot be funded with TANF funds.

WIOA Youth funds will be used for these co-enrolled individuals to provide additional support "connective" services such as:

- Child Care
- Transportation (gas cards, bus tokens, etc.)
- Work clothing
- Counseling

As appropriate, WIOA Youth funds will also be used to continue to support the wages of co-enrolled individuals in the worksites to which they have been assigned.

The youth who are served through the TANF Innovation Project will be working with the MFIP Employment Service providers prior to their enrollment in the program. Upon enrollment, the youth will also be working with WIOA youth staff to work out continued service plans. Following completion of the summer program, most of these youth will be engaged in education and services provided primarily through MFIP to continue to build academic skills, employability skills and positive work habits and attitudes. For those individuals who continue to be enrolled in the joint funding program, there will be plans co-funded to provide additional education and training opportunities. Individuals leaving MFIP and still requiring additional training will be supported by the WIOA Youth Program. As appropriate, individuals will be transitioned to the WIOA Adult program.

Last year, this waiver allowed the project to serve xxx individuals of whom xx percent were from communities of color and xx percent were youth with a disability.

PETS Project: Minnesota's initiation of the PETS project is a continuation of the state's effort to improve coordinated services to youth with disabilities, especially youth who are transitioning from secondary school to postsecondary education and employment. The state recognizes that such services are best delivered through complementary services delivered by both the Vocational Rehabilitation agencies and employment and training local boards. It is expected that the PETS project will:

- Allow local employment and training boards to deliver effective pre-employment transition services including job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary education programs, workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living, and instruction in self-

advocacy. These are services that the employment and training community are well skilled to deliver.

- Further enhance cooperation between the employment and training community and Vocational Rehabilitation agencies/programs.

Youth participants in the PETS Project who will be enrolled in work experience will be paid, through Vocational Rehabilitation funds, at a wage of at least \$9.00 per hour (Minnesota's new minimum wage effective August 1, 2015. Minnesota's minimum wage will go up to \$9.50 effective August 1, 2016 and youth wages will go up accordingly).

Relationship of Waiver to WIOA Goals and U.S. DOL Priorities: Minnesota recognizes that the WIOA program represents a "significant opportunity for the transformation of the public workforce system, in part due to the unprecedented level of flexibility that the legislation provides State and local stakeholders." (TEGL 1-15, July 1, 2015) Minnesota also understands that WIOA encourages states to develop appropriate linkages among service organizations enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of each component of the employment and training system. Organizations are asked to perform in the areas they do best and form partnerships to better serve participants.

Appropriate performance standards have the effect of augmenting these relationships. This waiver of statutory performance standards is in accordance with this goal as DEED and DHS link programs enhancing the services given to the target populations. DEED and DHS are doing what they do best increasing the chances that project participants will ultimately become economically and socially self-sufficient.

This waiver pays particular attention to U.S. DOL priorities (as cited in proposed regulations 20 CFR 679.620) as follows

- Supporting employer engagement: This waiver will allow Minnesota to have greater opportunities to place youth participants with employers. Employers will learn more about the employment potential of youth and thus enhancing employer participation in present and future youth employment and training programs.
- Supporting work-based learning: This waiver will allow Minnesota to have more flexibility in giving youth the opportunity to participate in experiential learning. Youth will understand the relevance of their education in the workplace as they engage in "real" work.
- Improving job and career results: This waiver will allow youth participants to experience what it means to be in the workplace including learning the "soft skills" necessary to succeed. This acquisition will increase the future employability of these youth.

For the PETS project, this waiver is in accordance with TEGL 8-15 (November 17, 2015) which states: WIOA emphasizes and increases the requirements for the workforce system to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities, including students and youth with disabilities. WIOA places significant emphasis on serving youth and youth with disabilities by increasing work opportunities to improve workplace skills, including internships and apprenticeships...WIOA encourages pro-active engagement between the workforce development system and VR agencies around the strategic planning process, including the strategic vision and goals for preparing and educating all individuals served by the workforce system and for meeting the needs of employers. Examples of coordination opportunities include; Pre-Employment Transition Services. WIOA requires VR agencies and state and local educational agencies (LEAs) to coordinate and ensure the provision of pre-employment transition services for students with

disabilities. Local workforce development boards should coordinate with VR agencies and educational agencies in serving in-school youth with disabilities and complement services provided by those agencies with WIOA services that VR agencies and LEAs are not able to provide.

Individuals Impacted by the Waiver: Youth targeted to be served by the 2015-2017 Summer TANF Innovation Project include:

- Teen parents, 16 through 24 years of age who are receiving Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) benefits (MFIP is the TANF program in Minnesota);
- Younger youth, 14 through 18 years of age, who are on the grant in MFIP households

Youth targeted to be served by the PETS Project include students with disabilities who are in need of pre-employment transition services.

We estimate the following participation numbers:

- Total number of youth to be served through the 2015-2017 project: x each year
- Number of youth to be co-enrolled in the WIOA Youth program and in the 2015-2017 summer project: xx each year
- Percentage of TANF summer youth who will be co-enrolled in WIOA but WILL NOT participate in WIOA beyond each summer x percent
- Total number of youth to be served through the PETS program: xx

Process for monitoring progress in implementation: DEED has entered into an Interagency Agreement with DHS to access TANF funds for the 2015-2017 Summer Project. Prompt implementation is critical to the success of this youth employment project.

Upon approval by U.S. DOL, the waiver will be incorporated into state planning guideline distributed to all participating LWDA/LWDBs and posted to the DEED website. Technical assistance will be provided to all LWDBs by DEED and DHS as appropriate to ensure swift, successful implementation of the Project.

State staff will review the implementation of this waiver during the annual on-site review of WIOA Youth Programs. Monitoring would ensure correct documentation of the youth participants who are co-enrolled in TANF and WIOA funding which will be tracked and reflected in the Individual Service Strategy and Youth Employment Plan. Information related to the implementation of this waiver will be collected in the data collected from service providers on a regular basis.

DEED's Vocational Rehabilitation program will work with DEED's Workforce Development Division to monitor the implementation of the PETS program as well as monitoring the implementation of this waiver.

Notice to affected local boards: Local boards and staffs have been notified of the waiver request and are being given a direct opportunity to comment on this specific waiver. Copies of any comments received will be forwarded to the U.S. DOL/ETA national office and Chicago regional office.

Public comment: DEED intends to place this waiver request on its website for an appropriate public comment period and will send a notice on the waiver to interested individuals on DEED's mailing list.

Copies of any comments received will be forwarded to the U.S. DOL/ETA national office and Chicago regional office.

ASSURANCES

The State Department of Employment & Economic Development provides the following assurances related to Title I-B of WIOA:

1. The State has implemented a policy to ensure Adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of career and training services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients or basic skills deficient;
2. The State has implemented a policy to ensure local areas have a process in place for referring veterans with significant barriers to employment to career services provided by the JVSG program's Disabled Veteran's Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist;
3. The State established a written policy and procedure that set forth criteria to be used by chief elected officials for the appointment of local workforce development board members
4. The State established written policy and procedures to ensure local workforce development boards are certified by the governor every two years in accordance with WIOA Section 107(c)(2);
5. Where an alternative entity takes the place of the State Board, the State has written policy and procedures to ensure the alternative entity meets the definition under WIOA Section 101(e) and the legal requirements for membership;
6. The State established a written policy for how the individuals and entities represented on the State Workforce Development Board help to determine the methods and factors of distribution, and how the State consults with chief elected officials in local areas throughout the State in determining the distributions;
7. The State will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA Section 181(b)(7);
8. The State distributes adult and youth funds received under WIOA equitably throughout the State, and no local area suffers significant shifts in funding from year-to-year during the period covered by this plan;
9. If a State Workforce Development Board, department or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities, that board, department or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I;
10. Priority of Service for covered persons is provided for each of the Title I programs; and
11. The State agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report;
12. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance under WIOA Section 184(a)(3).

WAGNER-PEYSER ACT PROGRAM

EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PROFESSIONAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT

(a)(1) Describe how the State will utilize professional development activities for Employment Service staff to ensure staff is able to provide high quality services to both jobseekers and employers.

The state will use several professional development activities for Job Service staff:

- All staff who serve job seekers in the resource areas and/or reception desks are required to complete the [Reception and Resource Area Certification Program](#).
- Business Services Representatives are required to obtain the Workforce Development Specialist certification from a customized training program developed by the University of Minnesota.
- Classroom presentation skills training based on the state's [Creative Job Search](#) workshop will continue to be offered to all employees who facilitate workshops.
- All Job Service employees have access to the Skill-soft online training platform. Training specific to each employee is documented in the employee's Individual Development Plan.
- Ongoing training in the areas of dealing with diverse populations, accessibility, safety, and financial literacy will continue to be offered to all employees.
- Training will continue to be provided in specific program areas such as Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers and Trade Adjustment Assistance.
- Staff will continue to be encouraged to attend the state's annual Job Counselor training event, which includes keynote speakers and breakout sessions on multiple topics related to their work with job seekers and businesses.

The goal of these training activities is to ensure that staff are able to effectively assist job seekers with improving their job search skills, obtaining the best job possible, and progressing in a career pathway. These training activities will also provide employers with access to qualified candidates and strengthen their business. The delivery methods of these trainings will include on-the-job training, conference calls, and web based technology such as Skype and WebEx.

(a)(2) Describe strategies developed to support training and awareness across core programs and the Unemployment Insurance program and the training provided for Employment Services and WIOA staff on identification of Unemployment Insurance (UI) eligibility issues.

The state's [Reception and Resource Area Certification Program](#) is available for all state and local partners in the WorkForce Centers and includes basic training on core programs as well as the Unemployment Insurance program. Modules that are included in this training program are:

- Unemployment Insurance basics, how to file a claim and claim benefits
- Assessing and referring the UI customer
- WIOA and State programs and services offered through the WorkForce Center system
- Career Planning Process
- Job Searching Process
- The state's Customer Registration System that enrolls job seekers for all WorkForce Center services as well as the Wagner-Peyser program
- Adaptive Technology
- [MinnesotaWorks](#) (i.e. the state's online labor exchange system)
- Equal Opportunity
- WIOA complaint process
- Data Privacy
- Customer Service
- Population Awareness
- Business Services

- "Language Line" translation services

(b) Explain how the State will provide information and meaningful assistance to individuals requesting assistance in filing a claim for unemployment compensation through one-stop centers, as required by WIOA as a career service.

Most aspects of Minnesota's Unemployment Insurance program are operated centrally by DEED through an online portal and a call center. Although only about two percent of all UI customers access services through the one-stops, customers who request assistance in a WorkForce Center are offered one or more of the following:

- Free computers to access the online UI portal to file a claim, file an appeal, and/or claim benefits. The UI portal is bookmarked on every WFC resource area computer.
- Phones for calling the UI call center.
- Printed materials containing detailed information about UI benefit eligibility and the process for filing claims, appeals, and collecting benefits.
- Staff assistance on the computers when needed.

As mentioned in the "training" Sections of this plan, the state's [Reception and Resource Area Certification Program](#) contains modules on UI including:

- Introduction to UI
- Assessing and Referring UI Customers
- UI Basic Information and Researching UI
- Data Security and Passwords
- UI Website and Online Application Process Overview

Handouts for staff that are part of this training include:

- Answering UI Questions: Phone Tree English
- Answering UI Questions: Phone Tree Hmong
- Answering UI Questions: Phone Tree Somali
- Answering UI Questions: Phone Tree Spanish
- How to Apply for UI Benefits
- Language Line Quick Reference Guide

(c) Describe the State's strategy for providing reemployment assistance to UI claimants and other unemployed individuals.

A strategy and implementation plan for providing reemployment assistance to UI claimants is currently being revised by a work group consisting of Job Service and UI managers. The plan will be implemented in July 2016. Minnesota's strategy in this area will be as follows:

- A Job Service staff person will attend every Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) session that UI offers across the state. The UI program plans on offering RESEA sessions to approximately 40,000 applicants per year to those who are at risk of exhausting their benefits.
- The RESEA and Job Service staff will conduct a quick assessment of every RESEA participant to determine who will most likely need additional services from the WorkForce Center.
- The Job Service staff person will conduct an orientation to WFC services either 1:1 or in a group setting (depending on the size of the group) that includes information on how to register for the

state's labor exchange system, i.e. [MinnesotaWorks](#), and information about programs such as the Dislocated Worker program that they may be eligible for.

- The Job Service staff person will assist the RESEA customer with creating an initial registration and enrolling in the [Creative Job Search](#) workshop. Creative Job Search is typically the first job finding/job placement service that is offered to UI applicants. The workshop consists of training on how to find a job that includes career planning, preparing for the job hunt, skills identification, resumes and cover letters, applications and references, social media, interviewing skills, and more.
- Job Service will follow up with RESEA participants who are not enrolled in a program to ensure that they have a complete registration and resume in MinnesotaWorks, and that they are taking advantage of job placement services.

(d) Describe how the State will use Wagner-Peyser funds to support UI claimants, and the communication between Wagner-Peyser and Unemployment Insurance, as appropriate including the following:

(d)(1) Coordination of and provision of labor exchange services for UI claimants as required by the Wagner-Peyser Act;

The UI program requires all RESEA program participants to register with the state's labor exchange system, [MinnesotaWorks](#), and create a resume. Once registered, job seekers have access to all of the online features such as searching for jobs and making their resume viewable by employers registered in the system. As described in the previous Section, RESEA participants also receive information on Wagner-Peyser services, information and referrals to eligibility-based programs (such as WIOA Dislocated Worker), orientations to WFC services, and workshop enrollments.

Job seekers can conduct self-service activities in the resource areas and can also receive staff-assisted services such as job search workshops, assistance with [MinnesotaWorks](#), resume writing assistance, labor market information, referral to veteran services, and referral to education, training, and supportive services.

(d)(2) Registration of UI claimants with the State's employment service if required by State law;

State law does not require UI claimants to register with [MinnesotaWorks](#), however UI requires registration for RESEA program participants. As described earlier, Wagner-Peyser staff attend every RESEA workshop and provide follow up services with the intent of having every participant create a viewable resume in [MinnesotaWorks](#).

(d)(3) Administration of the work test for the State unemployment compensation system, including making eligibility assessments (for referral to UI adjudication, if needed), and providing job finding and placement services for UI claimants;

Wagner-Peyser staff in Minnesota are not involved in administration of the work test or making eligibility assessments. The UI program administers the work test and does all eligibility assessments. Please refer to previous Sections for the description on how job finding and placement services are provided to UI applicants.

(d)(4) Provision of referrals to and application assistance for training and education programs and resources.

REA program participants who attend the mandatory workshops are provided about the availability of training and education programs. This includes an explanation of how the UI claimant, if eligible, can

collect benefits and receive training. Customers who would like further information about training are assisted either by Job Service staff to gain more information and application assistance, or by program staff if the customer is eligible for a WIOA or state funded program.

AGRICULTURAL OUTREACH PLAN (AOP)

(e) Each State agency must develop an AOP every four years as part of the Combined State Plan required under Sections 102 or 103 of WIOA. The AOP must include: (1) Assessment of Need; (2) Outreach Activities; (3) State Strategy; (4) Services provided to farmworkers and agricultural employers through the one-stop delivery system; and (5) Other Requirements

MINNESOTA AGRICULTURAL SERVICES

MINNESOTA LABOR INTENSIVE AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY IN CROPS

Crop	Area	Dates
Vegetables	South/Southeastern	May-September
Sugar beets	Northwestern/Southwestern	June-August
Potatoes	Statewide	September-November
Corn	Central and Southern	July-September
Soybeans	Central and Southern	June-July

Migrant labor participation was concentrated in the months specified, based on the growing or harvesting of the particular crops. The use of mechanization and Roundup Ready chemicals in the state has reduced the number of farm workers needed per acre in fieldwork. Many migrant farm workers have continued to take advantage of other longer-term employment opportunities in vegetable, meat and poultry processing companies. In addition, local worker shortages have also contributed to the increasing interest of employers hiring migrant farm workers in dairy farms, nurseries, landscaping and sod farms. Since some workers return to areas where they have established relationships, they do not seek the services of the WorkForce Centers. Therefore, it is difficult to provide an actual number of migrant farm workers in this state. The best guess would be an estimate of 10,000 migrant farm workers residing in Minnesota during the peak season.

The total number of registered Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers in the last full program year, PY14, was 2,435. This number is a significant increase due to best practices used by the Migrant Labor outreach workers and the addition of a Migrant Labor Representative (MLR) outreach worker at the Rochester WorkForce Center the MSFW information was captured in the Workforce One data system. Our commitment to improve these numbers have included intensive training for the program staff as to the eligibility definitions and criteria of the program. The reestablishment of employer cooperation and collaboration. In the past, Minnesota has placed in the top 12 of the 20 states with the highest impact of registered MSFWs. There are four WorkForce Centers with significant MSFW activity in Minnesota. These WorkForce Centers each staff a bilingual Spanish/English MLR, all of whom are bilingual/bicultural and also have farmworker backgrounds. Three of these MLRs are not full-time outreach positions. The MLR staff, while performing outreach, make contacts, assist MSFWs with registrations, job referrals and inform workers of employment services as well as other resources available from all partners in the WorkForce Centers. They distribute bilingual materials that describe these services and also provide the names and addresses of contact persons. The information is important and sometimes crucial to MSFWs, whether they are seeking agricultural or non-agricultural employment. This is consistent with our commitment to universal access to labor exchange services and the requirement to ensure that all

job seekers with LEP and/or little or no knowledge in using computer-based labor exchange services will be provided with services.

Other partner agencies are advised they may want to review their written correspondence to ensure they are meeting the needs of LEP customers. For example, English language forms or general business letters are sent to LEP customers explaining the appeals process and numerous processes within the agency. LEP customers often lose their benefits because they do not understand nor respond to the information they receive. They may be unfamiliar with timeframes for filing, the appeals process or deadlines for applications. Many times these customer will have to reapply for a benefit or start over with the process, which can cost time and decrease the amount of benefits. Therefore, it is imperative that LEP customers be identified in the registration process and correspondence written in their language whenever possible.

The MLRs will contact farm workers at their work sites, living areas and gathering places. The MLRs collaborate with social service agencies, migrant education centers, health service centers, community agencies, migrant Head Start, migrant legal services and other migrant service providers to enable them to provide outreach and locate farm workers that are missed through WorkForce Center outreach efforts. The cooperative arrangements with these agencies are based on long-standing verbal agreements. Minnesota has a Memorandum of Understanding with Motivation, Education and Training, Inc. (MET) the NFJP grantee. The working relationships among agencies have been excellent.

The MLRs are expected to contact a minimum of five farm workers per day on their outreach days. At the rate of 121 outreach days from four offices, the number of contacts in PY14 was 2,216. The expected new for PY15 will be 3,500. Much of the outreach activity is concentrated in the summer and early fall months, when MSFW activity is at its peak.

The MLRs participated in the annual Pre-Season Training in May 2015. The emphasis of the training included outreach efforts, coordination with other agencies, the Complaint Process and protections afforded to MSFWs by state and federal laws. The training is planned and facilitated by the state monitor advocate. The second part of the training included an orientation on the WF1 system components and the integration of the MSFW Program within WF1. MET staff was also invited and participated in this training. The MET staff will work in partnership with the MLR staff to deliver services to MSFWs.

The significant local offices also develop a yearly outreach plan which, in part, describes the coordination and referral system with other local community MSFW service providers and partners. This includes conducting employer visits and making contacts for job development and assessment of the needs of both MSFWs and employers. These plans will be monitored by the state Monitor Advocate as part of the review process to ensure that MSFWs have full access to all WorkForce Center services.

Outreach staff also contact agricultural employers, providing them with information about the services of partners in the WorkForce Centers and the availability of farm workers and the special services provided to them. We have updated our informational pamphlets directed to agricultural and non-agricultural employers.

There were 2,880 agricultural job openings received in PY14. There were no interstate clearance orders received. The WF1 system is not set up to or able to accept out of state job orders. Information available on computerized job systems appears to be making clearance orders obsolete. Employers in search of

workers contact the local offices and job orders are received and entered in MinnesotaWorks.net, our online state labor exchange system. Local staff provide service to employers by searching for candidates who match the employers' job categories and other requirements of the positions. This routine screening procedure can alert staff to opportunities that meet the preferences of many migrant workers. In addition, the outreach staff is acquainted with employers in their prospective areas who repeatedly hire MSFWs. Domestic referrals are made to H2-A employers.

Migrant labor representatives make contact with as many agricultural employers as possible to provide them information on:

- Listing their agricultural job orders with WorkForce Centers
- Interstate and intrastate clearance orders
- Federal and state compliance regulations
- The availability of presentations by compliance agencies to growers associations, and
- other affected groups and organizations
- Field and quality assessments
- Mediation/interpreter services
- Liaison between migrant service providers and employer

The State Monitor Advocate (SMA) visits communities with substantial MSFW activity to meet with employers, review their needs and determine the effectiveness of the WorkForce Center services provided. This opportunity is taken to provide information to employers, discussing such issues as how to meet the housing needs of farm workers.

An additional tool for promoting labor exchange services is the mn.gov/deed website which contains information of particular importance to agricultural employers.

Minnesota met 5 of 5 Equity Ratio Indicators in fourth quarter of PY14, including:

1. Referred to Employment
2. Received Staff Assisted Services
3. Referred to Support Services
4. Career Guidance,
5. Job Development Contacts

Minnesota met 4 of the 7 (Minimum Service Level) equity indicators in the fourth quarter of PY10, including:

1. Reviews of significant offices
2. Field checks conducted
3. Timely processing of ES complaints
4. Outreach contacts per staff day

Minnesota is on track to meet the same numerical goals for PY14 and will achieve additional Minimum Service Level equity indicators for PY15. Additional emphasis will be placed on outreach contacts. Outreach was performed throughout the peak MSFW farm worker season. The MLRs commendable commitment to outreach has succeeded in increasing the number to 18 contacts per outreach day in PY14.

There were no clearance orders or required field checks in PY14. Although, with an increasing number of H2-A employers and domestic referrals, field checks will be conducted in the coming season. All of the significant offices will be reviewed again this program year.

Minnesota WorkForce Centers will offer the same full range of programs and services to farm workers that are provided to non-farm workers. Services will be actively promoted to farm workers as described above under the outreach plan.

Our demand driven philosophy includes the concept that employment services are available to both the employers and job seekers to assist in making the connection of the two parties through a common language and understanding of jobs that are in high demand.

In a primarily agricultural area, agribusiness is a cornerstone of employment. Occupations in this industry include agricultural research, sales and farming.

Minnesota has a full-time MSFW monitor advocate. The State Monitor Advocate and the Migrant Labor Representatives maintain close contact with the following organizations in the interest of providing effective service to their customers:

- Red River Valley Sugar Beet Growers Association
- Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services
- Motivation Education and Training Inc.
- Migrant Health Services, Inc.
- Tri-Valley Opportunity Council

Feedback on the Agricultural Services plan has been solicited from the above organizations. We are awaiting responses for PY15.

The four MLRs are expected to contact a minimum of 5 farmworkers per day on their outreach days. In PY14: The number of 2,216 contacts were conducted in 121 staff days this indicates that there was 18 contacts per staff outreach day. The rate of 203 contacts by cooperating agencies. The number of expected contacts in the new PY15 will be 3,500. Much of the outreach activity is concentrated in the summer and early fall months, when MSFW activity is at its peak. Most of the workers are migrant food processors that are recruited and contracted in Texas by employers. They arrive to work in three 8-14 hour shifts during the season. Minnesota met 5 of 5 Equity Ratio Indicators in fourth quarter of PY14. Minnesota met 4 of the 7 (Minimum Service Level) equity indicators in the fourth quarter of PY14. Outreach was performed during the peak MSFW farm worker season. The MLRS made 18 contacts per outreach day (PY14).

WAGNER-PEYSER ASSURANCES

The State assures the following:

1. The Wagner-Peyser Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time.
2. The State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111 (State agency staffing requirements) if the State has significant MSFW one-stop centers;
3. If a State Workforce Development Board, department or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities, that board, department, or agency

cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and

4. State agency merit-based public employees provide Wagner-Peyser Act-funded labor exchange activities in accordance with Department of Labor regulations.

ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY

The State Plan must include a description of the following as it pertains to Adult Education and Literacy programs under title II, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA).

ALIGNING OF CONTENT STANDARDS

(a) Describe how the eligible agency will, by July 1, 2016, align its content standards for adult education with State-adopted challenging academic content standards, as adopted under Section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(1)).

The content standards for the Minnesota Adult Basic Education (ABE) system are comprised of three components:

1. The federally-developed [College and Career Readiness Standards \(CCRS\) for Adult Education](#), which identify key English Language Arts/Literacy, Math, and Foundational Reading Skills
2. The Minnesota-developed [Academic, Career and Employability Skills \(ACES\) Transitions Integration Framework \(TIF\)](#), which identifies key professional or soft skills in the areas of Effective Communication, Learning Strategies, Critical Thinking, Self-Management, Developing a Future Pathway, Navigating Systems
3. The Minnesota-developed [Northstar Digital Literacy Standards](#), which identify key basic digital literacy skills needed to perform tasks on computers and online.

The CCRS for Adult Education are drawn from the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Minnesota state-adopted K-12 standards for English Language Arts and Literacy align with the CCSS. The current Minnesota state-adopted K-12 standards for Mathematics encompass some content that is beyond the scope of the CCSS, but are largely aligned with the CCSS.

Eligible providers will be required to demonstrate that their curriculum, instruction, and assessment are aligned to these MN ABE content standards and that their staff have been trained on the use of the standards.

In order to ensure that all ABE practitioners are knowledgeable of the above listed standards and understand how to use them effectively to guide instruction and programming, the Minnesota ABE system will provide systematic professional development and other support to eligible providers including:

- face-to-face workshops and online trainings;
- training modules based on the College and Career Readiness Standards-in-Action training tools and processes;
- technical assistance to eligible providers focused on standards implementation;

- support for local Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) focused on standards implementation;
- online standards resource libraries; and
- support for the use of standards-aligned Open Educational Resources (OERs).

LOCAL ACTIVITIES

(b) Describe how the state will, using the considerations specified in Section 231(e) of WIOA, fund each eligible provider to establish or operate programs that provide adult education and literacy activities, including programs that provide such activities concurrently. The Combined State Plan must include at a minimum the scope, content, and organization of local activities.

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) is the State's Eligible Agency for Adult Education and Literacy programs. MDE is responsible for administering funds and providing program/performance oversight to grantees.

Adult Education and Literacy eligible providers approved under Workforce Investment Act of 1998 requirements will continue to receive funding through June 30, 2017, as long as they adhere to state and federal grant expectations, as measured through annual applications, financial reports, and program performance reports.

During grant year 2016–17, the Minnesota Department of Education will implement a new competitive application process for all federal AEFLA funding that will determine what local providers will be grantees starting July 1, 2017. The local AEFLA program grant process will rate responses to the 13 considerations in Title II of WIOA and include additional state ABE priorities and context.

An eligible local provider is an organization that has demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education activities to eligible individuals and may include:

1. A local education agency;
2. Community-based or faith-based organization;
3. Volunteer literacy organization;
4. Institution of higher education;
5. Public or private nonprofit agency;
6. Library;
7. Public housing authority;
8. Nonprofit institution with the ability to provide adult education and literacy services;
9. Consortium or coalition of agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described above; and
10. A partnership between an employer and an entity described above.

The grant competition will be publicized in compliance with federal law, Minnesota statute, and Minnesota Department of Education policy in order to ensure that all eligible providers have direct and equitable access to apply and compete for grants.

The Minnesota Department of Education will dedicate a minimum 82.5 percent of the state allocation of federal AEFLA funding to grants to eligible providers. In addition, up to 12.5 percent of the state allocation to Leadership Activities to provide support for activities such as: professional development;

volunteer recruitment and training; technology; serving students with disabilities; distance learning and digital literacy; program quality support; assessment training; and career pathway and other transitions-related collaborations.

The Minnesota Department of Education will use the considerations specified in Section 231(e) of WIOA and listed below as the criteria for selecting and funding eligible providers. As part of the RFP process, agencies will be required to provide narrative detail describing how they will meet each consideration.

1. Needs Assessment: The degree to which the provider is responsive to (A) regional needs as identified in the local plan under Section 108; and (B) serving individuals in the community who are identified in such plan as most in need of adult education and literacy activities, including individuals who have low levels of literacy skills and who are English language learners.
2. Individuals with Disabilities: The degree to which the provider is able to serve eligible individuals with disabilities, including eligible individuals with learning disabilities.
3. Past Effectiveness: The degree to which the provider demonstrates past effectiveness in improving the literacy of eligible individuals, to meet State-adjusted levels of performance for the primary indicators of performance described in Section 116, especially with respect to eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy.
4. Alignment with One-stop Partners: The degree to which the eligible provider is responsive to, and demonstrates alignment between, proposed activities and services and the strategy and goals of the local plan under Section 108 as well as the activities and services of the one-stop partners.
5. Intensity, Quality, and Instructional Practices: The degree to which the eligible provider's program is of sufficient intensity and quality, and based on the most rigorous research available so that participants achieve substantial learning gains; and uses instructional practices that include the essential components of reading instruction.
6. Research Based Educational Practices: The degree to which the eligible provider's activities including reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, and English language acquisition instruction, are based on the best practices derived from the most rigorous research available and appropriate, including scientifically valid research and effective educational practice.
7. Effective Use of Technology: The degree to which the eligible provider's activities effectively use technology, services, and delivery systems, including distance education in a manner sufficient to increase the amount and quality of learning and how such technology, services, and systems lead to improved performance.
8. Integrated Education and Training: The degree to which the eligible provider's activities offer learning in context, including through integrated education and training, so that an individual acquires the skills needed to transition to and complete postsecondary education and training programs, obtain and advance in employment leading to economic self-sufficiency, and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
9. Qualified Staff: The degree to which the eligible provider's activities are delivered by well-trained instructors, counselors, and administrators who meet any minimum qualifications established by the state, where applicable, and who have access to high quality professional development, including through electronic means.
10. Partnerships and Development of Career Pathways: The degree to which the eligible provider's activities coordinate with other available education, training, and social service resources in the community, such as by establishing strong links with elementary schools and secondary schools, postsecondary educational institutions, institutions of higher education, local workforce development boards, one-stop centers, job training programs, and social service agencies,

business, industry, labor organizations, community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and intermediaries, for the development of career pathways.

11. Flexible Schedules and Coordination with Support Services: The degree to which the eligible provider's activities offer flexible schedules and coordination with Federal, State, and local support services (such as child care, transportation, mental health services, and career planning) that are necessary to enable individuals, including individuals with disabilities or other special needs, to attend and complete programs information management system that has the capacity to report measurable participant outcomes (consistent with Section 116) and to monitor program performance.
12. Information management system: The expectation will be that the eligible provider will use the State-administered designated MIS for all grant-related data collection and reporting; and
13. English Language Acquisition and Civics Education: The degree to which the eligible provider has a demonstrated need for additional English language acquisition programs and civics education programs.

In addition to the above considerations, the grant application will require description of applicants:

- location, service area, the scope of the program, a description of the population to be served, fiscal management procedures, and audit history;
- capacity to offer day, evening, and distance education programming;
- budget, as well as programmatic information regarding statutory requirements;
- coordination with other service providers to provide wrap-around services to participants (e.g., child care, transportation); and
- a description of how the program will align activities to the Local Plan for WIOA providers and supportive services.

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMMING

The focus of adult education instruction in Minnesota will be the above noted content standards contextualized to enhance readiness for employment, citizenship, postsecondary education and training provided through comprehensive services that meet the diverse educational needs of students.

In accordance with federal regulation, eligible providers may receive adult education funding for the delivery of any of the following adult education and literacy activities:

- adult education;
- literacy;
- workplace adult education and literacy activities;
- family literacy activities;
- English language and acquisition activities;
- integrated English literacy and civics education (IEL/Civics);
- workforce preparation activities; or
- integrated education and training, which
 - provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, and
 - is for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

Eligible providers will be required to implement such activities in accordance with the following federal definitions:

- **Adult education** means academic instruction and education services below the postsecondary level that increase an individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English and perform mathematics or other activities necessary for the attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; transition to postsecondary education and training; and obtain employment.
- **Literacy** means an individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, compute, and solve problems, at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job, in the family of the individual, and in society.
- **Workplace adult education and literacy activities** means adult education and literacy activities offered by an eligible provider in collaboration with an employer or employee organization at a workplace or an off-site location that is designed to improve the productivity of the workforce.

Family literacy activities means activities that are of sufficient intensity and quality to make sustainable improvements in the economic prospects for a family, and that better enable parents or family members to support their children's learning needs, and that integrate all of the following activities:

- A. Parent or family adult education and literacy activities that lead to readiness for postsecondary education or training, career advancement, and economic self-sufficiency.
- B. Interactive literacy activities between parents or family members and their children.
- C. Training for parents or family members regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children.
- D. An age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences.

SPECIAL RULE FOR FAMILY LITERACY

The Minnesota Department of Education will not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that the agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, the Minnesota Department of Education will attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

English language acquisition program means a program of instruction designed to help eligible individuals who are English language learners achieve competence in reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension of the English language; and that leads to attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent; and transition to post-secondary education and training; or employment.

Integrated English literacy and civics education means education services provided to English language learners who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, that enables such adults to achieve competency in the English language and acquire the basic and more advanced skills needed to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens in the United States. Such services shall include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation, and may include workforce training.

Workforce preparation activities means activities, programs, or services designed to help an individual acquire a combination of basic academic skills, critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and self-management skills, including competencies in utilizing resources, using information, working with others, understanding systems, and obtaining skills necessary for successful transition into and completion of post-secondary education or training, or employment.

Integrated education and training means a service approach that provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

Federal funds may be used to increase the level of nonfederal funds that would be available in the absence of federal funds, and, in no case, replace those nonfederal funds. Federal funds must not be used for the purpose of supplanting, only for supplementing.

CORRECTIONS EDUCATION AND OTHER EDUCATION OF INSTITUTIONALIZED INDIVIDUALS

(c) Describe how the state will establish and operate programs under Section 225 of WIOA for corrections education and education of other institutionalized individuals, including how it will fund, in accordance with the requirements of title II subtitle C, any of the following academic programs for: Adult education and literacy activities; Special education, as determined by the eligible agency; Secondary school credit; Integrated education and training; Career pathways; Concurrent enrollment; Peer tutoring; and Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.

Each eligible agency using funds provided under Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution must give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within 5 years of participation in the program.

The Minnesota Department of Education will award funds to carry out corrections education and education for other institutionalized individuals within correctional institutions in accordance with the requirements of Section 225.

Each eligible provider that receives funds provided under Section 225 to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution shall give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program. Applicants must describe in their grant application how they give priority to individuals most likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.

Minnesota's state corrections system will receive direct funding as a provider as long as their application adheres to the 13 considerations. County corrections facilities as well as other facilities such as state hospitals, rehabilitation centers, and limited retention facilities will be required to apply as members of an adult basic education consortium.

INTEGRATED ENGLISH LITERACY AND CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

(d) Describe how the state will establish and operate Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education programs under Section 243 of WIOA, for English language learners who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries.

Describe how the State will fund, in accordance with the requirements of title II, subtitle C, an Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program and how the funds will be used for the program.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program will be delivered in combination with integrated education and training activities.

Describe how the program is designed to (1) prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency and (2) integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.

The goals of IEL/Civics Education are to:

1. prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency; and
2. integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.

Successful applicants may receive up to \$50,000 per site annually for their IEL/Civics program that embeds the four instructional components as noted in WIOA through IEL/Civics:

1. English Literacy
2. Civics
3. Workforce Preparation
4. Work Training and Certification

The Minnesota Department of Education will offer multi-year grants through a competitive request-for-proposal (RFP) process specifically for IEL/Civics Education grant funds. The application RFP asks potential local providers to describe:

- The programming they would implement and how it incorporates the four instructional components;
- How they would use the grant funds; and
- Respond to the 13 considerations from Title II of WIOA.

Each criterion in the application RFP articulates a potential maximum score.

Eligible providers for IEL/Civics grants include local education agencies, community based organizations (including faith-based organizations), volunteer literacy organizations, institutions of higher education, public or private nonprofits, public housing authorities, libraries, and consortiums of the above.

A fair and equitable process is followed to allow all eligible entities the opportunity to apply for the IEL/Civics grant. The Minnesota Department of Education publishes all grant opportunities on its website. IEL/Civics proposals are rated and scored by teams of reviewers approved by the Minnesota Department of Education Grants Office.

The review process for selecting successful applicants includes formally scoring applications on their responses to each of the 13 considerations of WIOA, the programming proposed and its alignment to the four instructional components, and the articulated use of funds.

Grantees receive considerable technical assistance from the MDE-ABE office and will be convened for targeted professional development that emphasizes current best-practices.

STATE LEADERSHIP

(e) Describe how the state will use the funds to carry out the required State Leadership activities under Section 223 of WIOA.

Describe how the state will use the funds to carry out permissible State Leadership Activities under Section 223 of WIOA, if applicable.

The Minnesota Department of Education will use funds made available under Section 222(a)(2) to enhance the quality of programming in the adult education system. Not more than 12.5 percent of the grant funds made available will be used to carry out State leadership activities under Section 223.

The Minnesota Department of Education will work collaboratively with other core programs and partner agencies to align and coordinate services for program participants. State-level policy and planning bodies provide an opportunity for Minnesota's ABE system and local programs to partner with workforce development, human services, higher education and other key agencies. Leadership funds will be used to build the capacity of grantees to coordinate and align services. Specific areas of capacity building include intake/orientation, eligibility screening, and referral between partners, and other joint mechanisms developed through agency partnerships. In addition, the development of all components of career pathways will continue to be a priority with a focus on bridge programming and integrated education and training.

Minnesota supports a statewide ABE professional development (PD) advisory committee that meets quarterly to identify key present and future PD needs, develop PD plans and resources, identify and implement best practices in PD, and coordinate and align PD activities for an efficient and effective PD system. This advisory committee has approximately 25 members, and includes state ABE staff, PD providers and local ABE instructors and administrators.

The Minnesota PD system uses a data-driven planning process to identify PD needs and set priorities for each year. The results of an annual statewide PD needs assessment of local providers, along with evaluation data from previous PD efforts, research regarding best practices, and federal recommendations are used to inform PD priorities and the design and delivery of PD activities. Professional development activities are aligned to the MN ABE PD standards, which emphasize research-based features of effective professional development – longer-term, job-embedded activities with opportunities for collaborative participation and the application of new knowledge and skills. Both statewide and regional opportunities are provided for adult educators to develop and share their knowledge and skills in order to improve the quality of instruction delivered in local programs. These PD activities include professional learning communities, study circles, statewide and regional conferences, online courses, webinars, and others. Evaluation of PD outcomes, especially evidence of teacher change and quality of implementation of new knowledge and skills, is integrated into every initiative to ensure the effectiveness of PD activities.

State leadership funds will be used to support professional development activities that focus on a variety of areas of emphasis, including content standards implementation, evidence-based reading instruction (EBRI), adult learning, research-based instructional methodologies, volunteer training and management, effective program management, integrated education and training, bridge programming, transition to postsecondary education, use of technology, distance education, universal design, serving students with disabilities, and volunteer training and recruitment.

The MDE-ABE office contracts for ABE professional development services related to research-based literacy, numeracy, English language instruction, content standards, and transitions. These PD activities include STAR training and technical assistance; EBRI study circles, online courses, and resource dissemination; and the implementation of content standards. More information regarding existing training provided may be viewed on the [ATLAS \(ABE Teaching and Learning Advancement System\) homepage](#).

In addition, the MDE-ABE office contracts to deliver professional development and technical assistance in the arena of serving adults with disabilities and to maintain a [disabilities website](#). The disabilities website has received considerable national attention and may be the leading model for adult education related disabilities web information in the United States. The disabilities service provider also provides training on using Universal Design for Learning principles and strategies to address the varied needs of adult learners. All disability-related activities are consistent with and contribute to implementation of Minnesota's Olmstead plan.

The MDE-ABE office contracts to provide statewide services in the areas of volunteer tutor training, volunteer management, and client referral services (a [web-searchable Literacy Hotline](#) and a phone hotline).

The Minnesota Department of Education will deliver technical assistance to eligible providers to enhance program effectiveness, increase the ability of providers to meet established performance standards, and fulfill obligations associated with being a one-stop partner. Specific areas of focus will include:

1. Increasing the capacity of instructors and programs to provide quality instruction in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition, and distance education via implementation of professional development activities and associated technical assistance such as:
 - STAR training and Evidence-Based Reading Instruction study circles;
 - EBRI and writing online courses;
 - Annual Language and Literacy Institute;
 - Low-literacy Adult ESL Study Circles;
 - Minnesota Numeracy Initiative (MNI) cohort training;
 - Annual Math Institute;
 - Distance learning professional development cohorts (DL 101 and DL 102);
 - MN distance learning website
 - Distance Learning Basics online course
 - Online resource libraries in the areas of EBRI, STAR, writing, adult ESL, numeracy, writing, content standards, transitions, content standards, and project-based learning
2. Enabling providers to establish, build upon, or maintain effective relationships with other core providers via training on referral systems, data sharing/reporting, integrating education with occupational training, and transition strategies for post-secondary enrollment or employment.
3. Using technology to improve program effectiveness through training and technical assistance focused on preparing instructors and program administrators to identify and utilize technology to enhance instruction, programming, and distance education. MDE-ABE contracts to provide professional development in the area of technology through activities such as face-to-face and

[online training](#). MDE-ABE contracts to provide online training in a variety of areas, including educational technology, digital literacy instruction, and distance learning. A list of current courses available can be found on their [website](#). Training and technical assistance around distance education and digital literacy is also offered through a contracted provider. More information about current training and resources can be found on their [website](#).

In addition, other training and technical assistance focuses on the effective use of the statewide data system to maintain accurate student data and continuously improve programming. This support is offered in a variety of formats and venues.

The Minnesota Department of Education will provide grantee oversight to include data monitoring, site visits and a program improvement process for low performing grantees. The following strategies will be implemented:

- **Data Reviews** – The statewide MIS will be configured to facilitate ongoing review in the areas of assessment, attendance and compliance.
- **Monitoring Visits** – The Minnesota Department of Education will establish a monitoring system focusing on programs identified via data review. Visits will focus primarily on compliance related issues, but may be incorporated in the more extensive program review, and will result in development and monitored implementation of a local corrective action plan, called the program improvement process. *(For more information on monitoring visits, see the response to (f).)*
- **Program Improvement Process** - Local providers that do not meet state and federal program performance targets and grant expectations will be subject to a program improvement process. Over the course of one year, a provider in program improvement will:
 - Host site visits from staff from the Minnesota Department of Education;
 - Participate in special workshops focusing on analyzing and improving local program results;
 - Develop a program improvement plan that will highlight key local challenges, ensure program compliance with state and federal policy, and identify strategies and timelines to improve program performance; and
 - Receive additional technical assistance from Minnesota Department of Education and other adult education specialists, as needed.

The program improvement process will last at least one program year. At the end of the program year, the provider will complete the process as long as the provider's annual grant performance reports meet state and federal targets and grant expectations. Local providers that continue to not meet state and federal targets and grant expectations will be subject to participate in program improvement again. Providers that do not meet state and federal targets and grant expectations 3 consecutive years, may be subject to a special review by the Minnesota Department of Education to determine if the provider should continue to receive AEFLA funding.

The MDE-ABE office and professional development providers will employ a variety of methods to ensure that information about proven or promising practices and models is disseminated to eligible providers and practitioners working in the ABE system. These will include activities such as:

- local program site visits, as described in (f)(5);
- a weekly electronic professional development newsletter with information about training opportunities, high-quality resources, and promising practices for instruction and programming;

- sessions at state and regional conferences showcasing promising practices and models;
- webinars showcasing promising practices and models; and
- job-embedded professional development activities, including professional learning communities, study circles and peer observations.

ASSESSING QUALITY

(f) Describe how the eligible agency will assess the quality of providers of adult education and literacy activities under title II and take actions to improve such quality, including providing the activities described in Section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA.

The Minnesota Department of Education prioritizes and measures program quality through accountability expectations and activities that focus on both compliance and best practice according to research and experience. The expectations and activities include:

1. The state ABE Management Information System (MIS) data: Minnesota's MIS balances both program quality and program compliance with state and federal expectations. In addition to required reports, local providers can use the state MIS to analyze student persistence, program outcomes, and other measures at the consortium, site, class and student level.
2. A state AEFLA grantee report card: The report card notes actual performance and ranks providers by key program data measures, including measurable skill gain by population, cost of programming per individual served, intensity of service provided, and percentage of population served.
3. A program improvement process: Programs will be identified for review based on rankings in the state AEFLA report card and will undergo a comprehensive review and monitored implementation of a program improvement plan that requires local providers to complete site visits, workshop activities, reports, and plans to strengthen program performance and quality. *(For more information on Program Improvement, see the response to (D).)*
4. Intensive program application cycle: On a five-year basis, ABE providers are required to complete an in-depth application as a method to adhere to Minnesota statute governing local ABE programs. In this intensive application, local providers describe their:
 - a. Consortium
 - b. Program accountability procedures
 - c. Professional development priorities and activities
 - d. Proposed programming
 - e. Local program governance
 - f. Program collaboration with key stakeholders and partners
 - g. Technology resources and integration
 - h. Future plans
 - i. Performance

These in-depth applications are reviewed and scored by a team of state staff from the Minnesota Department of Education and local AEFLA providers.

5. Local program monitoring site visits: All grantees are subject to monitoring site visits that focus on policy compliance and program quality through multiple methods:
 - a. Providers with low performance participate in site visits through the program improvement process;

- b. All AEFLA grantees receive site visits on a rotating basis, at least once every five years, when the program participates in in-depth application process to continue receiving state ABE funding to comply with Minnesota statute;
- c. Monitoring visits based on periodic desk review of provider data;
- d. Local ABE providers that participate in state initiatives and/or receive special grants through state or federal funding typically receive site visits as part of their participation; and
- e. Local providers request special technical assistance site visits as they face issues.

CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1. The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan;
2. The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program;
3. The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan;
4. All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law;
5. A State officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan;
6. The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan;
7. The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan; and
8. The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program;

The State Plan must include assurances that:

1. The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under Section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding supplement and not supplant provisions);
2. The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in Section 3(32) of WIOA;
3. The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not "eligible individuals" within the meaning of Section 203(4) of WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in Section 203(9) of WIOA; and
4. Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.

Do we need to link to the 3 forms – are they already filled out?

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

INPUT OF STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services portion of the Combined State Plan must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA:

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

(a)(1) input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council, including input and recommendations on the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan, recommendations from the Council's report, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction, and other Council reports that may have been developed as part of the Council's functions;

(a)(2) the designated State unit's response to the input and recommendations; and

(a)(3) the designated State unit's rejection of any input or recommendation of the Council.

SUMMARY OF INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS PROVIDED BY THE SRC WITH STATE RESPONSE

The State Rehabilitation Council provides ongoing input and recommendations to VRS. The council's annual reports, meeting minutes, and summary reports of public forums can be found [online](#).

The SRC spent a substantial amount of time reviewing WIOA and preparing public comment. The council's comments were previously submitted to RSA. In summary, the following recommendations were made:

1. RSA should closely monitor the impact of steering 15 percent of the federal appropriation to pre-employment services for transition aged youth. The SRC felt that this new mandate should have included new funding. This new mandate could have negative impact on services for adults.
2. The regulations should clarify how the common performance measures will be used. The regulations do not indicate if VR agencies will be compared to other VR agencies, or if VR will be compared to all programs funded by WIOA. If VR will be compared to all WIOA funded programs, common definitions need to be provided. For example, VR considers placement to be 90 days of successful employment while other programs consider placement to be one day of employment.
3. The SRC provided comment on the draft WIOA regulations related to Employer Training & Services. The primary concern is the language used in this regulation indicating that WIOA “authorizes the DSU to expend VR funds for training and services for employers [...].” The SRC is concerned that the language in this draft regulation is not strong enough to make this a priority for the DSU. There are many operational requirements that the DSU must fulfill, and if the draft regulations do not use language that do not require or allocate funding to this activity, it will not be a priority. SRC would like the language revised to emphasize the importance of this activity.

Additionally, of particular interest to the council is the type of services that should be available to employers. The MN SRC General proposes that the following training & services be available to employers:

- a. Disability Awareness Training
- b. Myths & Facts of ADA Accommodations Training
- c. VR Services 101 training for Employers. This training should discuss services and supports available to employees/employers including when and for how long after employee is hired supports can be provided through VR and Extended Employment.
4. SRC provided comment and suggestions on metrics that can assist in measuring “effectiveness in serving employers”. These measures could include:
 - a. Repeat hiring of VRS referrals by employer
 - b. Employer referrals of other employment businesses
 - c. Post-placement career progression
 - d. Number of individuals employed by each employer business partner

- e. Ratio of employers hiring VRS consumers &/or using Work Opportunity Tax Credits (WOTC) compared to all employers

SRC noted that a measure that would be *ineffective* at measuring effectiveness in serving employers would be employee retention rates. This would not have the strongest correlation to the DSU effectiveness, as much of it is related to the employer's own initiative and commitment.

- 5. The goal of competitive integrated employment that provides an opportunity for advancement is a very appropriate goal for the public Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program. However, the Council is concerned that mandating the goal through regulation will infringe on the participant's right to self-determination. People should be given choices and options for competitive integrated employment based on their abilities and capabilities. Establishing the appropriate level of integration for the person is best done on an individual basis through the counseling and guidance process, not federal regulations.

The employee with a disability may choose a competitive work site that is not fully integrated for a variety of reasons. The person may want or need a level of job coaching or other supports not available at a single site placement. The person may be introverted and not want a high level of interaction with co-workers. People may select a small work crew because they feel that working with people who have similar disabilities provides a supportive environment. Public transportation may not be available to single site placements, especially in rural areas.

The Council also has concerns about the requirement that individuals with disabilities employed by a community rehabilitation program (CRP) and working on a community-based service contract (i.e., working on a janitorial work crew) be integrated with co-workers without disabilities employed by the CRP instead of with co-workers employed at the community work site. Many individuals with disabilities choose employment on a work crew as a stepping stone to a competitive single site placement. The level of integration should be measured at the actual work site, not the CRP site, since the opportunity for advancement would be employment at the work site.

- 6. SRC recommends that each state have the discretion to define the ages of those potentially eligible for services. Due to limited resources, SRC recommends limiting pre-employment services to students on IEPs or Section 504 Plans who are age 16 – 21. Interested students with disabilities age 14 and older should have annual exposure to VR, including information and referral.
- 7. The term 'hearing impaired' is offensive and should be replaced with 'deaf, hard of hearing and DeafBlind'.

PUBLIC FORUMS

The State Rehabilitation Council convenes two public forums each year. The forums provide an opportunity to gather grassroots commentary and input regarding Minnesota's Vocational Rehabilitation program, and they encourage participation in public conversation about matters of interest and importance in the arena of disability employment.

May public forum: A Public forum on Employment and People with Disabilities in Southwest Minnesota.

The May forum examined local employment data for southwestern Minnesota, a predominantly rural area with limited resources. Key stakeholders providing input included County Case Management, Southwest Independent Living staff, VRS staff, and the Commission on Economic Development. Overall,

the SRC was impressed with the VR staff and their creative approach to the challenges posed when providing services in a vast low population area.

Recommendations from the forum included:

- Recognizing that VR staff in Greater Minnesota already collaborate with community resources, the SRC called upon VRS leadership to encourage VR staff to increase collaboration and provide creative leadership in such efforts. Specific examples included supporting the development of more work readiness programs, skill training, and student work opportunities. One participant noted that the nearest job coach was one and a half hours away.
- The SRC advised that VR staff actively encourage homebased employment options.
- SRC advised that VR continue to support early outreach and communication to potential VR consumers in hopes that early engagement will allow VR staff to build connections with employers and provide client choice.
- The SRC advised that VR continue to support outreach to employers, including small businesses. VR has a unique and important role assuring small businesses are aware of ADA, on-the-job training, work opportunity tax-credits, etc.
- Lack of transportation impacted job choice, training opportunities and economic development. SRC recognized that transportation options are very limited in rural areas, but the problem cannot be ignored.

September public forum: Coordination between the Schools and Vocational Rehabilitation.

The September forum was sponsored by SRC-General, SRC-Blind and the Department of Education. A panel discussed the federal and state initiatives designed to increase employability for students with disabilities, and how to maximize the positive impact of pre-employment transition services through effective collaboration.

Following a panel discussion of the current initiatives and a discussion of the current policies and practices around VR and school collaboration, participants broke into local teams consisting of the local school district staff, the VRS and SSB staff assigned to those school districts, and students with disabilities from the various school districts. Each team developed strategies on how to improve interagency coordination at the local level. Although not a part of the initial design, participants used the forum as an opportunity to network and become familiar with services available at other school districts and/or other agencies.

Review and analysis of consumer satisfaction

The SRC expanded on the May forum by holding consumer discussion groups in five additional areas of the state. The Centers for Independent Living hosted these discussion groups, focusing on a subgroup of VRS participants who received both VR and IL services. Public discussions were held in Duluth (northeast), Fergus Falls (west central), Rochester (southeast) St. Cloud (central), and St. Paul (Twin cities metro).

Discussion topics were primarily focused on people's experiences looking for and obtaining jobs, experiences working with placement services, experiences after getting the job and working for a while, and thoughts on the VR/IL collaborative. Following is a brief summary of the discussions:

Looking for and obtaining jobs:

- Scheduling interviews can be difficult if you use door to door para-transit services. You need to schedule a week in advance and provide a specific address. If you submit multiple resumes you don't know who will invite you to interview or on what date.
- Several people mentioned VR was willing to fund school and coordinate academic accommodations.
- Several people mentioned they had returned to VR on multiple occasions for placement assistance. One person mentioned he worked for 30 years as a professional, and then returned to VR when the job ended. Other people mentioned they wished they had known it was O.K. to return if the job ended or you were ready for advancement.
- Most people were aware of assistive technology and many people accessed assistive technology services. One person mentioned that VR provided adaptations to her car to get to and from work, but no agency was available to modify the employer's van that she uses while working.

Experiences working with placement services:

- Overall, people were very positive about the practical help provided including job search, coordinating interviews, mock interviews, resume development, etc. Two people described their experience as awesome. Several people commented that job seeking was much more difficult than they imagined. They initially didn't see the need for support, but very much appreciated it once they started the job search.
- Several people felt they were being pushed to apply for available jobs in the local economy instead of VR developing jobs in their areas of interest. There was too much focus on the number of placements instead of the quality of the placement. One person mentioned that VR would not support his vocational goal because Labor Market Information indicated it was not in a growing industry. Another person mentioned that all he wanted was a d*** job; the process was too slow.
- Some people indicated VR provided too many choices. It was too difficult to decide. This was more common with transition students entering employment for the first time.

Experiences after getting the job and working for a while:

- There was recognition that the outreach, information and support VR provides to employers is unique and important.
- The overall theme was that the VR process is important but can be frustrating at times. Participants generally felt that they would not have succeeded without VR support.
- Several people felt 90 days of support after successful employment was not enough. Some people wanted more information on employee rights. Several people didn't disclose their disability at hire and were uncertain if they should now disclose. Some people weren't comfortable calling their counselor after case closure, or weren't aware they could request additional services after closure.

Thoughts on the VR/IL collaborative:

- The VR/IL collaborative was very important to the participants. One person stated that IL/VR was a “savior”. It helped her prioritize life's major stressors.
- Overall, people felt the collaborative was very helpful for prioritizing what needs to be addressed first, Social Security benefits counseling, learning about community services, independent living skills, and learning advocacy skills.

The SRC and VRS has reviewed the notes of the discussion groups to help determine staff training needs. More emphasis needs to be placed on teaching self-advocacy skills. Several people mentioned they would have benefited from specific services but never asked for the services. People were appreciative of the team approach (VRS staff, IL staff and CRP staff co-located) but some people presumed everyone was employed by VRS. It is important that everyone is aware that VR provides choice of vendor and you don't need to select the co-located staff. VRS needs to look at better ways to dis-engage when the person is successfully employed and does not need long-term supports. The information about post-employment services needs to be more inviting.

The designated State unit's response to the input and recommendations; and explanations for the designated State unit's rejection of any input or recommendation of the council:

The Director of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the Field Operations Director attended most meetings of the SRC and responded to questions from the Council. Much of the discussion in the past year focused on the changes related to WIOA. There were no formal recommendations made to VRS that required a formal response. Instead, the focus was on VRS management team and SRC learning together about WIOA.

REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS

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

(b)(1) a local public agency will provide the non-Federal share of costs associated with the services to be provided in accordance with the waiver request;

(b)(2) the designated State unit will approve each proposed service before it is put into effect; and

(b)(3) requirements of the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan will apply to the services approved under the waiver..

This agency **has** requested a waiver of statewideness.

VRS requests continuation of the waiver with respect to delivery of vocational rehabilitation services in Minnesota Independent School District No. 2170, which includes the cities of Staples and Motley in north central Minnesota.

VRS serves students with disabilities in all public school districts and most private schools and charter schools. Uniform statewide provision of services is required by the Rehabilitation Act, except when waived.

Independent School District 2170 and VRS use a service model, pursuant to waiver, under which a full-time counselor provides services exclusively to the district's eligible students. The school district employs the counselor, sharing costs with VRS. Hiring authority and case supervision is a responsibility of the VRS area manager. The contract under which this collaboration is carried out is negotiated and administered by the local rehabilitation area manager to meet specific local needs. This written contract provides that all non-federal funds allocated by the agreement are made available to VRS, that all

services provided under the agreement are subject to VRS approval, and that all State Plan requirements apply to all services approved under the contract.

COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH AGENCIES

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

(c)(1) Federal, state, and local agencies and programs;

(c) (2) State programs carried out under Section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998;

(c) (3) Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture;

(c) (4) Noneducational agencies serving out-of-school youth; and

(c) (5) State use contracting programs.

COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Following is a discussion of Vocational Rehabilitation Services' collaborative arrangements with federal, state and local agencies and with private entities that are not formal components of the statewide workforce investment system.

The Minnesota STAR (System of Technology to Achieve Results) Program: The STAR Program, a program within the Minnesota Department of Administration, is funded by the Department of Health and Human Services in accordance with the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, as amended. Vocational Rehabilitation often refers people to STAR for a device demonstration. This allows consumers to compare benefits and features of a particular device or category of devices. Once a decision on a device is made, the person can borrow the device for 30 days to make sure it meets the person's needs before VR purchases the item. VR also maintains an agreement with STAR to provide VR assistive technology specialists with commonly used devices for use in doing assessments with consumers.

Olmstead Subcabinet: The DEED is active on the Lt. Governor's subcabinet to implement the Olmstead Plan that approved by the U.S. District Court on September 29, 2015. The subcabinet "embraces the Olmstead decision as a key component of achieving a better Minnesota for all Minnesotans, and strives to ensure Minnesotans with disabilities will have the opportunity, both now and in the future, to live close to their families and friends, to live more independently, to engage in productive employment and to participate in community life" (2013 vision statement). The employment Section of the plan listed two population-level indicators: 1) Increase the employment rate of individuals with disabilities so that it is comparable to the employment rate of persons without disabilities and 2) Increase the employment earnings of individuals with disabilities so that they are comparable to the earnings of persons without disabilities.

Minnesota Autism Interagency Committee: Representatives from Minnesota's Departments of Education, Human Services, Health, and Employment and Economic Development meet monthly to discuss the needs of citizens with autism. VRS is active on this committee, and on a sub-committee that wrote Minnesota's Autism State Plan. The rehabilitation specialist for autism is also active on the Department of Human Services' Advisory Council on residential services for people with autism. The task force supports expanding transition program options and employment opportunities for teens and adults with autism, particularly innovative community-based programs (e.g., [Project Search](#)) that better meet the unique needs of this population.

Collaboration Grants to Provide Independent Living Services: Since 2008, the VRS/IL collaboration has served Minnesotans with the most significant disabilities who require both vocational rehabilitation and independent living services to meet their goals for working and living in the community. In FFY14 VRS dedicated \$1,027,466 in SSA program income to fund locally designed collaboration grants with each of Minnesota's eight Centers for Independent Living. There is an IL counselor housed in most VRS offices.

Minnesota Employment Center for Individuals Who Are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing: Provides VRS funded short-term services and state-funded long-term support services for individuals who are deaf and hard-of-hearing.

VECTOR Youth Project for Deaf/Deaf Blind: \$1.9m in school district funding supplemented with \$475,000 in VRS managed state funding support enhanced transition services for youth who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf blind in Minnesota. Enhanced services include work readiness classes, college preparation classes, driver's education, community based work experiences, and paid internships in competitive employment. For students who transition to college, high school instructors work with the college for the first semester to make sure all needed accommodations are in place and the person is making adequate progress. Ninety percent of VECTOR students are either working or enrolled in college at time of high school graduation.

Cooperative Agreements with the White Earth Nation - Tribal VR program and the Red Lake Nation - Tribal VR program: VRS and State Services for the Blind provide information, technical assistance, training opportunities, and support to the state's two tribal VR programs. A formal process is in place for referral and transfer of cases in accordance with best practices ensuring choice. Although not a part of the formal written agreement, the Social Security Administration's Area Work Incentive Coordinator plays a crucial role in providing technical assistance on benefits planning.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services: Memorandum of Understanding to enhance work opportunities for veterans with disabilities by sharing information, coordinating activities and offering complementary services.

U.S. Department of Agriculture: Memorandum of Understanding establishing formal working relationships between the USDA's AgrAbility Project and Vocational Rehabilitation Services field offices under which consumers may access programs funded by USDA Rural Development in support of their employment plans. The Minnesota USDA Rural Development Office also uses technical economic and forecasting information provided by DEED to develop and market its services.

Work Incentives Connection (Minnesota's Work Incentives and Planning Assistance program): VRS maintains an agreement with Goodwill Easter Seals to provide benefit analysis counseling and related services for consumers on a fee for service basis with the goal of increasing the employment of persons who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). The agreement also provides funding for staff training on work incentives.

Ticket to Work Employment Networks: VRS, State Services for the Blind and SSA co-host periodic meetings of the Employment Networks to provide staff training, updates on Ticket to Work procedural changes, and to promote Partnership Plus job retention services after VRS/SSB case closure.

The SGA Project: The Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts-Boston is conducting RSA funded research on best practices for assisting SSDI beneficiaries achieve employment

above Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA). The VR agencies in Minnesota and Kentucky are currently demonstrating this rapid engagement model where eligibility is determined within three days; within seven days transferable work skills are identified, labor market information is presented to the consumer, and benefits and financial planning services are started; and within 30 days the IPE and a Placement Plan are developed. A benefits analysis is completed within 8 weeks of application if needed. RSA demonstration grant funding is being used to provide SSDI beneficiaries' access to a financial specialist to help the person know how income will impact federal and state benefits, and how work incentives and VR services can help improve credit scores and provide savings that can be used as a down-payment on a home or to purchase reliable transportation, etc. Minnesota hopes to demonstrate that rapid engagement and holistic services will lead to more placements at higher wages.

Professional vocational rehabilitation counseling organizations: Active participation relating to ongoing professional development for staff and to counselor recruitment takes place through well-established working relationships with and memberships on the boards of the Minnesota Rehabilitation Association, including the Minnesota Rehabilitation Counseling Association chapter.

Performance-based funding for placement services provided by community rehabilitation programs and limited-use vendors: Placement providers receive milestone and outcome payments for facilitating successful outcomes for VR customers. The first milestone is payable when the Placement Plan is developed, the second milestone is paid at time of successful placement, and a final outcome payment is paid when the person has been successfully employed for 90 days.

State Use Program: Since the mid-1990s, Minnesota state agencies have been legislatively encouraged to purchase goods and services from small businesses operated by individuals with disabilities. In 2007, the Legislature enacted a set-aside program, providing that 19 percent of the total value of all state janitorial contracts be awarded to community rehabilitation organizations approved by VRS as service providers under the VRS Extended Employment Program. During the 2010 legislative session, the set-aside program was expanded to include document imaging, document shredding, mailing, collating, and sorting services. Further, the amount of each contract awarded under this Section may exceed the estimated fair market price for the same goods and services by up to 6 percent.

COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

(d)(1) Describe the designated State unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of VR services, including pre-employment transition services, as well as procedures for the timely development and approval of individualized plans for employment for the students.

(d)(2) Describe information on the formal interagency agreement with the State educational agency with respect to:

(d)(2)(A) consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services;

(d)(2)(B) transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs;

(d)(2)(C) roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;

(d)(2)(D) procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), State Services for the Blind (SSB), and the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) have an agreement to achieve better coordination between schools and VR services and creating a bridge from the school to VRS or SSB prior to school exit. Following is a discussion of the current agreement. It is anticipated that the agreement will be updated when the final WIOA regulations are published:

- Provide guidance to students with disabilities transitioning from school to employment.
- Offer consultation and technical assistance to educators in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to VR services.
- Define roles and responsibilities, including the financial responsibilities of each agency, and determine state lead agencies and qualified staff responsible for transition services.
- Design methods of identification and outreach to students with disabilities who are in need of transition services.
- Guide the development of policies and procedures that help students with disabilities make the transition from school to employment.
- Promote flexible, coordinated, and collaborative planning and service delivery among MDE, VRS, and SSB for eligible youth transitioning from school to employment.

Coordinated Services for Youth in Special Education

Minnesota law mandates a coordinated system of services for youth, birth to 21, who are involved in special education. The Minnesota System for Interagency Collaboration (MnSIC) was formed to develop and implement this system. VRS is represented on MnSIC and VRS staff participate on subcommittees that develop service strategies for students and recommendations for governance and coordination of state and local collaborative efforts.

Community Transition Interagency Committee (CTIC)

Approximately 70 local CTICs promote statewide interagency coordination to remove system barriers and expand community services. CTICs include parents, students, advocacy groups, local businesses, county government, post-secondary education, vocational education, community education, corrections, SSA health care, and other local service providers. VRS staff serve on all CTICs, thereby helping to improve and expand vocational services that result in employment outcomes.

Rehabilitation Counselors Assigned to High Schools

VR counselors are assigned to all public, private, and charter high schools in Minnesota. They are active participants on transition planning teams so that each VR eligible student with a disability can access VR services and establish a written VR plan before leaving school. Outreach efforts include working with school nurses, guidance counselors, case managers, principals, social workers, 504 personnel, community agencies and work experience coordinators to identify students with disabilities who are not in special education programs. About 11 percent of students referred to VRS are not enrolled in special education programs. A referral of all potentially eligible students is sought as soon as possible so that employment services can begin well before the student leaves school.

Interagency Agreement to Purchase used Assistive Technology Devices

When a child with a disability transitions into a work environment or postsecondary program, VRS or SSB may purchase any assistive technology device that the child's former school district purchased on the child's behalf.

COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

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

VRS purchases services such as vocational evaluation, skill training, internships, job development and job placement, on-the-job training, and time-limited job coaching. Services must be consistent with an employment plan developed between counselor and customer, based on the consumer's informed choices and offered in integrated settings.

WRITTEN ASSURANCES

Providers must provide written assurances about their organizational missions, operations (including audits and lines of authority), staff development and qualifications, services, fees, populations served, standards of professional practice, and adherence to customers' employment plans. They must also provide written assurance regarding vendor compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Minnesota Human Rights Act and other employment law on individual rights, accessibility, occupational health and safety, and data privacy.

TWO CATEGORIES OF PROVIDERS

Minnesota distinguishes between two categories of vendor: the limited-use provider and the unlimited use community rehabilitation program (CRP). This arrangement permits wide selection of services and system flexibility and emphasizes the use of providers accredited by the national Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).

LIMITED USE PROVIDERS

Limited-use providers (those without CARF accreditation) introduce competition to the rehabilitation marketplace and provide an entry point for new providers in response to an unmet or emerging service need. They are typically small organizations with small caseloads, limited to a narrow range of specialized services such as intensive job placement or job coaching for individuals with a particular disability. Some are private-for-profit entities. VRS uses the services of 53 limited-use providers. Contracts are limited to \$20,000 annually.

CARF-ACCREDITED CRPS

An unlimited-use CRP must be accredited by CARF for the services they provide. Professional/Technical Contracts, detailing services and specific fee schedules, are negotiated, with the engagement of VRS area managers and counseling staff. VRS management reviews the agreement for approval or modification. VRS currently has 62 Professional/Technical Contracts with CRPs statewide.

VRS employs a program specialist to help maintain a mutually supportive professional relationship and to negotiate modifications to agreements with CRPs. VRS and CRPs work together to promote mutually held goals, including:

- Develop and maintain choices for consumers.
- Meet workforce needs identified by the state's employers.
- Ensure that services are provided in integrated settings.
- Facilitate state-level planning and coordination of training needs of CRP staff.
- Facilitate communication between VRS and CRP staff at the administrative level.
- Increase CRP awareness of vocational rehabilitation issues at state and national levels.

- Identify and provide training for CRP and VRS staff.

VRS has an active CRP Advisory Committee to assist in achievement of these common goals. Priority topics discussed included "telling our story" (development of a strategic marketing and communications plan), enhanced placement services through collaboration, CRP input into the VRS administrative structure, collaborating with CRPs to provide paid internships for consumers including pre-employment transition internships, enhancements to supported employment services, and shared coordination and delivery of staff training.

The Advisory Committee is also engaged in defining CRP quality measures and defining opportunities for joint training of VRS and CRP staff. The committee is currently actively involved in developing and providing training for VRS and CRP job developers on rapid engagement and fully engaging the consumer in the placement process.

ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

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

EVIDENCE OF COLLABORATION REGARDING SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND EXTENDED SERVICES

STATEWIDE COLLABORATION

VRS collaborates with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), Department of Human Services (DHS), and county and local service providers to offer statewide supported employment services. VRS is a partner in several state-level agreements that provide long-term supports.

During development of an employment plan, VRS counselors and other service team members help consumers to select supported employment services that meet their needs. They identify which services will be provided by VRS, as well as the source of long-term supports in the community.

VRS provides time-limited supports for up to 18 months, but an employment plan may be amended if additional time is needed to achieve job stability. The primary funding resources for long-term supports in the community following VRS case closure are county case managers, the VRS Extended Employment Program, DHS programs such as traumatic brain injury waiver funding, and the Social Security Administration's Impairment-Related Work Expense exclusions and Ticket to Work funding for persons on SSI and/or SSDI.

STATE-FUNDED VRS EXTENDED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

Minnesota's Extended Employment Program, administered by VRS, develops performance based contracts with CARF-accredited CRPs. The contracts set expectations for extended support, establish funding levels and specify how many employment hours will be funded. These collaborations contribute significantly to the quality, scope, and effectiveness of the State's supported employment efforts. The VRS Extended Employment Program augments Minnesota's supported employment resources, including those for persons who are deaf or hard-of-hearing and for persons with serious mental illness. It provides over \$12 million a year to CRPs to provide ongoing supports. VRS coordinates both vocational

rehabilitation and extended employment services to maximize the impact of both time-limited and extended services.

The Extended Employment Program is in the rule making process. Currently, more than 80 percent of the dollars support people working in integrated community settings. The proposed rule would eliminate center-based employment over five years, shifting 100 percent of the money to community based employment.

INDIVIDUALS WITH SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD-OF-HEARING

Extended Employment dedicates \$1.6 million to supports for persons with serious and persistent mental illness. Another appropriation provides \$475,000 annually to provide ongoing supports for persons who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

In SFY14, the VRS Extended Employment program provided ongoing work supports to about 4,700 individuals working in the community, most of whom had previously received time-limited VR services. VRS and the DHS Mental Health Division also collaborate on projects that lead to community-based employment for adults with serious and persistent mental illness. Services include functional assessment, individualized career planning, job skill acquisition, job placement, job development, and non-time-limited supports to maintain and advance in employment. All recipients of these grants must demonstrate collaboration with counties, local community support programs, VRS, and providers of employability services such as community rehabilitation programs, regional treatment centers, and community mental health centers.

COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

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

(g)(1) VR services; and

(g)(2) transition services, including pre-employment transition services, for students and youth with disabilities.

Excellence in placement services is fundamental to more fully living into DEED's vision statement of “a healthy economy, where all Minnesotans have or are on a path to meaningful employment and a family sustaining wage, and all employers are able to fill jobs in demand”. Coordination with employers is also key to VRS' priority to embrace employers as key customers resulting in increased employment outcomes.

VRS has developed three updated strategic priorities and measures related to coordination with employers. These priorities replace the priorities listed under Goal 4: Employer Engagement in Section (P) Evaluation and Reports of Progress.

- A. Develop and implement a VR consumer talent pool structural framework within the electronic case management system. The talent pool will be developed to gather and tap information to facilitate matching consumers to employment opportunities.
Metric: Secure approval and resources to develop the consumer talent pool structural framework as part of a larger rewrite of the case management system.
- B. Develop and implement Low Risk Hiring and Retention Options designed to increase employment outcomes and workforce diversity.

Metric: Track the VR consumer participation and employment outcomes in low risk hiring and retention options on a quarterly basis. Options include on-the-job training, job try outs, internships, 700 hour program and Schedule A hiring.

Metric: Create and delivery raining to help employers identify, develop and sustain natural supports for employees with disabilities in the workplace.

- C. VRS will lead and convene Placement Partnerships focused on developing, maintaining, and strengthening relationships among VRS, VR Community Partners and employers.

Metric: The placement specialist team will develop a quarterly report on the major activities and outcomes for active placement partnerships.

Metric: VRS will share the quarterly report with partnership participants and use as a tool to increase understanding and collaboration for increased employment outcomes.

Metric: WIOA Common Performance Measure #6 (effectiveness in serving employers) will be developed and addressed in an annual report.

Following is a report of progress on the revised priorities:

The *Disability Employment Resource (DER)* was developed to support business engagement. The initiative helps businesses meet their workforce goals by employing individuals with disabilities in competitive integrated positions, while employment professionals learn more about how to align their placement goals with business needs. The DER curriculum improves business engagement by delivering information to bridge the gap between business and human services, dispelling myths that can prevent employers from considering individuals with disabilities, helping human service professionals understand the business perspective, providing tools for starting and building relationships, and connecting businesses with information and resources to help them succeed.

The DER model has four stages of engagement: The first stage is Visibility. Strategies are provided to identify businesses and develop contacts. The second stage is Credibility. The focus is on educating and informing the employer by asking for opportunities to present employment information to the business, hosting informational events, and sharing stories about business successes in employing individuals with disabilities. To encourage engagement, the employer may be asked to conduct mock interviews with job seekers or mentoring a job seeker. The third stage is Fulfillment. The focus is on finding qualified candidates for the employer's job openings. The fourth stage is Reciprocity. The focus is on supporting the new employee by mentoring the person's supervisor, if needed, and providing job coaching and other support services to fully integrate the new employee in the work site.

Minnesota has developed 15 Placement Partnerships throughout the state to provide a single point of contact for employers and to enhance the skills of placement professionals. Placement 101 is a three day training to provide professionals with an introductory level of knowledge and skills in providing placement services for VRS consumers. It is available free of charge to VRS and community partners. To date, 17 classes have been completed, providing training to over 300 placement professionals. In addition, 30 trainers have been trained (15 VRS staff and 15 community rehabilitation program staff) to ensure an adequate number of trainers to continue the project. In addition to supporting joint training to maintain qualified staff, the placement partnerships share job leads and host job fairs and other community events.

In 2012 a Next Generation Placement Design Team was developed, consisting of 18 key VRS and CRP leaders who engaged in a facilitated process to develop the 'Next Generation' of placement services for the benefit of job seekers and employers. The model was piloted in each region of the state (northern,

metro, and southern) and at the Deaf/Hard of Hearing Units in St. Paul and St. Cloud. The model is currently being expanded statewide to all geographic areas of the state and all VR communities (VRS, community rehabilitation programs and limited use vendors).

The vision of Next Generation Placement is that job seekers will be better prepared to actively engage with the placement team to secure integrated competitive employment. The placement team will provide coordinated, effective and individualized support to the job seeker and employers, including access to ongoing supports to help the person maintain and advance in their employment. Employment will increase self-sufficiency, thus further increasing the person's integration in the community. The employer will also be more engaged and willing to provide job skill evaluations, job tryouts and on the job training. The initial evaluation of the project is very promising. For example, one employer has completed 79 job skill evaluations or job tryouts, and hired 31 of the people. The employer has directly hired another 25 people.

The SGA Project, implemented in August, 2015, is piloting another strategy for engaging consumers and employers. The consumer works with a core team consisting of a counselor, benefits planner and placement specialist. The consumer can add additional people if desired, such as an independent living counselor or mental health worker. The counselor and placement specialist focus on helping the person decide on a vocational goal that exists in the local economy, while the benefits planner helps the person set an income goal. The placement plan is developed at the same time as the Employment Plan, even if the person will be entering a training program. If the person is entering a highly competitive field, the placement specialist may recommend internships or other services that will give the consumer a competitive edge over other job applicants. Frequently, the internship leads to a job offer.

INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

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

(h)(1) the State Medicaid plan under Title XIX of the Social Security Act;

(h)(2) the State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities; and

(h)(3) the State agency responsible for providing mental health services.

THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT

Medical Assistance, the state's Medicaid program, is administered by the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS). Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) and State Services for the Blind (SSB) collaborate closely with DHS in the provision of a variety of Medicaid services:

Waiver Programs: Medicaid participants with disabilities who need a defined level of care and choose to live in the community may be eligible for one of the following waivers to help fund the cost of community living and supportive employment:

- **Brain Injury Waiver:** the person must have a traumatic, acquired or degenerative brain injury and require the level of care typically provided in a nursing facility or neurobehavioral hospital.
- **Community Alternatives for Disabled Individuals (CADI) Waiver:** the person must have a disability and require the level of care typically provided in a nursing facility.
- **Developmental Disability Waiver:** the person must have a developmental disability or related condition and require the level of care typically provided in an Intermediate Care Facility for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (ICF/DD).

There is joint planning occurring between the Waiver Programs and the state funded Extended Employment program to maximize the number of people who can access competitive integrated employment through the provision of supported employment services. Many counties have waiting lists for waiver services.

VRS and SSB access Medicaid dollars to pay for durable medical supplies such as wheelchairs, hearing aids and communication boards. Medicaid has limits on what they will pay for specific items. If the rehabilitation counselor feels the consumer would benefit from an “upgrade” to the item, Vocational Rehabilitation can pay the difference between the Medicaid payment and the cost of the upgraded product. Medicaid will apply the VR payment to the consumer's spenddown.

Minnesota's Medicaid Infrastructure Grant was a joint project of the Department of Human Services, the DEED (VRS and SSB) and the State Council on Disability. Collaborative efforts started utilizing grant funding has been continued using state appropriations, including:

- Disability Linkage Line (DLL): The DLL is a partnership between DHS and the Centers for Independent Living to provide disability related information and referral resources for Minnesotans with disabilities. Assistance is available in the areas of accessible housing, personal care services, transportation, employment, disability benefits, assistive technology, and other community resources. Services are available through a toll free number or [online](#). The most recent expansion of the DLL has been in the area of benefits planning and benefits analysis for beneficiaries of Social Security benefits.
- Disability Benefits 101: [DB101](#) is a free online service operated by the Disability Linkage Line that was initially developed using Medicaid Infrastructure grant funding. The program allows people to plan for their future by providing estimator sessions showing how income will impact benefits, explores effective use of work incentives, helps people establish work goals, and provides answers to questions through live chat, phone or email. The program includes short videos of success stories. Many of the DLL staff are certified Community Work Incentive Coordinators and can provide benefits analysis services if there are complex issues. Utilizing Department of Labor - Disability Employment Initiative funding, a new Section on Work Benefits for Youth has been added. In addition to VRS and SSB staff being actively involved in the development of the online program, consumers were actively involved in the BETA testing to make sure the program was accessible to individuals with disabilities.
- SGA Project: the Institute on Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts – Boston has received RSA funding to demonstrate effective strategies to assist SSDI beneficiaries achieve income above the substantial gainful activity (SGA) level. Minnesota VRS is one of the demonstration sites. At time of enrollment, the SSDI beneficiary is assigned a counselor, placement specialist and financial specialist. Eligibility for services is presumed within three days and the Employment Plan is developed within 30 days of application. VRS has partnered with the DLL to provide financial counseling in VR offices. RSA funding was used to provide the benefits planners with financial literacy training so that in addition to benefits planning the financial specialists can provide assistance with improving credits scores, paying off credit card debt, and developing savings plans. It is hoped that the combination of rapid engagement and financial planning services will lead to better outcomes. Although the SGA Project does not receive any Medicaid funding, the financial specialist positions would not have been possible without the initial collaboration with the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant.

STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY

The primary agency responsible for services for adults with disabilities is the Minnesota Department of Human Services. The Minnesota State Interagency Committee (MnSIC) has the responsibility to develop and implement a coordinated, multidisciplinary service system for children and youth with disabilities ages three to 21. The Committee brings together the Minnesota Departments of Education, Employment and Economic Development, Commerce, Corrections, Health, Human Rights, and Human Services to develop needed policy change to reduce duplication of local effort and to improve local response to the needs of children and families by developing a coordinated, multidisciplinary service system.

Minnesota's Olmstead Plan supports freedom of choice and provides a framework and a series of key activities that must be achieved to ensure Minnesotans with disabilities have the opportunity to live, learn, work and enjoy life in the most integrated setting desired by the person. Governor Mark Dayton appointed an Olmstead Subcabinet to develop and implement this plan. The Subcabinet consists of representatives of the MnSIC agencies listed above, the Housing Finance Agency, the Department of Transportation, the ombudsman for mental health and developmental disabilities, and the Executive Director of the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities.

VRS and SSB are involved in several joint projects with the above agencies:

- Individual Placement and Support (IPS): IPS services bring together mental health treatment services and vocational rehabilitation to help move people with serious mental illness into competitive employment. Participants are more likely to achieve employment success, leading to increased income, improved self-esteem, improved quality of life and reduced symptoms.
- Way to Work Project: Also referred to as the Ohio model, VRS has placed vocational rehabilitation counselors in a sheltered workshop to assess consumer needs and develop strategies to move the employees from segregated employment to competitive integrated employment. Dakota County, the Department of Human Services and VRS are studying effective ways to provide training, supports and benefits planning to assist people transition into the community.
- SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) Employment and Training: The Departments of Human Services and Employment and Economic Development are currently studying opportunities to blend SNAP funds with other anti-poverty funding to help move more people out of poverty.

COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

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

(i)(1)(A)(i) the number of personnel who are employed by the State agency in the provision of VR services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;

(i)(1)(A)(ii) the number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and

(i)(1)(A)(iii) projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the State agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

The Comprehensive System of Personnel Development is the planning framework for recruiting, developing and retaining qualified staff to carry out the state's vocational rehabilitation mission. Pursuant to Section 101 of the Rehabilitation Act, the plan addresses the following topics:

- The Need for Qualified Personnel
- Regional Higher Education for the Preparation of Vocational Rehabilitation Professionals
- Recruitment and Retention of Qualified Personnel
- Staff Training and Development
- Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs
- Coordination with Personnel Development of the State's Secondary Education System under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

QUALIFIED PERSONNEL NEEDS

In FFY13, VRS served 19,534 consumers and ended the year with an active caseload of 12,928 individuals, including 384 in applicant status. In FFY14, we anticipate serving approximately 18,620 consumers, and ending the year with an active caseload of 12,324, including 366 in applicant status. In FFY14, counselors will have an average caseload of about 77. U.S. Census Bureau data on the geographic distribution of Minnesotans with disabilities is used to determine the distribution of staff. The metro region has 152 positions, the northern region has 64 positions, and the southern region has 75 positions.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Services leadership team consists of a director, eight managers and an Office Services Supervisor. Direct supervision of field staff is provided by seventeen rehabilitation area managers and five rehabilitation supervisors. Twenty seven rehabilitation specialists and three other administrative specialists support the work of both administrative and field staff by providing technical assistance, training, and consultation. Direct service to VR consumers is provided by 156 rehabilitation counselors, augmented by five rehabilitation representatives, twenty one job placement coordinators, a business services representative, two community liaison representatives, and two Occupational Communication Specialists (sign language interpreters); seventy-five vocational rehabilitation technicians and 17 clerical staff provide support to both field and administrative offices.

VRS had nine retirements in calendar year 2013. There were nine voluntary resignations. The number of voluntary resignations has remained constant (around 2 percent) over the past five years. Between 2014 and 2019, 33 percent of VRS staff, including 23 percent of counselors and 44 percent of managers and supervisors will be eligible to retire.

Row	Job Title	Total positions	Current vacancies	Projected vacancies over the next 5 years
1	VRS program director/managers/supervisors (Admin)	10	0	5
2	Rehabilitation Area Managers/supervisors (field)	22	0	10
3	Rehabilitation Specialists	27	0	10
4	Rehabilitation Counselors	156	1	36
5	Rehabilitation Representatives	5	0	1
6	Job Placement/Business Services	21	0	9
7	Vocational Rehabilitation Technicians	75	0	30
8	Clerical Support	17	0	6
9	Other Admin/Field	10	0	5

Row	Job Title	Total positions	Current vacancies	Projected vacancies over the next 5 years
10	TOTAL	343	1	112

PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

(i)(1)(B) Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on personnel development with respect to:

(i)(1)(B)(i) a list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program;

(i)(1)(B)(ii) the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and

(i)(1)(B)(iii) the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

Three area graduate programs award master's degrees that prepare individuals to work as vocational rehabilitation counselors: Minnesota State University at Mankato; St. Cloud State University; and the University of Wisconsin - Stout. VRS maintains a collegial relationship with these programs, recruiting for internships and filling counselor positions from among graduates. The table below displays current enrollment and the number of rehabilitation counseling graduates available through these programs.

Row	Institutions	Students enrolled	Employees sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates from the previous year
1	Minnesota State University - Mankato	15	2	0	8
2	St. Cloud State University	25	0	0	9
3	University of Wisconsin – Stout	61	4	11	30

PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL

(i)(2) Describe the development and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated State unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

Internships commonly lead to permanent counseling positions. Seven students completed internships in 2013. One person completed an internship thus far in 2014, and two are currently in progress. We anticipate hosting additional interns beginning for the fall 2014 semester. A staff development specialist devotes approximately 10 percent time as the point of contact for managers, professors, interns, supervising counselors, and Human Resources to coordinate intern placement and supervision, and for counselor recruitment. Other activities include presentations to students, coordinating VRS participation in career fairs, and informing university personnel of counselor vacancies.

The VRS staff development manager is an active member of graduate counseling advisory committees at the University of Wisconsin - Stout and Minnesota State University, and communicates regularly with counseling program directors.

VRS provides tuition support for staff pursuing graduate degrees in rehabilitation counseling. Employees in the UW - Stout online program have also had access to RSA stipends to assist with some tuition costs. Two VRS employees graduated with Rehabilitation Counseling graduate degrees in 2013-2014, one of whom has since been promoted to a counselor position; five employees are in the process of completing degrees.

Media advertisement: VRS posts its vacancies at the State of Minnesota personnel openings website and the MinnesotaWorks job bank, as well as in newspapers.

Minnesota post retirement option: The post retirement option, which permits a state retiree to work up to half time without losing insurance or retirement benefits, is a component of VRS retention and succession planning strategies.

As a key strategy for staff retention, VRS pays close attention to organizational vitality and staff morale. VRS works to maintain a high level of employee engagement through statewide staff communication about the vision, mission, values, strategic goals and agency achievements, and a robust training and development program. VRS completed an Organizational Vitality survey in April 2013 and again in May 2014. Survey response rate increased to from 85 percent in 2013 to 88 percent this year. Findings indicate strong employee engagement on the key indicators measured. For example, 93 percent agreed that the VRS mission makes them feel their job is important, 93 percent agreed that they have the necessary training to do their job well, and 79 percent agreed that they were informed of decisions and issues that affect them and their work. Staff also provided suggestions for specific changes that would increase job satisfaction; response themes included continuing the commitment to training, increasing recognition and feedback, enhancing organization communications, reviewing system or policy issues, and addressing work environment issues. VRS plans to repeat the survey annually as a measure of employee engagement and as a tool to identify needed improvements in organizational effectiveness.

Counselors and other staff are recruited and hired under Minnesota's competitive civil service system, including affirmative action to recruit and hire individuals with disabilities and members of the state's diverse cultural and ethnic populations. Voluntary disclosure of ethnic and cultural status provides the following FFY13 data: 7 percent of VRS employees identify themselves as American Indian, Asian, Black or Hispanic/Latino, 91 percent identify themselves as White, and 2 percent are non-specified or undisclosed. At present, 10 percent of VRS employees voluntarily disclose a disability.

The New Americans team, based in the Twin Cities, offer vocational rehabilitation services to refugees who recently immigrated to Minnesota from countries such as Somalia, Ethiopia, Jamaica, Turkey, Congo, Guyana, Iraq, Nigeria, Egypt, Pakistan, Sudan and Eritrea. The New Americans team consists of a lead rehabilitation counselor and two community liaison representatives. They are themselves refugees from East African countries. Each member of the New Americans team is multi-lingual and provides intensive supports from application through employment closure to the VRS consumers they serve.

Coordination with professional associations: VRS staff serve on the board of the Minnesota Rehabilitation Association (MRA) and serve on MRA conference planning committees. A significant number of staff attend MRA conferences each year. VRS encourages staff membership in professional associations, and many serve as officers and work on association committees.

PERSONNEL STANDARDS

(i)(3) Describe the State agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards to ensure that designated State unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:

(i)(3)(A) standards that are consistent with any national or State-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing VR services; and

(i)(3)(B) the establishment and maintenance of education and experience requirements, to ensure that the personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.

Vocational rehabilitation counselors and other professional staff are hired through competitive examination under the Minnesota civil service system. The current rehabilitation counselor candidate examination was developed by a workgroup that comprises staff from VRS, State Services for the Blind, and the department's Office of Human Resources.

Qualifications for counselors are based on both educational preparation and professional work experience. The academic degree standard for Rehabilitation Counselors is the Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or a Master's Degree in a closely related field and evidence of completion of a graduate level course in counseling theories/techniques.

QUALIFICATIONS

Rehabilitation Counselors

- Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling; or
- A degree in a closely related field with evidence of completion of graduate level coursework in counseling theory/techniques. All of the agency's vocational rehabilitation counselors meet the state's standard.

Rehabilitation Representative

- Bachelor's degree in rehabilitation counseling or in a related social services field; or
- Bachelor's degree in any field, plus two years of experience providing employment related services for individuals with disabilities.

Placement Coordinator

- One year professional experience in which the primary focus was the provision of vocational services to individuals with disabilities; or
- Master's degree in behavioral science, counseling, vocational evaluation, job placement, vocational rehabilitation, or a closely related degree; or
- Three years of paraprofessional experience in which the primary focus was the provision of vocational services to individuals with disabilities.

Vocational Rehabilitation Technician

- A minimum of one year of experience in an organization whose mission includes the provision of services to persons who are injured or disabled so that an understanding and sensitivity toward individuals with disabilities has been obtained
- Customer service skills sufficient to perform intake, assist with forms, and to develop positive relationships with the consumers
- Keyboarding skills sufficient to create documents and complete data entry, and

- English sufficient to interview consumers and employers, present job-seeking skills training, and to draft correspondence or complete forms.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

(i)(4) Describe the State agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that all personnel employed by the designated State unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:

(i)(4)(A) a system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated State unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and

(i)(4)(B) procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to designated State unit professionals and paraprofessionals.

The staff development director is a member of the VRS management team and is responsible for the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development. A staff development specialist coordinates training, develops training programs to meet identified needs, and coordinates internships and other recruitment activities.

Staff development and training needs are assessed through interviews with field staff, reports from area managers and recommendations from staff groups and committees. Case review yields training needs information. A Staff Development Committee meets regularly to develop and guide staff development activity.

The comprehensive staff training and development plan describes core training curriculum for staff, identifies competencies required of each VRS position along with training strategies and resource information for each competency, and identifies specialized competencies for serving transition age youth. Annual performance reviews between supervisor and employee include a review of training and development needs of the employee.

Required training for new employees includes: New Employee Orientation, New Counselor Training, Data Practices, Ethics, Information Management, Purchasing Procedures, Work Incentives, Transition 101, Labor Market Resources and Updates, Vocational Assessment Interpretation, ADA, Introduction to Supported Employment and Motivational Interviewing. Online learning options available through the TACE and other entities are also available for new employees. A field trainer manual is available for use in on-the-job training of counselors.

Guidelines for funding continuing education contribute to agency succession planning, professional expertise and leadership capacity. Completion of an ethics course once every five years is a minimum expectation for all staff. Besides agency-required training, staff must complete at least one self-initiated elective training activity annually. The agency makes a concerted effort to publicize conferences and external training opportunities available to staff; these are a vital component of the overall staff development strategy as they enable counselors to obtain advanced training to meet individual learning and development goals for serving VR consumers.

The agency continues to focus and invest in training on motivational interviewing. Continuing learning opportunities are available for staff to build and expand upon their counseling skills using MI strategies; in addition we are building the capacity of internal staff to train, coach and mentor others on MI. TACE V is supporting Minnesota's MI training initiative via a contract with the Institute for Individual and

Organizational Change (IFIOC) to provide individualized audiotape coding and phone feedback for VRS staff. The Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Evidence Based Practice in Vocational Rehabilitation is currently conducting a study of the impact of our MI training efforts. The purpose of the study is to investigate the effect of motivational interviewing training for VR counselors on MI competencies, readiness to use MI in clinical practice, the working alliance with consumers, and case management performance; a counselor survey was deployed in February 2014 and researchers are analyzing 911 case service data relative to counselor survey responses and level of MI training completed.

We continue to offer a variety of in-service training programs to enhance counselor skills. As VRS expanded the Individual Placement and Support model for Persons with Serious Mental Illness (IPS), staff involved in the expansion projects received training on the IPS model of service delivery. Training has also been offered on Rehabilitation Approaches to Serving People with Mental Health Disorders, Mental Health First Aid, and ADHD, LD and EBD: Effective Rehabilitation Approaches. "Transition Services for 2013 and Beyond", offered in collaboration with PACER Center, addressed two critical training topics: 1) Counselor Advocacy with the Educational System, and 2) Engaging Families of Transition-age Youth. Transition Counselors also noted that a new training program offered this year "Understanding Special Education Evaluation Summary Reports" was extremely impactful on their practice. Training on Social Security Work Incentives is offered annually. "Assistive Technology: Basics of Principles and Practice", a new training program, provided introductory level of training on AT; team AT Liaisons also received advanced training in Assistive Technology. All field staff received training on a new Mandated Reporting policy, and refresher training was offered on "Determining Eligibility: Ability to Benefit".

VRS continues to support staff in attending external training that addresses individual development needs related to serving unique populations, including participation in the Minnesota Rehabilitation Association Conference, which this year offered two full day programs on serving individuals with mental health disorders and on working with families of transition-age youth.

An 18-month statewide case review cycle was completed on September 30, 2012 with results compiled in October 2012. Baseline results for the Assessment of VR Needs quality indicators: 66 percent met standard, 26 percent were "working toward" standard, and 8 percent did not meet the standard. For Employment Plan quality indicators: 86 percent met the standard, 8 percent were "working toward" standard, and 6 percent did not meet the standard. Teams have reported that the re-designed process is much more positive and conducive to learning and process improvement than they have experienced in previous review case review cycles. Given the needs noted for improvements to the Assessment of VR needs and Employment Plans, supervisors received training on a training module on Assessment of VR Needs they can implement at the team level. The 2013-2014 review cycle will be completed by September 30, 2014.

VRS and CRPs in Minnesota continue to make a concerted effort to work in partnership to serve VR consumers. Placement 101, a foundational training program in job placement for new VRS and CRP placement staff is offered on a quarterly basis with an average of 18 participants in attendance. The training design team also developed a training program on Business Engagement; implementation is pending infrastructure enhancements that will enable the rehabilitation community to successfully meet the needs of businesses. Training on a VRS initiated pilot project "Next Generation Placement", occurred in fall 2013; the pilot is designed to implement and assess the effectiveness of an enhanced team approach to providing job placement services.

Between August 2012 and March 2014, field managers and supervisors participated in Clinical Supervision Training offered by Pennsylvania State University as part of a NIDRR Field Initiated project designed to enhance clinical supervision among state VR supervisors. Members of the VRS Leadership team participated in a separate two-day overview of Clinical Supervision program with the goal of acquiring knowledge to be able to support field managers with integrating clinical supervision into their supervisory practices; we are working to identify local resources with clinical supervision expertise to provide follow up training and support to fully integrate clinical supervision practices. The VRS leadership team has defined a set of leadership competencies for the agency. A leadership development program for VRS staff has been designed and will be launched in October 2014. Two employees were sponsored to participate in the State of Minnesota's 7-month Emerging Leaders Institute, a program designed to enable participants to explore leadership in State government.

The DEED librarians routinely track and disseminate relevant research and journals. They also provide in-service training to VRS teams on how to use the department's advanced online library search capabilities and on effective use of social media.

In the next year, priorities are to continue to build counseling and counseling supervision skills along with developing internal capacity to provide ongoing training in Motivational Interviewing, to implement a Leadership Development program for VRS, to develop strategies and resources to support regional staff development activities, and to continue to build skills of VRS and CRP Placement staff.

PERSONNEL TO ADDRESS INDIVIDUAL COMMUNICATION NEEDS

(i)(5) Describe how the designated State unit has personnel or obtains the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in appropriate modes of communication with or in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability.

VRS ensures that personnel and methods are available so that staff may communicate with consumers in a preferred language or other means of communication. Substantial numbers of VRS consumers use languages other than English, including: Cambodian, Lao, Vietnamese, Somali, Spanish, and American Sign Language. Translation of forms, information brochures and the ready availability of purchased interpreter services or a multilingual staff member ensures effective communication statewide.

The addition of a highly qualified State Coordinator on Deaf Services in 2012 has greatly enhanced agency capacity to serve consumers who are deaf or hard of hearing. In addition to the State Coordinator on Deaf Services, twenty four staff are conversationally competent in American Sign Language, including six VRS managers/supervisors, ten counselors, three placement specialists, two VR technicians, a Rehabilitation Representative, and two Occupational Communication Specialists (who are also certified sign language interpreters). Deaf and hard of hearing specialists in eight locations are using a video remote interpreting platform called Polycomm's Real Presence to supplement the use of onsite interpreting services and provide more options for accessibility. Counselors are also using videophones, FaceTime and Microsoft Lync to communicate, and new video communication platforms are being offered which allow hearing staff to communicate directly with deaf and hard of hearing consumers via desktop or laptop computers.

COORDINATION OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

(i)(6) Describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated State unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

VRS has a collaborative agreement with the Minnesota Department of Education, Minnesota's secondary education system. This is augmented by Department of Education representation on the State Rehabilitation Council and VRS participation on the Minnesota State Interagency Coordinating Team, with staff support by VRS program specialists for transition services and services for people with autism.

STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

(j)(1) Provide an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the state, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of those:

(j)(1)(A) with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;

(j)(1)(B) who are minorities;

(j)(1)(C) who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;

(j)(1)(D) who have been served through other components of the statewide workforce development system; and

(j)(1)(E) who are youth with disabilities and students with disabilities, including, as appropriate, their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition services.

(j)(2) Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State.

(j)(3) Include an assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition career services and pre-employment transition services, and the extent to which such services are coordinated with transition services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This needs assessment is a report jointly developed under the direction of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), a division of the Minnesota DEED, and the Minnesota State Rehabilitation Council. These entities are recognized by Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), United States Department of Education, as the state's vocational rehabilitation agency and council under the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NEEDS FRAMEWORK

The project team examined needs across various populations, subgroups, and disabilities, using a large variety of sources, including providers, agencies, experts, advocates and consumers. In addition to the objective data and qualitative data about consumer needs, this needs assessment contains updates to the literature review.

The data have been organized into four general categories (Transition Services, Employment Preparation, Employer Relationships and Long Term Supports) which represent areas of need consistently identified in previous assessments. Within those categories, needs were identified as either "Consistent and Documented" or "Potential and Emerging". The fifth category – Communications – identifies both internal and external communication needs.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES NEEDS

TRANSITION SERVICES

CONSISTENT AND DOCUMENTED

To improve the likelihood of future employment, Transition Plans should contain a Career Development Section. The Section should contain expectations for Work Experiences or Internships to explore potential careers and work experience opportunities. So that deaf and hard of hearing transition consumers can participate in Career Development, there is a need for ASL interpreters for career development classes and work experiences/internships. Career development discussions should begin as early as the ninth grade and possibly in middle school.

Parents consistently express two ways to improve the transition planning process: 1) alternative meeting locations, other than just the school, for meetings between VRS counselor and consumer and 2) parent forums or parent support groups where parents of transition-age consumers can air their concerns and issues with other parents and VRS staff in an informal setting.

In 2012, a survey of VRS staff serving transition-age youth found:

- -56 percent of staff had seen a large increase in the last two years in the amount of time spent with transition-age consumers with challenging disability-related barriers;
- -53 percent of staff wanted additional training in career development services;
- -42 percent of staff wanted additional training on developing and maintaining productive relationships with parents and family.

POTENTIAL AND EMERGING

There is an increasing incidence of individuals diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). The diagnosis usually occurs while the individual is a child. In FFY06 VRS served 175 ASD consumers. In FFY12 VRS served 488 ASD consumers. Emerging needs in the provision of services to persons with ASD include: a) individuals without cognitive disability may be ineligible for developmental disability services but require long-term, ongoing supports, b) staff and programs may have little experience with ASD clients, and best-practices research is limited, c) traditional services are often not suitable for persons with ASD, as highly individualized services are required, and d) there are not good assessment and vocational evaluation tools for persons with ASD. The increasing number of youth with ASD provided focus on their specific needs for career development:

- Guidance to develop individualized postsecondary education, employment and independent living goals for life after high school
- A work-based learning plan between the student, employer and job specialist that requires discussion about agreed upon work goals and ongoing evaluation
- Job hunting skills (i.e., resume writing, cover letter writing, and interviewing skills) in collaboration with local one-stop career centers
- Training and opportunities to practice self-advocacy and self-determination skills in work and college settings services that will ensure they meet employment goals
- Work experience in community-based settings including service learning,

Many parents have a preference for continued involvement in their child's case after the child reaches age 18. Although options exist to allow continued involvement, parents would like a more “assertive” stance by VRS to encourage parental participation. This is slightly tempered by children who want to assert their independence and do not wish to have their parents involved after the age of 18.

EMPLOYMENT PREPARATION NEEDS

CONSISTENT AND DOCUMENTED

Historically, approximately 44 percent of VRS consumers with a signed placement plan do not find employment before having their case closed. Research continues to stress the importance of a consistent and engaged counseling relationship between counselor and consumer. Engagement needs include regular and predictable VRS counselor contact while a consumer attends training/schooling and then when the consumer begins looking for employment.

Consumers need a variety of work experiences to prepare for competitive work. These could include: internships, job shadowing, job tryouts. Within those work experiences, consumers need more options for the intensity of services (very low to very high) and cost (inexpensive to expensive) in order to meet their needs at different points in the employment preparation process.

The Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee identified several strategies to increase the number of successful employment outcomes: a) ensure a high quality “Assessment of VR Needs” by the counselor and include the assessment with all referrals to a CRP, b) promote greater use of a team approach in referral decisions; involve counselor, consumer and potential CRP/LUV placement professional, c) after a placement plan is signed, reconvene the team (minimum of counselor, consumer and placement professional) for a 90-day check-in to assess progress of the Employment Plan, d) amend plan (services, outcomes, expectations) when necessary to achieve employment, e) restructure the PBA (performance based agreement) payment system to better align benchmark payment timing and amount of payment with when the work occurs (the job search and job support phases tend to be the most intensive part of the process), d) re-educate placement teams that the Employment Plan process is a flexible and fluid process which should provide a level of support (from low to high) commensurate with the needs of the consumer.

National discussions about the quality and skill level of potential employees suggest that all future job candidates must have post-secondary education along with related work experience and a readiness to work full time. But the data indicates otherwise. Business surveys show that the percentage of jobs which requires those three things varies dramatically by job class and geographic area. There are still many jobs for individuals who lack a post-secondary education or related work experience, and who prefer to work part time. VRS's desire to place consumers in competitive employment at a living wage and progressively reduce the client's dependence on public benefits can run counter to a consumer's desire to only work part time and not reduce their benefits.

There is generally good alignment between the job goals of VRS consumers and the projected hires by occupation for the period 2010-2020. Three of the occupations which are low job priorities for VRS consumers but projected as high hiring areas are: Health Diagnosing and Treating Practitioners (5th in projected hires, 26th in rank as a VRS consumer job goal), Construction Trade Workers (6th in projected hires, 30th in rank as a VRS consumer job goal) and Business Operations Specialists (7th in projected job hires, 27th in rank as a VRS consumer job goal). Two occupations which are higher job priorities for VRS consumers but lower projected hires are: Secretaries and Administrative Assistants (28th in projected hires, 12th as a VRS consumer job goal) and Other Food Preparation and Serving – Related Workers (29th in projected job hires, 10th as a VRS consumer job goal).

POTENTIAL AND EMERGING NEEDS

Minnesota has closed three out of four VRS service categories and is now working primarily with consumers with the greatest needs. How to prepare these consumers in the best manner possible so that employers see these individuals as viable employees is a constant and evolving need.

EMPLOYER RELATIONSHIPS NEEDS

CONSISTENT AND DOCUMENTED NEED

Current and potential employers want to know the financial and employment implications of hiring individuals with disabilities. Surveys suggest that businesses would appreciate knowing the effect on their bottom line – their return on investment – for hiring individuals with disabilities. Businesses would like to hear from other businesses about real cases and real costs for making accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). VRS should be able to explain the “value added” for businesses which hire individuals with disabilities and to explain the altruistic benefits for hiring individuals with disabilities. VRS needs to better describe the scope of VRS's services and what supports VRS offers after a person with a disability is hired.

Businesses identified four specific needs which could increase their hiring of individuals with disabilities: 1) access to trusted, credible sources of information related to disability employment, 2) evidence of applicant performance, 3) follow-up coaching and support for supervisors, 4) regular communication between employer and the VRS. Businesses want local reliable information resources on Minnesota and federal disability policies and accommodations. That need is heightened with the proposed federal regulations requiring businesses with federal contracts to work towards a goal of 7 percent of their workforce being individuals with disabilities.

On the consumer side of the equation, the State Rehabilitation Council identified three needs for improving employment: a) use old and new recruitment strategies for “telling” employers that VRS has a large employment-ready workforce, b) recruit a group of businesses with extensive experience employing individuals with disabilities who would be willing to “mentor” a business that would like to start hiring individuals with disabilities.

The research of Song, et al (2013) picks up on this theme. They found that employers tend to have low expectations about the job skills of a person with disabilities, but factors other than job skills are more important to employers – following instructions, integrity/honesty, punctual, being respectful and attending to safety. Reading/writing competencies and basic work skills were in high demand. In a good trend, employers increasingly recognize that costs associated with hiring individuals with disabilities are reasonable and negotiable. As would be expected, if an employer hires a person with disabilities, they show favorable attitudes towards hiring additional individuals with disabilities and can identify the advantages of those hires. The reverse tends to be true for employers who have not hired a person with disabilities.

LONG-TERM SUPPORT NEEDS

CONSISTENT AND DOCUMENTED NEEDS

Previous Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessments have identified a high level of need for long-term supports. The skill level of VRS counselors to both identify long term support needs during the development of the Individual Employment Plan and identify possible long-term support service options for the consumer (including VRS's own Extended Employment/Supported Employment program) has been identified as an area needing additional training. While virtually all VRS consumers would benefit

from some type of long-term supports, research and community input identified certain populations as noticeable underserved: Mental Illness, Traumatic Brain Injury, Autism Spectrum Disorders and Deaf and Hearing Impaired.

Consumers and organizations familiar with long-term support needs listed certain support services for the period 6 months, 12 months, 18 months, and longer after a consumer has started employment. Those services included: a) personal support for life issues that accompany a job, b) how to disclose a disability, c) how to quit a job, d) how to make oneself visible and promotion-worthy within a company, e) negotiating workplace accommodations, and f) understanding the performance appraisal purpose and process.

There is a need to identify ongoing funding resources for independent living support services. County budget reductions coupled with a decline in the number of waiver slots poses significant challenges to providing joint VRS/DHS/County funding for services for long-term support.

Greater Minnesota's circumstances – fewer and more dispersed organizations offering long-term support services – presents a barrier to meeting long-term support needs. Consumers and providers recognize the need for a richer mix of long-term support and Supported Employment services outside of the metropolitan area. Before developing new programs, there is a need to more clearly identify the problem and barriers to resolving the problem: Are VRS's pay-for-performance rates high enough to draw providers to underserved areas? For providers, are the barriers to entry a capacity issue (need more providers or more slots in existing programs), a coordination issue (more efficient/effective use of county waiver funds and VRS Supported Employment funds), an effectiveness issue (are the most effective providers receiving the majority of funds) or a financial issues (cash flow from contract payments is insufficient to recoup start-up costs in a reasonable amount of time).

POTENTIAL AND EMERGING NEEDS

Given the continual identification of long-term supports/Supported Employment as a need, explore the possibility of creating a Program Specialist position(s) for planning and promoting long term supports including Supported Employment among VRS counselors. Consider how the evolving Placement Partnerships could play in role in meeting and/or resolving long-term support needs, especially in Greater Minnesota.

COMMUNICATION NEEDS

CONSISTENT AND DOCUMENTED NEED

The rehabilitation community has a general consensus of a need to better describe the purpose, availability and extent of rehabilitation services in Minnesota. VRS convened a work group comprising communication representatives from various CRPs and that group identified needs for improved communication:

- Helping vocational rehabilitation communities to develop key messages and to speak with one voice
- Addressing branding challenges and opportunities for the VR Community
- Getting better at “Telling Our Story”
- Developing an effective, system-wide media outreach plan
- Helping the general public understand what services are available
- Developing messages that speak to each audience in language they understand

- Working to motivate others into action – shifting mindsets to increase awareness, interest and support for competitive employment for individuals with disabilities and other barriers
- Gathering and synthesizing relevant inputs on outreach needs, messages and efforts
- Providing support for stronger VR communication strategy and execution
- Working on actual projects that help progress/results toward strategic outreach goals
- Creating more streamlined access to important information and resources such as contacts, expertise, and links for education and training

Legislators, businesses and the general public need to know if the public expenditures for VRS services are effective and a good investment of public dollars. There are many demands for public funding and it is incumbent on VRS to be able to show if the investment of public dollars is a prudent financial decision. In 2012, VRS replicated a Return on Investment methodology developed by the State of Virginia Rehabilitation Services and economists from the University of Richmond. That analysis provided a first look at ROI for VRS. Based on the results of that analysis, there is a need for further parsing the information for that cohort (2003) as well as analyze another cohort (2007) to see if the trends for the 2003 cohort are similar for a later cohort.

Other communication needs regarding the use of public funds include: There is a need to understand the difference in costs/wages between the various disability groups and the factors underlying those differences, e.g., type of services received by consumer, length of time of service, speed of wage gains; a need to better utilize technology to improve service and productivity within VRS and to improve and expand the participation of consumers, providers, staff and citizens in the discussion of needs and strategies for VRS.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES

(k) Describe

(k)(1) The number of individuals in the State who are eligible for services.

(k)(2) The number of eligible individuals who will receive services under the VR program; the Supported Employment Program; and each priority category, if under an order of selection.

(k)(3) The number of individuals who are eligible for VR services, but are not receiving such services due to an order of selection, and

(k)(4) The cost of services for the number of individuals estimated to be eligible for services. If under an order of selection, identify the cost of services for each priority category.

ESTIMATE OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS WHO WILL BE SERVED

In FFY16, Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) anticipates serving about 17,240 persons under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, all of whom will be individuals with either a significant disability or a most significant disability under Minnesota's administrative rule for vocational rehabilitation. It is estimated that about 15,480 (89 percent) will be persons who have a most significant disability, and about 1,760 (11 percent) will be persons with a significant disability.

ESTIMATE OF THE NUMBER OF PERSONS POTENTIALLY ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES

Of the approximately 225,000 Minnesotans between the ages of 16 and 64 with two or more long-lasting disabilities, it is estimated that approximately 150,000 are eligible for vocational rehabilitation services.

ESTIMATES WITHIN PRIORITY CATEGORIES

In FFY16, it is estimated that about 15,480 persons with serious limitations in three or more functional areas (priority category one) will be served at an approximate case service cost of \$16.9 million; about 1,270 persons will be served who have serious limitations in two functional areas (priority category two) at an approximate case service cost of \$1.2 million; and about 490 persons will be served who have a serious limitation in one functional area (priority category three) at an approximate case service cost of \$460,000.

ESTIMATE OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

It is estimated that 3,000 individuals will have individualized employment plans with a supported employment goal in FFY16 under Title VI Part B, Supported Employment Services Program. The approximate cost of purchased services for these individuals will be \$4,500,000. Under the administrative rule enacted to establish Minnesota's order of selection, all persons receiving supported employment services must be found to have three or more serious functional limitations (priority category one).

ESTIMATE OF OUTCOMES

In FFY16, approximately 2,875 individuals will obtain an integrated competitive outcome that is approved by the U.S. Secretary of Education. All of these will be individuals with significant or most significant disabilities.

Category	Title I or Title VI	Estimated Funds	Estimated Number to be Served	Average Cost of Services
Priority Category One: Open	Title I	\$16,890,000	15,480	\$1,091
Priority Category Two: Closed	Title I	\$1,230,000	1,270	\$968
Priority Category Three: Closed	Title I	\$460,000	490	\$938
Priority Category Four: Closed	Title I	\$0	0	0
Totals		\$18,580,000	17,240	\$1,078

STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

(l) The designated State unit must:

(i)(1) Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the State VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the State has a Council, and jointly agreed to any revisions.

(i)(2) Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs.

(i)(3) Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas:

(i)(3)(A) the most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates;

(i)(3)(B) the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of Section 116 of WIOA; and

(i)(3)(C) other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under Section 107.

Four goals, including strategic priorities for each goal, have been developed based on the comprehensive statewide needs assessment, a review of agency performance for the previous fiscal years, and input from the State Rehabilitation Council and CRP Advisory Committee. The goals were jointly approved by Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the Minnesota State Rehabilitation Council.

Goal 1 is the primary goal. Goals 2 through 4 support the achievement of Goal 1. Progress in achieving the goals is measured by establishing outcome measures for Goal 1 and process measures for the remaining goals.

Goal 1: More jobs, better jobs

The result of this goal is expanded job opportunities and improved employment outcomes for Minnesotans with disabilities.

Goal 1 Strategic priorities and measures:

VRS will:

- A. Increase the number of employment outcomes
 - 1. Using the results from FFY13 as the baseline, employment outcomes will increase by 25 in each of the next two FFYs (2014 and 2015)
- B. Increase the quality of employment outcomes
 - 1. All VRS managers, counselors and VR Technician Seniors will have attended four informational sessions on Social Security work incentives and benefits planning by the end of FFY15.
 - 2. During FFY14 VRS will collect baseline data on consumer satisfaction with their employment outcomes. The baseline data will be used to establish future targets for customer satisfaction.
- C. Expand development of long-term supports
 - 1. Increase annually the number of VRS consumers who are leveraging Extended Employment/Supported Employment funding for on-going supports.
- D. Improve consistency of transition services received by students who are in high school
 - 1. Increase work experience opportunities for VRS consumers in school to work transition.

Goal 2: Organizational vitality

The result of this goal is a vibrant organization providing the best possible services to Minnesotans with disabilities.

Goal 2 Strategic priorities for FFY14:

VRS will:

- A. Develop a program evaluation framework.
- B. Establish a leadership development program for current and emerging leaders.
- C. Implement the first stage of a University of Wisconsin research study to assess counselor competency in motivational interviewing.

Goal 3. Effective partnerships

The result of this goal is the establishment and strengthening of system-wide collaborative partnerships that fully use resources to serve Minnesotans with disabilities.

Strategic priorities:

- A. In FFY14 and 2015 the Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee, State Rehabilitation Council and Statewide Independent Living Council will rate the effectiveness of their partnership with VRS as at least 80 percent effective.
- B. In FFY14 VRS and the VR community, led by the VRS Community Outreach Team, will prepare and implement a collaborative system-wide marketing and branding outreach plan.

Goal 4. Employer engagement

The result of this goal is that VRS and the VR community will embrace serving businesses and other employers as key customers. This effort will produce long-term, enduring, mutually satisfying relationships and increased employment outcomes for VRS consumers.

Strategic Priorities

- A. Throughout FFY14 and 2015 VRS and Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) managers will continue to develop local placement partnerships throughout each of Minnesota's three regions and to create a locally consistent framework for service that engages and meets the needs of businesses and employers.
- B. By the end of FFY14, an active placement partnership will be established for 80 percent of the VR teams. By the end of FFY15, an active placement partnership will be established for 95 percent of VR teams.
- C. Placement partnership members will share and track job leads within the VR Community on a timely basis and in a coordinated manner in order to a) improve responsiveness to employers, and b) increase employment outcomes for VR consumers.

Section (P) Evaluation and Reports of Progress provides a baseline that will be used to measure the state's performance under the performance accountability measures of Section 116 of WIOA. VRS believes the goals and priorities outlined above will result in continuous improvement in our performance measures.

ORDER OF SELECTION

(m) Describe

(m)(1) The order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided VR services.

(m)(2) The justification for the order.

(m)(3) The service and outcome goals.

(m)(4) The time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.

(m)(5) How individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities; and

(m)(6) If the designated State Unit has elected to serve eligible individuals, regardless of any established order of selection, who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment.

Minnesota Vocational Rehabilitation Services implemented an Order of Selection in 1993, setting forth who will be served first when the program cannot serve all eligible individuals. Determination of eligibility and qualification for service is based on the applicable Minnesota administrative rule and the Minnesota Vocational Rehabilitation Policy and Procedure Manual.

Annual State and Federal resources allocated for Minnesota's Vocational Rehabilitation Services program continue to not be sufficient to serve all Minnesotans who are eligible for services. Conclusions regarding capacity of the Minnesota vocational rehabilitation program in any given year are based on:

1. An analysis of resources available for annual operation of the vocational rehabilitation program,
2. expenditures required to implement employment plans approved prior to commencement of the fiscal year,
3. the anticipated costs for determining eligibility and qualification for service of new applicants during the fiscal year,
4. the anticipated costs of implementing approved vocational rehabilitation plans for new applicants during the fiscal year, and
5. reasonable and necessary costs related to administration of the vocational rehabilitation services program.

Program expenditures were exceeding annual program resources, requiring the agency to use carryover funds from the previous year to meet all financial obligations. The budget forecast for FFY14 indicated a continuing trend in deficit spending. This fiscal situation required the agency to implement several budget reduction measures, including the closing of Priority Categories Two and Three on October 14, 2013. Priority Category Four (individuals who have a disability that makes them eligible for service but do not have a serious limitation in a functional area) has been closed since 1993.

The State Rehabilitation Council received monthly updates on the budget situation, including the impact of sequestration, and was actively involved in the process to determine if and when to close Priority Categories Two and Three.

There are currently 625 individuals on the waiting list (6 on Priority Category Four, 201 on Priority Category Three, and 418 on Priority Category Two). Individuals on the waiting list are provided information and referral to other programs that may meet the person's needs. Although the above categories remain closed, VRS used RSA reallocation dollars to take everyone off of the Category 2 and 3 waiting lists who had been found eligible for services prior to October 15, 2014.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

ELIGIBILITY FOR VR SERVICES

A person is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services from the general VR agency when they have a physical or mental impairment that constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment, and they require vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment.

Qualifications for VR Services

A person is qualified for vocational rehabilitation services from the General VR agency when they are eligible and found to have serious functional limitations due to a severe impairment and wish to obtain, retain, or regain employment.

Service Priority

The order of selection establishes service priority based on the number of functional areas in which a person has significant limitations to employment. Persons with limitations in more functional areas are deemed to have more significant disability. It is intended by the order of selection that persons with the most significant disabilities will be served first when all persons who are eligible cannot be served.

Waiting List

When annual program resources are insufficient to serve qualified new applicants and to serve all current customers through the end of the fiscal year, a priority category may be closed. New applicants who qualify in a closed category are then placed on a statewide waiting list for that category. Closing a category slows the rate of increase in the number of persons being served. It conserves resources so that obligations to persons who are already being served may continue to be met.

Functional Areas

Serious limitations in life skills in one or more of the following areas, as defined:

- A. Communication: the ability to effectively give and receive information through words or concepts, such as reading, writing, speaking, listening, sign language, or other adaptive methods
- B. Interpersonal skills: the ability to establish and maintain personal, family, and community relationships as it affects, or is likely to affect, job performance and security.
- C. Mobility: the physical and psychological ability to move about from place to place inside and outside the home, including travel to and from usual destinations in the community for activities of daily living, training, or work.
- D. Self-care: the skills needed to manage self or living environment, such as eating, toileting, grooming, dressing, money management, and management of special health or safety needs, including medication management, as they affect an individual's ability to participate in training or work-related activities.
- E. Self-direction: the ability to independently plan, initiate, organize, or carry out goal-directed activities or solve problems related to working.
- F. Work skills: (1) the ability to do specific tasks required to carry out job functions; and (2) the capacity to benefit from training in how to perform tasks required to carry out job functions.
- G. Work tolerance: the capacity or endurance to effectively and efficiently perform jobs requiring various levels of physical demands, psychological demands, or both.

Serious Limitation

A serious limitation in a functional area means that, due to a severe physical or mental impairment, the individual's functional capacities in the specific area are restricted to the degree that they require services or accommodations not typically made for other individuals in order to prepare for, enter, engage in, or retain employment. Accommodations are defined as special working conditions, job re-engineering, rehabilitation technology, or substantial support and/or supervision.

List of Physical or Mental Disabilities

Physical or mental disabilities resulting from amputation, arthritis, autism, blindness, burn injury, cancer, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, deafness, head injury, heart disease, hemiplegia, hemophilia, respiratory or pulmonary dysfunction, mental retardation, mental illness, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, musculoskeletal disorders, neurological disorders including stroke and epilepsy, paraplegia, quadriplegia, and other spinal cord conditions, sickle cell anemia, specific learning disability, and end-stage renal disease, or another disability or combination of disabilities determined on the basis of an assessment for determining eligibility and priority for services to cause comparable serious functional limitation.

Description of Priority categories

Service Priority Categories

Persons are served according to their priority category. When priority categories must be closed, lower priority categories are closed before higher categories. Persons leave their waiting list according to the priority of their category and their date of application for VR services.

- Priority Category One (first priority for service) includes all individuals with a most significant disability, that is, persons whose condition results in serious limitations in three or more functional areas.
- Priority Category Two (second priority for service) includes all individuals with a significant disability that results in serious functional limitations in two functional areas.
- Priority Category Three (third priority for service) includes all individuals with a significant disability that results in a serious functional limitation in one functional area.
- Priority Category Four (fourth priority for service) includes all other eligible customers. These customers have a disability that makes them eligible for service but they do not have a serious limitation in a functional area. This category has essentially been closed since 1993.

Priority of categories to receive VR services under the order

Service Priority: The order of selection establishes service priority based on the number of functional areas in which a person has significant limitations to employment. Persons with limitations in more functional areas are deemed to have more significant disability. It is intended by the order of selection that persons with the most significant disabilities will be served first when all persons who are eligible cannot be served.

Service and outcome goals and the time within which the goals will be achieved

FFY16 Service and Outcome Goals and the Time within which the goals will be achieved for Each Category of the Order:

In FFY16, under the order of selection currently in effect, approximately 17,240 individuals will be served. Approximately 2,875 individuals will achieve employment outcomes in FFY15.

Priority Category	Number of individuals to be served	Estimated number of individuals who will exit with employment after receiving services	Estimated number of individuals who will exit without employment after receiving services	Time within which goals are to be achieved	Cost of services
1	15,480	2,450	1,290	20.3 months	\$16,890,000
2	1,270	320	180	34.5 months	\$1,230,000
3	490	105	40	32.2 months	\$460,000
4	0	0	0		0

Vocational Rehabilitation Services has elected to not exempt individuals who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment from the Order of Selection.

GOALS AND PLANS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS

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

(n)(2) Describe the activities to be conducted, with funds reserved pursuant to section 603(d), for youth with the most significant disabilities, including the provision of extended services for a period not to exceed 4 years; and how the State will leverage other public and private funds to increase resources for extended services and expanded supported employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities.

ESTIMATE OF THE NUMBER OF PERSONS TO BE SERVED

During FFY15, about 2,950 individuals will be served with Title VI, Part B funds supplemented by Title I funds, at a purchased service cost of about \$2,610,000. Under the administrative rule that sets forth Minnesota's priority-for-service categories, all persons receiving supported employment have three or more serious functional limitations.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF STATE FUNDING

Title VI B and Title I funds are used to prepare people for supported employment. The VRS Extended Employment Program (VRS-EE) provides ongoing employment supports using state funding of \$12,075,000 annually that flows to community rehabilitation programs. More than 80 percent of this state funding provides extended services for persons in competitive employment with supports. The VRS-EE "basic" program serves all disability groups. An additional state appropriation of \$1,555,000 is dedicated to extended supported employment services for persons with serious mental illness since it has been historically difficult to obtain ongoing support services for this population.

SYSTEM COMPLEXITY AND LIMITED CAPACITY

Funding for supported employment, within which Title VI Part B funds play a relatively small part, is governed by a myriad of federal and state laws and rules covering many categories of services. For example, a network of private, not-for-profit organizations, licensed by the Department of Human Services Disability Services Division, provides training and habilitation services that may include supported employment. People with mental illness may receive work-related support through the State Comprehensive Mental Health Act. In these instances, each county determines the level of service that will be provided.

Title VI B supported employment funds are distributed on a fee-for-service basis under fee schedules developed with service providers. VRS collaborates with the Departments of Education and Human Services and county and local service providers to facilitate access to other funding and service resources. During development of a vocational rehabilitation employment plan, the vocational rehabilitation participant and the service team design a supported employment framework that best meets the participant's needs. Planning for eventual long-term supports in the community is a crucial part of planning during VRS' time-limited period of service. Minnesota has redistributed available VRS-EE funding to address waiting lists in some areas of the state.

STRATEGIC GOAL FOR EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

In FFY16, under the designated State unit's strategic goal for effective partnerships, VRS will continue to facilitate a statewide planning collaboration to better understand Minnesota's supported employment needs, revise the State Rule to shift more state dollars to integrated competitive supported employment work sites, address current service capacity and gaps, particularly those related to the development needs of community rehabilitation programs, the needs of transition-age youths, and the needs of underserved populations.

STATE'S STRATEGIES

(o) Describe the required strategies and how the agency will use these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome any barriers to accessing the VR and the Supported Employment programs.

(o)(1) The methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities.

Innovation and Expansion activities are developed in response to needs identified in the Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of Need, with a focus on ensuring equal access to services regardless of specific disability, impediment to employment, economic status, public assistance status, race, national origin, gender, sexual orientation or age.

This activity specifically addresses program access, and adherence to the employment non-discrimination principles requirements of Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act. VRS seeks partnerships with other public and private entities to increase access to vocational rehabilitation services and other employment services.

The State Rehabilitation Council plays a crucial role in identifying the needs of citizens with disabilities. The council conducts 10 meetings annually, along with public forums and numerous committee meetings to carry out its consultative and participative roles in the work of Vocational Rehabilitation Services. In 2015 the council participated in updating the VR combined plan and the comprehensive needs assessment, engaged in strategic planning, reviewed the policies and practices that guide the delivery of VRS services, and assisted in identifying program evaluation needs.

The employment Section of the Olmstead Plan, submitted to the U.S. District Court on November 1, 2013, establishes two goals: 1) Increase the employment rate for individuals with disabilities so that it is comparable to the employment rate of people without disabilities, and 2) increase the earnings of individuals with disabilities so that it is comparable to people without disabilities. There are four specific strategies that VRS will play an active role in: 1) Expand Individual Placement and supports in 17 additional counties, 2) promulgate changes to the State Rule governing Extended Employment, ending admissions to non-integrated and sub-minimum wage programs and shifting the state funding to integrated employment, 3) provide technical assistance to non-integrated employment programs to design new business models that lead to competitive employment in the most integrated setting, and 4) provide information about effective employment strategies, such as supported and customized employment, that make competitive employment possible for individuals with complex and significant disabilities. VRS is currently clarifying policy to ensure that all vocational rehabilitation services are provided in the most integrated setting appropriate for the person.

In FFY15, VRS utilized \$1,216,000 in funding for innovation and expansion activities. This includes funding for the State Rehabilitation Council, salaries for rehabilitation specialists focused on service innovation and program evaluation, and state funds for the Minnesota Employment Center for Individuals who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing.

(o)(2) How a broad range of assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process and on a statewide basis.

A rehabilitation technology specialist provides onsite assistive technology assistance to staff and consumers. He also coordinates with the Minnesota Department of Education to promote inclusion of assistive technology in transition plans, and coordinates with the national AgrAbility project to assist agricultural workers with disabilities maintain their employment. The specialist is supported by three

regional liaisons and a local liaison on each VR team. Placement coordinators assist employers in using rehabilitation technology to resolve employment barriers. The VRS website has an assistive technology page with links to nationally recognized websites. VRS coordinates closely with the STAR Program which operates an equipment loan program that allows consumers to try the assistive technology for 30 days before VRS purchases the equipment.

(o)(3) The outreach procedures that will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities, as well as those who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program.

(o)(4) The methods to be used to improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities, including the coordination of services designed to facilitate the transition of such students from school to postsecondary life.

VRS continues to expand services to minority populations. The New Americans VRS office in St. Paul employs multi-lingual staff of East African descent to provide outreach and services to recent immigrants, primarily from Somalia, who are not fluent in English. Other VRS offices hire bilingual staff as opportunities arise.

VRS and the Department of Corrections (DOC) utilize the same online interest and aptitude assessment to assist people make a smoother transition from incarceration to VR services. The goal is to assist people develop a vocational goal early, and then enroll in appropriate DOC adult basic education classes or other training programs while incarcerated. As part of the community release plan, the person then transitions to VR if appropriate for continued training and/or job placement assistance.

It is estimated that there are 315,000 Minnesotans of working age living with serious mental illness. VRS collaborates with the Department of Human Services (DHS) Adult Mental Health Division and with community partners to build supports and services for persons with serious mental illness (SMI), who now comprise 33 percent of the VR caseload and 32.5 percent of employment outcomes. Two models are currently in use to provide VRS and on-going support services.

Individual Placement and Support (IPS) is the evidenced based practice of supported employment for persons with serious mental illness. IPS helps people in community mental health treatment services to become part of the competitive labor market. Research indicates that IPS is nearly three times more effective than other vocational approaches in helping people with mental illness to work competitively. Research also shows that people who obtain competitive employment through IPS have increased income, improved self-esteem, improved quality of life and reduced symptoms. Approximately half of the people who enroll in IPS become steady workers and remain competitively employed a decade later.

Minnesota VR became part of the Johnson and Johnson Dartmouth Community Mental Health learning collaborative in 2006. VR has supported the implementation of IPS in Minnesota using VRS funding for time limited services via innovation and expansion grants, assignment of VR Counselor liaisons to IPS projects and VR purchase of services for VR time limited services. Minnesota now has increased the number of projects from eight to 25 using State funds and VRS purchase of services for time limited VR services.

The Coordinated Employability Project is a more traditional model. VRS coordinates short term services with 19 community rehabilitation programs that then provide the long term supports using state Extended Employment dollars. VRS is currently examining these two SMI service models to determine the impact national health care reform and state mental health budget cuts will have on this activity.

Historically, VRS has provided state funding to the Minnesota Employment Center (MEC) for Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, using an annual pass-through appropriation of \$300,000. VRS time limited services and MEC supported employment services have been closely coordinated to enhance employment opportunities for people who are deaf or have significant hearing loss. However, a legislative change in 2013 redirected the direct appropriation into a competitive grant pool. MEC has successfully competed for the available funding.

About 40 percent of VRS applicants receive SSA benefits. VRS was instrumental in establishing the Work Incentives Connection, a program of Goodwill Industries that provides work incentives planning and assistance for consumers and work incentives training for VRS staff. SSA, VRS and State Services for the Blind co-host periodic meetings of the Employment Networks. In addition to providing in-service training, the meetings provide an opportunity to learn more about the services offered by each Employment Network to assist consumers make informed choices when selecting a vendor for employment services and/or on-going job retention services. The current focus of this group is to expand the use of Ticket to Work funding to provide ongoing job retention supports, and to promote the use of PASS Plans.

Minnesota has been selected by the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at the University of Massachusetts – Boston as a demonstration site for the RSA funded demonstration grant to improve employment outcomes for VR customers who are SSDI beneficiaries (“The SGA Project”). Minnesota VRS is working closely with the ICI to promote rehabilitation counseling techniques that promote consumer engagement, provide early access to financial planning and benefits planning services, and provides early job development activities. Goals include presuming eligibility within 3 days, holding a meeting with the consumer to start benefits planning and to discuss Labor Market information within 7 days, and to implement the Employment Plan within 30 days.

(o)(5) If applicable, plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs within the State.

Program access to CRPs is monitored by reviewing compliance with CARF policies on program access, and by continuously monitoring the geographical coverage provided by the network of 63 CRPs.

VRS has an active CRP Advisory Committee to assist in achievement of common goals. Priority topics include "telling our story" (development of a Community Outreach Team to develop a strategic marketing and communications plan for the public/private partnership), input into the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment through completion of a community survey to identify strategic priorities, enhanced placement services through collaboration, preliminary work on a return on investment study, CRP input into the VRS administrative structure, collaborating with CRPs to provide paid internships for consumers, enhancements to supported employment services, and shared coordination and delivery of staff training. A sub-committee is currently actively involved in developing and implementing training for VRS and CRP job developers (Next Generation Placement). The Advisory Committee is also engaged in defining CRP quality measures that will support VRS' goals and priorities.

(o)(6) Strategies to improve the performance of the State with respect to the performance measures.

Performance, five-year trends, and specific strategies utilized to improve the agency's performance in meeting the evaluation standards and performance indicators, are included in Section (P).

(o)(7) Strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce development system in assisting individuals with disabilities.

WorkForce Centers (WFCs) serve a significant number of individuals with disabilities beyond the customers served by VRS and SSB. The needs assessment indicated that notable progress has been made toward achieving universal design; almost 100 percent of survey respondents indicated they felt WFC resources were universally available. However, WFCs need to articulate and better disseminate information about their program access.

VRS provides consultation to the WFCs' Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) federal grant to serve youth in transition and adults.

(o)(8) How the agency's strategies will be used to:

*(o)(8)(A) achieve goals and priorities by the State, consistent with the comprehensive needs assessment;
(o)(8)(B) support innovation and expansion activities; and
(o)(8)(C) overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the State VR Services Program and the state Supported Employment Services Program.*

The agency's strategies to achieve the goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion, and overcome identified barriers are fully discussed in Section (L) State Goals and Priorities.

EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (VR) AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT (SE) GOALS

(p)(1) An evaluation of the extent to which the VR Program goals described in the approved VR services portion of the Combined State Plan for the most recently completed program year were achieved. The evaluation must:

*(p)(1)(A) Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.
(p)(1)(B) Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.*

(p)(2) An evaluation of the extent to which the Supported Employment program goals described in the Supported Employment Supplement for the most recent program year were achieved. The evaluation must:

*(p)(2)(A) Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.
(p)(2)(B) Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.*

*(p)(3) The VR program's performance on the performance accountability indicators under Section 116 of WIOA.
(p)(4) How the funds reserved for innovation and expansion activities were utilized.*

The State Rehabilitation Council and VRS are committed to a disciplined process for making decisions that shape and guide VRS as an organization. Consumers, stakeholders and VRS staff contributed insights over many months to the planning process, resulting in the five goals. A strategic planning process is never finished. Changing consumer needs - as reflected by the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, program evaluation and ever-changing social, legal and economic circumstances - prompts an annual review of the goals and process measures.

Goal 1: More jobs, better jobs

The result of this goal is expanded job opportunities and improved employment outcomes for Minnesotans with disabilities.

VRS will:

- A. Increase the number of employment outcomes
- B. Increase the quality of employment outcomes
- C. Expand development of long-term supports
- D. Improve consistency of transition services received by students who are in high school

Goal 1 Outcome Measures:

A1. Using FFY13 as the baseline, employment outcomes will increase by 25 annually in each of the next two FFYs (2014 and 2015).

Progress to Date: The 2013 baseline is 2,738 placements. The 2014 performance was 2,869, a 131 increase over the previous fiscal year. The 2015 performance was 3,104, a 365 increase over the 2013 baseline.

B1. All VRS managers, counselors and VR Technicians Seniors will have attended four informational sessions on Social Security work incentives and benefits planning by the end of FFY15.

Progress to Date: All teams participated in training on Developing PASS Plans and a Disability Benefits 101 refresher. New employees participated in benefits planning training provided by local WIPA staff. An advanced course on benefits planning was also offered to all staff. VRS is one of the sites for the Institute for Community Inclusion's SGA Project. Eight staff completed a comprehensive three week training course on benefits and financial planning to help determine if in-house financial planning services will improve employment outcomes for SSDI beneficiaries. In addition to traditional benefits planning services, the financial specialist also helps people develop strategies to build savings, improve credit ratings, and achieve other financial goals.

B2. VRS will collect baseline data during FFY14 on consumer satisfaction with their employment outcomes. The baseline data will be used to establish future targets for customer satisfaction.

Progress to Date: VRS has decided to initially focus on determining the factors that keep consumers engaged in the VR process. Although satisfaction with employment outcome is very important, it is equally important that the person stays engaged in the process.

A new Consumer Engagement survey has been developed. Consumer Engagement is operationalized by the measure of three constructs: empowerment, partnership and performance. The survey was developed through meetings with 5 teams who contributed input into the development of the constructs to measure consumer engagement and survey items for those constructs. Once a survey was drafted, meetings were conducted with 5 teams to review and suggest modifications of the survey. Once the survey was developed, it was field-tested with approximately 50 consumers. Modifications were made based on the consumers' comments.

The survey was administered to a statewide sample. Response rate was over 80 percent and composite scores for consumer engagement it constructs were compiled. Overall, engagement across the State was in the 89-90 range on a scale of 1 to 100. The responses to the statewide sample were used to conduct a statistical analysis (Factor Analysis) to validate the construct measurements. Modifications to the survey items were made based on this analysis. Some items thought to measure one construct actually

measured another, or were equivocal. The survey will be offered to all consumers during the first counseling session after plan development.

C1. Increase annually the number of VRS consumers who are leveraging Extended Employment/Supported Employment funding for on-going supports.

Progress to Date: All direct service staff have received training on the available funding streams for supported employment. Measuring the impact of this training has been difficult due to the complexity of the funding streams, and the fact that a person may access multiple funding streams to meet specific needs. VRS works closely with the SSA funded Employment Networks to encourage leveraging of Ticket to Work funding to provide on-going supports. In FFY15, Employment Networks received over \$250,000 in SSA funding for post-VR job retention services.

D1. Improve work experience opportunities for VRS consumers in school to work transition.

Progress to Date: The Olmsted Plan places heavy emphasis on “Work First”. Transition students will have opportunities for integrated work experiences in the community before less integrated options are considered. VRS continues to support work try-outs, on the job training and paid work experiences to assist students make the transition to integrated competitive employment.

Goal 2: Organizational vitality

The result of this goal is a vibrant organization providing the best possible services to Minnesotans with disabilities.

VRS will:

- A. Develop a program evaluation framework

Progress to Date: VRS has developed and implemented an evaluation framework with three aspects:

1. A Director of Program Evaluation and Service Quality has been hired. He has clarified and articulated a development model of program evaluation and created a plan to progressively move VRS's evaluation work from compliance reports to sophisticated program analytics to measure State Plan and program outcomes and the factors supporting/hindering those outcomes;
2. revised internal operation details to support the model and ensure that there is alignment of evaluation efforts with VRS's direction and that new initiatives develop an evaluation design prior to the start of the initiative, and
3. VRS took steps to “demystify” data and program evaluation and increase the data skills of staff and managers. For common reports and common requests, VRS has been creating a series of Excel spreadsheets which are populated with client data. Each spreadsheet has a specific topic, e.g., placement, assessment, service costs, and includes data elements for those topics. In this way, managers and staff only need knowledge of Excel, Excel's Sort function, some capacity to create tables/charts and rudimentary skill with Pivot Tables to quickly answer their questions in these topic areas. This approach improved the productivity of evaluation staff to more quickly answer manager's questions and continued to embed an “evaluation” culture within VRS.

The Director position is currently vacant. An interim Director is continuing the focus on program evaluation, with an emphasis on identifying new data elements needed for WIOA reporting. Managers

received initial training on using Excel spreadsheets. Additional training will be provided as the report structure is finalized.

B. Establish a leadership development program for current and emerging leaders

Progress to Date: The VRS Leadership Exploration and Development (LEAD) Program was launched in November 2014. Thirteen VRS staff participated in the 12 month program, which included opportunities for self-assessment, increasing awareness of VRS strategic priorities, developing skills in leadership related competencies, experiential learning through leading a project, and reflective learning via participation in a peer-coaching process.

The State of Minnesota's Emerging Leader's Institute (ELI), a 7 month program designed to help participants explore leadership within State government, is available to a total of 60 State of Minnesota employees each year. Three VRS employees completed ELI in 2015, and one employee is participating in the 2015-16 ELI cohort.

Goal 3: Effective partnerships

The result of this goal is the strengthening of system-wide collaborative partnerships that fully use resources to serve Minnesotans with disabilities.

Strategic priority:

1. In FFY14 and 2015 the State Rehabilitation Council and the Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee will rate the effectiveness of their partnership with VRS as at least 80 percent effective.

The State Rehabilitation Council conducts an annual survey of the Council to rate the effectiveness of the Council. The average ranking for the questions ranged from 62 percent to 96 percent. Topics that exceeded the 80 percent threshold included VRS giving meaningful consideration to Council's advice (94.5 percent), clarity of the information provided by VRS (92 percent), clarity of data submitted to RSA (92 percent), completeness of the information provided about the required data reports (96 percent), timeliness of discussions (91.5 percent), and informing the Council of their statutory responsibilities (87.5 percent). Two areas of concern emerged from the survey. Some members felt member training and development would be improved if members mentored each other and if there was an expanded orientation for new members (62 percent ranking). Some members were either unclear or was unaware that there was a Council Work Plan (78 percent ranking).

The Community Rehabilitation Advisory Committee meets an average of six times per year. There has been substantial discussion this year on deepening and strengthening collaboration. Activities included co-hosting a statewide community partners meeting, sharing an understanding of WIOA regulations regarding Pre-Employment Transition Services and the impact this will have on VRS and CRPs, discussing a pilot program at ProAct (a center-based employment site) that will help transform centered-based programs to competitive integrated work opportunities, and providing an effective conduit for sharing important information with community providers and consumers.

Goal 4. Employer engagement

The result of this goal is that VRS and the VR community will embrace serving businesses and other employers as key customers. This effort will produce long-term, enduring, mutually satisfying relationships and increased employment outcomes for VRS consumers. New strategic priorities are included in Section (G) Coordination with Employers. Following is a progress report on the previous priorities:

Strategic Priorities

- A. Throughout FFY14 and 2015 VRS and Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) managers will continue to develop local placement partnerships throughout each of Minnesota's three regions and to create a locally consistent framework for service that engages and meets the needs of businesses and employers.

Progress to date: There are currently 18 local placement partnerships operating across the state. Placement 101, the joint training of VRS and CRP placement specialists, continues. To date, over 300 placement specialists from VRS and our community partners have attended this training.

- B. By the end of FFY14, an active placement partnership will be established for 80 percent of the VR teams. By the end of FFY15, an active placement partnership will be established for 95 percent of VR teams.

Progress to date: Each of the 17 VRS teams is represented on at least one of the 15 active placement partnerships. The more established partnerships are hosting job fairs, mentoring new staff, and operating as an effective partnership. Newer partnerships are still defining how they will operate and expanding community awareness of their services.

- C. Placement partnership members will share and track job leads within the VR Community on a timely basis and in a coordinated manner in order to a) improve responsiveness to employers, and b) increase employment outcomes for VR consumers.

Progress to Date: Job leads are shared via email or Google, and successful placements are tracked. Members frequently co-host Career Fairs and other employer events to engage employers.

QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

(q) Include the following:

(q)(1) The quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

(q)(2) The timing of transition to extended services.

Strategic Goal for the Supported Employment Services Program: Expand Minnesota's capacity to provide long term employment supports.

VRS utilized a Request for Proposals process to shift Extended Employment funding from areas with surplus capacity to areas with limited resources. This expanded Minnesota's service capacity for supported employment, including the supported employment needs of transition-age youths and young adults, low incidence populations of individuals with disabilities and other unserved and underserved populations. VRS is currently engaged in the rule making process to shift Extended Employment state dollars from center-based employment to integrated competitive work sites.

Following are the performance measures and the five-year trends:

Indicator 1.1: Number of consumers achieving an employment outcome:

RSA National Standard: Equal or exceed previous year.

2011: 2,477
2012: 2,490
2013: 2,738
2014: 2,869
2015: 3,014

Indicator 1.2: The percentage of consumers with employment outcomes who exited the program after receiving services.

RSA National Standard: 55.8 percent

2011: 60.2
2012: 56.7
2013: 59.5
2014: 61.4
2015: 61.9

Indicator 1.3: The percentage of consumers with competitive employment outcomes.

RSA National Standard: 72.6 percent

2011: 99.1
2012: 99.0
2013: 99.6
2014: 80 (Percentage declined due a significant increase in the state minimum wage)
2015: 99.4

Indicator 1.4: The percentage of consumers with significant disabilities.

RSA National Standard: 62.4 percent

Under the Order of Selection, 100 percent of consumers served have a significant disability.

Indicator 1.5: Consumers' average wage compared to all other Minnesota workers. RSA National Standard: .52

2011: .458
2012: .457
2013: .463
2014: .472
2015: .457

Indicator 1.6: Percentage change, from application to closure, of earned income as the primary source of financial support.

RSA National Standard: 53.0

2011: 67.9
2012: 64.4
2013: 67.8
2014: 69.3
2015: 64.3

Indicator 2.1: The ratio of minority and non-minority service rates. RSA National Standard .80

2011: .81
2012: .85
2013: .86
2014: .85
2015: .85

The following performance accountability factors are based on FFY14 closures, and includes only employment that was reported to Minnesota Wage Detail. VRS does not currently have access to wage detail for people employed by the federal government, placed in employment in other states, or people employed by employers not required to report wages.

1. the percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program: 56.6 percent
2. the percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program: 55.2 percent
3. the median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program: Quarterly median earnings was \$3,255. Average quarterly earnings was \$4,154. Average earnings increased to \$4,481 at the end of the fourth quarter.
4. the percentage of program participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential, or a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within one year after exit from the program: VRS does not currently track this data. Strategies are being developed to measure.
5. the percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains toward such credential or employment: VRS currently only measures the number of program participants enrolled in a for-credit college or university program. The agency is currently developing strategies for measuring participation in other post-secondary training programs.
6. the indicators of effectiveness in serving employers: VRS and the State Rehabilitation council are currently establishing the indicators of effectiveness in serving employers.

Contributions to Goal Progress from Innovation and Expansion Activities

About 3.3 percent of Minnesota's VR appropriation (\$1.216 m) was used for innovation and expansion activities to improve and increase services to historically underserved populations with the most severe disabilities. These activities represent program response to identified need.

State Rehabilitation Council

Ten monthly meetings of the SRC, committee meetings, and public forums are where council members carry out their consultative and participative roles in the work of VRS. Primary contributions are annual participation in development of the VR Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and State Plan; study of consumer satisfaction, VRS strategic planning, and review of the policies and practices that guide the delivery of services.

Persons with Mental Illness

Collaborative activity at state and local levels between VRS, DHS Mental Health Division, and community partners continues to build supports and services for persons with serious mental illness (SMI), who now comprise 33 percent of the VR program's total caseload and 32.5 percent of employment outcomes. Innovative projects developed with dedicated state funds are increasing the quality of services and outcomes for this population in urban and rural Minnesota.

SSDI and SSI Beneficiaries

SSA, VRS and SSB continue to co-host periodic meetings of the Employment Networks. One result of this is more Employment Networks are providing Ticket-to-Work funded job retention (Partnership Plus) services following VRS intensive services. There are currently 188 consumers receiving Partnership Plus services. Ticket-to-Work funding is used to supplement Supported Employment funding or to provide continued job retention services beyond the 90 days VRS typically provides. Work incentives basic and advanced training for counselors was provided by work incentives specialists at the Work Incentives Connection.

All counselors received SSA sponsored training on how to coordinate VRS and PASS Plan services. There are currently 80 consumers receiving coordinated services. The most typical PASS Plan services are private college tuition above what VRS pays and the purchase of "gently used" cars for reliable transportation.

VRS is currently implementing the "SGA Project" to improve the employment rate and income level for SSDI beneficiaries. The project is part of an RSA funded research project at the Institute for Community Inclusion at the U of M-Boston.

Rehabilitation Technology

Rehabilitation technology, also referred to as assistive technology, enhances employment outcomes, leading to better employment outcomes including higher paying jobs. VRS continues to provide training and coaching to increase the use of rehabilitation technology by both experienced and new staff. Implementation of the VR Rehabilitation Technology Services Plan has involved widespread staff participation, brought focus to rehabilitation technology activity, and honored the work of VR program counselors serving as a technology liaison to their own VR teams. Several staff have completed the RSA funded TechSpec program at the U of W-Milwaukee.

Minorities with Most Significant Disabilities

State demographic data indicates Minnesota's minority populations are growing at a much higher rate than the white, non-Hispanic population. Minnesota has the largest Somali refugee population in the United States.

The New Americans office in St. Paul specializes in addressing the needs of Somali and other East African immigrants who lack fluency in English. In FFY13, there were 38 new applications and 15 people achieved an employment outcome.

Collaborative Projects with Centers for Independent Living

Since 2008, the VRS-IL collaboration has served Minnesotans with the most significant disabilities that require both vocational rehabilitation and independent living services to meet their goals for working and living in the community. In FFY15 DEED-VRS dedicated **\$1,027,446** in SSA program income to fund locally designed collaboration grants with each of Minnesota's eight Centers for Independent Living. The employment rate for consumers who received coordinated services continue to exceed the rate for people who received only VR services.

Supported employment services promote the integration of people with the most significant disabilities into the Minnesota workplace. The use of funds from Title VI Part B of the Rehabilitation Act initially allowed for expansion of supported employment services and outcomes. Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) continues to work cooperatively with consumers, family members, advocates, employers, service providers and State, county, and local agencies to improve and expand the use of supported employment services statewide.

Approximately 3,000 vocational rehabilitation consumers were served in FFY15 with SE funds. VRS uses all federal funds authorized under Title VI, Part B in addition to Title I funds to purchase services for customers on a fee for service basis. Funds are distributed to field offices to purchase needed services for those consumers with a vocational goal that requires ongoing supports. Supported employment expenditures are administered and tracked separately in accordance with federal requirements. The quality of supported employment services in Minnesota is assured by a State administrative rule requirement that vendors from whom more than \$20,000 in services are purchased annually must be fully accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) or have applied for and are actively pursuing accreditation. In addition, vendors who agree to meet professional standards of service but are not CARF-accredited may be granted a limited use provider status, under which their services are limited to \$20,000 or less annually.

The state's major challenge regarding supported employment is one of consumer access to extended ongoing supports when they are needed. Agency structures and funding systems for extended support are governed by a myriad of federal and State laws and rules, each governing a specific piece of the categorical funding available to individuals with disabilities. A network of private not-for-profit organizations in Minnesota licensed by DHS Disabilities Services Division provides day training and habilitation services that may include such extended supports. People with mental illness may receive work-related support through the State Comprehensive Mental Health Act. Each county determines what level of service will be provided.

The agency's coordination of vocational rehabilitation services with its extended employment services contributes significantly to the quality, scope, and effectiveness of the State's overall SE efforts. When developing a customer's employment plan, the consumer and VR counselor identify the time-limited services to be provided by VRS, the expected ongoing supports needed, and the source of those

supports. This may include natural supports. VRS is a partner in several state level agreements that facilitate provision of these services. With respect to extended employment services, VRS develops contracts with each accredited community rehabilitation program (CRP) that includes an outline of expectations for extended support. Each program submits an application for funding which becomes part of the contract and specifies the number of employment hours that will be funded by VRS.

VRS provides \$11,942,000 in state funding annually to community rehabilitation programs to support ongoing vocational services through community based supported employment. By coordinating its short-term vocational rehabilitation services and long-term extended employment services, VRS facilitates optimal benefit from time-limited and extended funding for persons in supported employment.

VRS, through state-funded extended employment services, provides ongoing work supports to approximately 5,100 individuals in SE annually. Many of these individuals received time-limited vocational rehabilitation services prior to entering supported employment.

Part of Minnesota's supported employment funding is dedicated to extended supports for persons with serious and persistent mental illness. VRS and the Department of Human Services Mental Health Division collaborate on coordinated employability projects to promote innovation in service delivery, including supported employment services, for this population. The projects are designed to provide functional assessment, individualized career planning, job skill acquisition, job placement, job development, and non-time-limited supports necessary to maintain and advance in employment. All recipients of grants under these projects are required to demonstrate collaboration with counties, the local community support program, VRS, and providers of employment services such as CRPs, regional treatment centers, and community mental health centers.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION - STATE SERVICES FOR THE BLIND

INPUT OF STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

The Minnesota State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (hereinafter "SRC-B") is a council whose members are appointed by Governor Mark Dayton, consistent with the requirements of 34 CFR 361.17(b)(3) and related regulation. The SRC-B is an advisory council to Minnesota State Services for the Blind (hereinafter "SSB"), a division within the Minnesota DEED (hereinafter "DEED").

In formulating its input and recommendations for this State Plan, the SRC-B reviewed a considerable amount of information, including, but not limited to:

1. information supplied to the SRC-B by SSB;
2. information supplied to the SRC-B by DEED;
3. information developed by the SRC-B; and
4. information and input received from the public at SRC-B meetings.

SUMMARY OF INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SRC-B COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS

The SRC-B will vote on this Section at the February 4, 2016 Council meeting.

Coordination with Education Section D - The SRC-B will vote on this Section at the February 4, 2016 Council meeting.

Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofits Section E - The SRC-B will vote on this Section at the February 4, 2016 Council meeting.

Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements Regarding Supported Employment Section F - The SRC-B will vote on this Section at the February 4, 2016 Council meeting.

Coordination with Employers Section G - The SRC-B will vote on this Section at the February 4, 2016 Council meeting.

Coordination with Employers Section H - The SRC-B will vote on this Section at the February 4, 2016 Council meeting.

Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Section I - The SRC-B will vote on this Section at the February 4, 2016 Council meeting.

Statewide Assessment J - The Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Taskforce met in 2015 to review the needs assessment. An updated needs assessment was provided to the Council on June 4, 2015 with the understanding that RSA did not require State Plan submission on July 1, 2015 for FFY16. The taskforce met on November 16, 2015 to review and update the needs assessment. The updated needs assessment was presented to the Council at the December 3, 2015 meeting. SSB Response: SSB agrees with the SRC-B.

Annual Estimates Section K - SSB updated the annual estimates and submitted this Section on July 1, 2015 along with the Order of Selection Section. The updated annual estimates were presented to the Council on December 3, 2015. SSB Response: SSB agrees with the SRC-B.

Goals and Priorities Section L - The SRC-B has a standing "Customer Satisfaction and Goals & Priorities Committee" which reviews and makes recommendations regarding customer satisfaction, goals and priorities, and VR effectiveness. The committee reports quarterly to the full SRC-B. In preparing the strategies for the goals and priorities, the SRC-B committees submitted their recommendations to SSB. In 2015 the Customer Satisfaction and Goals & Priorities Committee reviewed the recommendations from the committees and developed goals and priorities for FFY16 with the understanding that RSA did not require State Plan submission on July 1, 2015. The SRC-B voted unanimously with one abstention on April 2, 2015 to approve the goals and priorities with no additional input. On October 28, 2015 the committee met to review and update the goals and priorities. They were presented to the SRC-B at the December 3, 2015 meeting and received a unanimous vote of approval. SSB Response: SSB agrees with the SRC-B.

Order Of Selection Section M - SSB implemented Order of Selection on October 1, 2015 after considerable discussion with the SRC-B. The Order of Selection Section was developed and submitted to RSA by SSB on July 1, 2015 for FFY16. The Section was presented to the SRC-B at the December 3, 2015 meeting.

Goals for Title VI Part B Section N - The SRC-B will vote on this Section at the February 4, 2016 Council meeting. SSB Response: SSB agrees with the SRC-B.

Strategies for Goals Section O - The SRC-B has a standing "Customer Satisfaction and Goals & Priorities Committee" which reviews and makes recommendations regarding customer satisfaction, goals and priorities, and VR effectiveness. The committee reports quarterly to the full SRC-B. In preparing the strategies for the goals and priorities, the SRC-B committees submitted their recommendations to SSB. In 2015 the Customer Satisfaction and Goals & Priorities Committee reviewed the recommendations from the committees and developed goals and priorities for FFY16 with the understanding that RSA did not require State Plan submission on July 1, 2015. The SRC-B voted unanimously with one abstention on April 2, 2015 to approve the goals, priorities, and strategies with no additional input. On October 28,

2015 the committee met to review and update the goals, priorities, and strategies. They were presented to the SRC-B at the December 3, 2015 meeting and received a unanimous vote of approval.

SSB Response: SSB agrees with the SRC-B.

Evaluation and Report of Progress Section P - The SRC-B has a standing "Customer Satisfaction and Goals & Priorities Committee" which reviews and makes recommendations regarding customer satisfaction, goals and priorities, and VR effectiveness. The committee reports quarterly to the full SRC-B. In preparing the year end year report which becomes this attachment, SSB formatted the material in a summary model which is different than the historical model of responding to each priority and strategy. The Committee requested the historical model be used for the SRC-B presentation in December, 2015 and their Annual Report. The report was approved unanimously with one abstention on December 3, 2015. There was no additional input or recommendations. SSB Response: SSB agreed with the reformatting for the Annual report, but will migrate to a new, more summary model of presentation in this attachment. SSB believes that a summary model is more in line with the expectations of RSA.

REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS

This agency **has not** requested a waiver of state-wideness.

COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH AGENCIES

VR-SSB does not have a formal interagency agreement with the programs carried out by the Department of Agriculture's undersecretary for rural development, nor does it have formal agreements with other federal or State agencies, except as noted below. All qualified VR counselors have been provided a description of the programs provided by the USDA Minnesota Rural Development Offices and are able to access these services as needed.

SSB continues to work in collaboration with the other designated State unit in Minnesota, Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), and has arrangements for providing reciprocal referral services between VR-SSB and VRS. SSB has developed and implemented a formal cooperative agreement with representatives of the higher education system in the State: the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MNSCU) System. SSB has established working relationships with programs which provide services to minority populations such as the New Americans Program (a program within VRS) and the Hmong American Partnership (HAP) in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs have become important partners with SSB in serving customers, especially pertaining to services to English Language Learners (ELL), which had been an objective within our RSA Quality Training Grant. VR-SSB also has formal interagency agreements with the American Indian VR programs in the State.

COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

In February, 2014 a revised Interagency Agreement was completed between the Minnesota DEED (DEED), Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS), State Services for the Blind (SSB) and the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), Division of Special Education pursuant to the coordination of transition services requirements of the Rehabilitation Act, Section 101(a)(11)9D), 34 C.F.R. 361.22 and 34 C.F.R. 300.154.

The intent of this agreement is to:

- Through consultation and technical assistance, assist local educational agencies (LEAs) in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post- school activities, including VR.
- Provide transition planning by staff of VRS and SSB alongside secondary special education staff that facilitates the development and completion of their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- Define the roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified staff responsible for transition services.
- Designate procedures for outreach to students with disabilities who are in need of transition services. Outreach to students should occur as early as possible during the transition planning process and will include, at a minimum, a description of the purpose of the vocational rehabilitation program, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and scope of services that may be provided.

The agreement clarifies how Minnesota's two vocational rehabilitation programs will assist education agencies in providing consultation and technical assistance. This agreement will also include technical assistance to DEED's VRS and SSB staff, and secondary special education staff. A few activities include:

- MDE, Division of Special Education and DEED's VRS/SSB agree to share responsibility for ensuring students with disabilities receive current information about their strengths, interests and preferences in order to make informed choices about competitive employment prior to leaving school.
- MDE, Division of Special Education and DEED's VRS/SSB agree to share responsibility for ensuring that students with disabilities receive exposure to career information through Minnesota's Internet System for Education and Employment Knowledge (ISEEK), Minnesota Career Information System (MCIS) or other state supported sites. Information could include connections to postsecondary education requirements, current labor market forecasts, and job outlook to assist the student in making informed choices about their future.
- MDE, Division of Special Education and DEED's VRS/SSB will work together to implement career exploration and vocational skills development for transition-age students with disabilities.
- MDE, Division of Special Education and DEED's VRS/SSB agree to collaborate and promote transition to adult services through participation in existing councils, committees, and other workgroups within respective agencies.
- Joint Transition Planning
- MDE, Division of Special Education and DEED's VRS/SSB agree to accept shared responsibility for the transition planning for students with disabilities receiving both special education and VR services. DEED's VRS/SSB staff agrees to be active participants in the transition planning process once VR eligibility is determined.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- MDE, Division of Special Education is responsible for ensuring that local education agencies provide special education and related services as documented in students' Individualized Education Program.
- DEED's VRS/SSB assists students with disabilities in making informed choices to prepare for, obtain and maintain employment. Services relate to assessing an individual's VR

needs, developing and implementing an individualized plan for employment (IPE), and assisting in the achievement of the employment goals for the individuals served.

- MDE, Division of Special Education and DEED's VRS/SSB are financially responsible for the services they provide under its own laws and rules.
- Outreach and Identification:
 - MDE, Division of Special Education and DEED's VRS/SSB staff will work together to develop outreach tools related to integrated competitive employment for students with disabilities, school personnel, and other community agencies. Materials may include a description of the purpose of the VR program, referral process, eligibility requirements, priority of services, application procedures, and scope of services that may be provided to eligible individuals.
- MDE, Division of Special Education and DEED's VRS/SSB staff will support Community Transition Interagency Committees (CTICs) to improve interagency collaboration among those that support youth with disabilities.

In a manner consistent with the requirements of Section 101(a)(11)(D) of the Act, SSB has continued as an active signatory to the *Minnesota Interagency Cooperative Agreement to Plan*, an agreement that has been in place since December 1987. This agreement is an understanding among organizations to facilitate the necessary changes, both within and among the several agencies, to realize an equitable statewide system for transition services. It provides information about what agency services exist and how agencies work together in Minnesota's communities. With local input, agencies can actively participate in the planning and creating of employment and community living options for individuals with disabilities of transition age.

There are several parts to the *Minnesota Interagency Cooperative Agreement to Plan* including a listing of members and a goals Section. Three levels of goals are identified:

- Planning for Individuals
- Community Planning
- Statewide Planning

Another key Section is the matrix which summarizes secondary and post-secondary school services available from each signatory agency to meet transition-related needs of individuals with disabilities. This Section identifies available resources and defines the financial responsibility of each agency for necessary transition services.

MINNESOTA STATE INTERAGENCY COMMITTEE

In June 1998, a new State-level committee, established by Minnesota statute, the Minnesota State Interagency Committee (MnSIC), held its first meeting. The mission of MnSIC, as delineated in Minnesota statute, is to "...develop and implement a coordinated, multi-disciplinary, interagency service system for children ages three to 21 with disabilities."

Members of MnSIC include two representatives from the Minnesota Association of Counties; two representatives each from MDE, Department of Commerce, Department of Corrections, VRS and SSB within the DEED (DEED), Department of Health, and the Department of Human Services; one representative from the Minnesota School Boards Association and the School Nurses Organization of Minnesota; and one ex-officio representative from the Minnesota Administrators of Special Education (MASE). The representatives were appointed by the respective commissioners or directors and have

been meeting regularly since the summer of 1998. MnSIC roles and responsibilities as defined in legislation include:

- Identify and assist in removing State and federal barriers to local coordination of services provided to children with disabilities
- Identify adequate, equitable, and flexible funding sources to streamline these services
- Develop guidelines for implementing policies that ensure a comprehensive and coordinated system of all State and local agency services, including multi-disciplinary assessment practices for children with disabilities ages three to 21
- Develop, consistent with federal law, a standardized written plan for providing services to a child with disabilities
- Identify how current systems for dispute resolution can be coordinated and develop guidelines for coordination
- Develop an evaluation process to measure the success of State and local interagency efforts in improving the quality and coordination of services to children with disabilities ages three to 21
- Develop guidelines to assist the governing boards of the interagency early intervention committees in carrying out the duties assigned to them by Minnesota statute 145A.027
- Carry out other duties necessary to develop and implement within communities a coordinated, multi-disciplinary, interagency intervention service system for children with disabilities

Several significant products have been implemented as a result of the interagency activities of this group. An updated formal interagency agreement with the State educational agency was implemented April 1, 2000, and reviewed for the need to update in 2005. The Individualized Interagency Intervention Plan (IIIP), a single document which delineates and coordinates all services needed by a child with a disability, was implemented incrementally beginning January 1, 2001. The implementation was completed by the fall of 2003 and included all eligible youth to age 21. This implementation included extensive statewide training provided by members of the MnSIC. Currently, evaluation methods are being developed and implemented. The MnSIC and the interagency management team (IMT) continue to develop annual goals for interagency collaboration on services to children and youth including transition activities.

Community Transition Interagency Committee (CTIC)

Community Transition Interagency Committees began in Minnesota in 1987. The requirements for a CTIC are outlined below. Existing CTICs sponsor different professional development opportunities for educators and interagency partners in their local communities.

Minnesota statute 125A.22 Community Transition Interagency Committees

A CTIC is a district, group of districts, or special education cooperative, in cooperation with the county or counties in which the district or cooperative is located, that must establish a community transition interagency committee for youth with disabilities, beginning at grade 9 or age equivalent, and their families. Members of the committee must consist of representatives from special education, vocational and regular education, community education, postsecondary education and training institutions, mental health, adults with disabilities who have received transition services if such persons are available, parents of youth with disabilities, local business or industry, rehabilitation services, county social services, health agencies, and additional public or private adult service providers as appropriate. The committee must elect a chair and must meet regularly. The committee must:

1. identify current services, programs, and funding sources provided within the community for secondary and postsecondary aged youth with disabilities and their families;

2. facilitate the development of multiagency teams to address present and future transition needs of individual students on their individualized education programs;
3. develop a community plan to include mission, goals, and objectives, and an implementation plan to assure that transition needs of individuals with disabilities are met;
4. recommend changes or improvements in the community system of transition services;
5. exchange agency information such as appropriate data, effectiveness studies, special projects, exemplary programs, and creative funding of programs; and
6. following procedures determined by the commissioner, prepare a yearly summary assessing the progress of transition services in the community.

SSB has continued involvement of their counselors in local CTIC activity. The low incidence of blindness among students of transition age continues to be an issue that SSB staff need to accommodate for in their work with local school districts and CTICs.

Centers for Independent Living (CIL)

Throughout the Centers' history in Minnesota, state monies have been provided for independent living skills training necessary for youths with disabilities to make the transition from family and school to independent living and the workplace. As a result of the 1997 Minnesota legislature allocating additional money to the CILs for transition services, the eight CILs in Minnesota have expanded and enhanced independent living transition services. In recent years, funding for the CILs has been reduced, in turn reducing transition services.

SSB has expanded its formal working relationships with independent living centers through an operating agreement with the Center for Independent Living of Northeast Minnesota in 2011.

Future Direction

With the hire of a Transition Coordinator, State Services for the Blind works with students, families, and teachers to help students transition to life after high school.

Implementing SSB BRIDGE

As students navigate the world of high school and begin thinking about the future, we offer services and resources that provide a foundation for success. Each of the core areas of our BRIDGE framework highlights an essential component that teenagers need in order to succeed after high school:

- Basic Skills
- Role Models
- Initiative
- Discovery
- Goal Setting
- Experience

Through SSB, teens can explore each of these core components and cross the BRIDGE in to the future of work, study, and living independently. In building that BRIDGE, SSB offers resources in technology, career exploration, work experience, adjustment to blindness training, and peer connections, to help students who are blind, DeafBlind, or visually impaired develop the skills and confidence for a bright future.

The Transition Coordinator works in collaboration with Kristin Oien, MDE Specialist and teachers of the blind and visually impaired.

Examples include:

- Tracking the work related activities of transition students. This allows the impact of SSB's emphasis on employment/enrichment activities to be monitored and the eventual employment success be measured.
- SSB representatives are now invited to State Vision Network (SVN) meetings regularly. SSB staff are regular presenters at the meetings.
- Kristin has included SSB on the Summer Transition Committee (STP) Steering Committee. This program now contains a job component in which students gain work experience in their communities.
- SSB has co-facilitated BVI special interest brain storming groups at SVN meetings.
- SSB's relationship with Minnesota State Academy for the Blind (MSAB) has been strengthened through enhanced relationships with John Davis (Director), Connie Telshow (Transition Coordinator) and Ken Treblehorn (AT Teacher). SSB staff is represented on MSAB Site Council. Additionally, the SSB Transition Coordinator will present seminars and workshops to students on campus.
- SSB is now a presenter and co-facilitator at the MSAB Family Transition Weekend.
- Kristin Oien is a permanent and active member of the SCR-B's Transition Committee along with SSB's Transition Coordinator.
- SSB staff presented at BVI teacher state conference along with representatives from the University of Minnesota.
- SSB staff participated in Low Vision Clinics at MDE to offer resources to children and their families.
- A unique Intake Folder for transition students and their families was created. Resources specific to high school students are included in this folder.
- SSB has continued outreach efforts to teachers and parents via email listservs. Resources are distributed and questions responded to through email communication.

SSB staff have been part of a broad array of transition partnerships and relevant school-to-work models. With the new emphasis on Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), SSB will continue to work with traditional partners to promote these models and facilitate effective implementation of emerging school-to-work efforts.

The activities detailed below are designed to facilitate outreach and referral efforts to transition-age students who are blind or visually impaired. The goals of this ongoing involvement by the counselor in the education of a student, beginning as early as age 14, are to enable a student to live independently before leaving a school setting, have a greater understanding of relevant employment options, and develop self-advocacy skills.

- SSB added a specific goal related to Transition outreach to the agency's Goals and Priorities beginning in FFY08. For FFY14, specific strategies will be implemented toward the goal of increasing the number of transition students who apply for services between the ages of 14-15 include:
 - Continuation of working statewide with Special Education teachers, teachers of the blind, visually impaired, or DeafBlind and other IEP team members in designated school districts to facilitate regular information meetings with SSB counselors.

- Development of methods to evaluate the effectiveness of communication about SSB to transition students and their families.
- Working collaboratively with the Minority Outreach Committee and develop outreach strategies for teachers of the blind, visually impaired and DeafBlind to provide information to students and their families from minority communities about SSB.
- Identification of a plan to engage counselors, teachers, leaders, employers, business and community resources to focus on student employment during high school so that every student will have at least one employment interaction that consists of a job shadow, informational interview, employment interview, or mentoring session.

Specific activities undertaken by the Transition Coordinator include:

- SSB has created a Newsletter for students, parents, and teachers. This publication is distributed every other month during the school year.
- SSB has hosted a "Summer Opportunities Fair" which showcases summer programs available to high school students.
 - SSB is involved in year-round transition programs which were awarded to vendors based on an RFP.
- A Transition Flyer was produced in collaboration with Outreach staff in order to identify unique services SSB provides to transition students.

Additional outreach activities include:

- SSB is actively involved in one unique summer program focused on transition. The Summer Transition Program (STP) serves as many as 25 high school juniors and/or seniors each summer. It is housed at St. Thomas University in St Paul, Minnesota, and is designed to provide alternative skills training and career exploration activities for participating students. Staff members assist students with transition goals that may include informational interviews, job shadowing, and mentoring. This gives students a first-hand experience in the world of work. While living in the dorms at St. Thomas, students also participate in a variety of independent living activities with specific mobility, self-care, communication, leadership, and related goals.
- A wide range of transition programs, separate and apart from the above summer programs, are individually tailored by counselors to meet the unique needs of each student. Such initiatives might include summer work experiences, advanced computer skills training, college readiness training, advanced training programs in specific educational areas, and attendance at the Helen Keller National Training Center. SSB assigns a staff member as liaison with the State Academy for the Blind, with specific focus on transition needs. Joint efforts with the State Academy are also focused on better vocational preparation of blind students of transition age.
- Several outreach efforts continue to be part of SSB's transition activities. These activities include involvement with the Statewide Vision Network, vision teachers who meet four times each school year to discuss issues related to the education of blind children of all ages. Outreach and identification of youth of transition age needing transition services are facilitated via this network. Network participants alert parents of youth needing transition services to services offered by SSB. The agency also offers meeting space and presentations to the National Association of Parents of Visually Impaired Children in Minnesota (MN NAPVI) to address concerns about their children's future and offer Communication Department Services.
- Counselors also work individually with high schools to focus on outreach and identification of youth in need of transition services (including youth who are not currently receiving special education services). Counselors attend IEPs/IIIPs, at the invitation of the parents and vision teacher, to educate prospective customers about SSB services. SSB has ongoing outreach to

Adjustment to Blindness Centers to offer presentations to the transition aged youth participating in their Student Spring Seminar, PREP programs and other youth gatherings.

COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

State Services for the Blind (SSB) has master contracts with three full-time Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) which focus on blindness and also provide other services to blind and visually impaired customers. SSB discusses programs, services, and rates during the development of the master contracts. SSB staff also answers questions and discusses any issues with each CRP as necessary. The director of SSB approves all service costs charged by these CRPs after review by staff internal to SSB.

SSB has developed and implemented a comprehensive vendor monitoring system which utilizes SharePoint for the overall management of the process. Vendors are reviewed in person on a 3 year cycle with reviews taking place throughout the year. Feedback to date has been positive from the vendors and is helping to create a better channel for communication and feedback about services delivered. In one case, this has led to a vendor-SSB committee to develop a more meaningful reporting tool with the vendor.

SSB contracts with CRPs to provide the minimum of 6 weeks intensive training under sleep shades from an adjustment to blindness center for Rehabilitation Counselors which is required by Minnesota statute. Contracts have also been developed with CRPs to provide transition programs to students. Services are meant to augment work done by school districts with activities on evenings and weekends.

Additionally, SSB has implemented "Vendor Forums" twice per year as an opportunity to provide updates about agency happenings, discuss trends in findings from monitoring visits and provide training on pertinent topics such as data practices, navigating the state system for job placement and assistive technology.

In the area of assistive technology, vendors were part of a pilot program which tested a new curriculum and reporting tool for technology training. That curriculum and reporting tool have since been adopted as standard procedure.

In the summer of 2015, a request for proposal (RFP) was released to the public to provide programming to transition students during the school year in the evenings and weekends designed to augment/supplement training they are receiving in school. Beginning on October 2015, SSB awarded two Adjustment to Blindness training centers contracts to provide these services.

ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

For customers that require other types of training or services from community-based rehabilitation programs, including supported employment program services, State Services for the Blind (SSB) utilizes community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) that have master contracts versus operating agreements with the general rehabilitation designated State unit, Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) or with SSB. Due to the changes in Minnesota's new accounting system, the operating agreements shifted to master contracts in October of 2012. With this shift, there were additional requirements for each vendor which included maintenance of liability insurance. As a result of this requirement, several vendors chose to no longer do business with SSB. New vendors have subsequently replaced those individuals, maintaining a high degree of choice and availability of services for customers.

Services to all supported employment program customers including youth have and will continue to be provided under fee-for-service contracts with CRPs. SSB's relationship with these CRPs is governed by master contracts with either SSB or VRS for the specific services required. The master contracts describe the services offered by the CRP and the agreed upon cost of each service. Information about each CRP is provided to each customer so that they can make an informed choice in the selection of their service provider.

Extended services are secured via individual agreements with non-VR organizations, including a number of agreements with an array of counties in Minnesota.

COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

There are many ways in which SSB works with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities. SSB has a team of 3 Employment Specialists who help employers meet their needs with qualified talent. Some of the services they provide to employers include impressing the importance of a diverse work force, job site analysis, training on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and retention services for employees with vision issues.

SSB routinely attends networking events that allow us to promote disability awareness and sensitivity training through offering presentations, trainings, resources and technical assistance to potential employers, public and private, throughout Minnesota. SSB has presented to the State of MN Human Resources leaders on the advantages of hiring people who are visually impaired, blind and DeafBlind. We have presented to major MN and national companies including Land O' Lakes, the Veteran's Administration, Medtronic, and 3M on services and candidates that SSB can provide their business.

SSB provides courtesy services, resources and follow up to employers, public and private, throughout Minnesota that have hired individuals with disabilities. These also include presentations, trainings, resources and technical assistance. Frequently SSB staff will visit employers to test their computer system and data bases for accessibility free of charge. Additionally, our staff will provide technology and expertise in accessing information to employers. Finally, SSB has provided training to managers and employers on hiring and working with individuals with disabilities.

SSB is actively participating and providing leadership and guidance to local and national groups devoted to connecting employers with qualified individuals with disabilities such as MNCARRS, CSAVR/NET, Project Search Leadership Team and Statewide Placement Partnerships.

Project Search is an internship program for students finishing their last year of high school. Instead of going to school they go to three, 10 week internship rotations with a business in the hopes that a job is offered after the 3rd rotation. This is a non-paid program and all students are in an integrated competitive employment situation. The Project Search Leadership team is a group of State Directors that over see's school districts requests to start a Project Search program. SSB reviews their proposal and determine if it would be a good site to incorporate the program.

There are over 250 Project Search sites around the world. There are 5 active sites in MN at Medtronic, Children's Hospital and Clinics, Minneapolis, Avera Hospital in Marshall, MN, Fairview Lakes Medical Center in Wyoming, MN, and Hennepin County Medical Center in Minneapolis. A total of 5 visually

impaired customers have taken part. One was hired/ employed part-time at Minneapolis Children's Hospital.

Minnesota Community Advisors on Recruitment and Retention Solutions (MnCARRS) is a partnership between agencies within the State of Minnesota and leaders of organizations representing minority communities, women, veterans, and individuals with disabilities.

MnCARRS partners serve as recruiters and credible voices within their communities to promote the State of Minnesota as an employer of choice. In return, the State provides advance communication of employment opportunities, improved communications about the State's employment processes, and assistance with mock interviews and training to improve candidate's performance in the hiring process.

Additionally, State agencies and MnCARRS partners participate in partner-sponsored career fairs, community outreach events, job information sessions, training sessions, resource sharing, and more.

Currently, MnCARRS is co-chaired by Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT). MnCARRS partners meet on a quarterly basis (4x per year) at a rotating location in the Twin Cities.

SSB has a full time Transition Coordinator who collaborates services with the Business Relations Consultants with employer related outreach.

SSB frequently acts as subject matter expert and a resource for other state programs that connect directly to employers across Minnesota, such as DEED Workforce Development and Business Service Representatives.

INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

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

1. The State Medicaid plan under Title XIX of the Social Security Act;
2. The State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities; and
3. The State agency responsible for providing mental health services.

THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT

Medical Assistance, the state's Medicaid program, is administered by the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS). Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) and State Services for the Blind (SSB) collaborate closely with DHS in the provision of a variety of Medicaid services:

Waiver Programs: Medicaid participants with disabilities who need a defined level of care and choose to live in the community may be eligible for one of the following waivers to help fund the cost of community living and supportive employment:

- Brain Injury Waiver: the person must have a traumatic, acquired or degenerative brain injury and require the level of care typically provided in a nursing facility or neurobehavioral hospital.
- Community Alternatives for Disabled Individuals (CADI) Waiver: the person must have a disability and require the level of care typically provided in a nursing facility.

- Developmental Disability Waiver: the person must have a developmental disability or related condition and require the level of care typically provided in an Intermediate Care Facility for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (ICF/DD).

There is joint planning occurring between the Waiver Programs and the state funded Extended Employment program to maximize the number of people who can access competitive integrated employment through the provision of supported employment services. Many counties have waiting lists for waiver services.

VRS and SSB access Medicaid dollars to pay for durable medical supplies such as wheelchairs, hearing aids and communication boards. Medicaid has limits on what they will pay for specific items. If the rehabilitation counselor feels the consumer would benefit from an "upgrade" to the item, Vocational Rehabilitation can pay the difference between the Medicaid payment and the cost of the upgraded product. Medicaid will apply the payment to the consumer's spenddown.

Minnesota's Medicaid Infrastructure Grant was a joint project of the Department of Human Services, the DEED (VRS and SSB) and the State Council on Disability. Collaborative efforts started utilizing grant funding has been continued using state appropriations, including:

- Disability Linkage Line (DLL): The DLL is a partnership between DHS and the Centers for Independent Living to provide disability related information and referral resources for Minnesotans with disabilities. Assistance is available in the areas of accessible housing, personal care services, transportation, employment, disability benefits, assistive technology, and other community resources. Services are available through a toll free number or online at [MinnesotaHelp](#). The most recent expansion of the DLL has been in the area of benefits planning and benefits analysis for beneficiaries of Social Security benefits.
- Disability Benefits 101: [DB101](#) is a free online service operated by the Disability Linkage Line that was initially developed using Medicaid Infrastructure grant funding. The program allows people to plan for their future by providing estimator sessions showing how income will impact benefits, explores effective use of work incentives, helps people establish work goals, and provides answers to questions through live chat, phone or email. The program includes short videos of success stories. Many of the DLL staff are certified Community Work Incentive Coordinators and can provide benefits analysis services if there are complex issues. Utilizing Department of Labor - Disability Employment Initiative funding, a new Section on Work Benefits for Youth has been added. In addition to VRS and SSB staff being actively involved in the development of the online program, consumers were actively involved in the BETA testing to make sure the program was accessible to individuals with disabilities.
- SGA Project: the Institute on Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts – Boston has received RSA funding to demonstrate effective strategies to assist SSDI beneficiaries achieve income above the substantial gainful activity (SGA) level. Minnesota VRS is one of the demonstration sites. At time of enrollment, the SSDI beneficiary is assigned a counselor, placement specialist and financial specialist. Eligibility for services is presumed within three days and the Employment Plan is developed within 30 days of application. VRS has partnered with the DLL to provide financial counseling in VR offices. RSA funding was used to provide the benefits planners with financial literacy training so that in addition to benefits planning the financial specialists can provide assistance with improving credits scores, paying off credit card debt, and developing savings plans. It is hoped that the combination of rapid engagement and financial planning services will lead to better outcomes. Although the SGA Project does not

receive any Medicaid funding, the financial specialist positions would not have been possible without the initial collaboration with the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant.

STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBILITY

The primary agency responsible for services for adults with disabilities is the Minnesota Department of Human Services. The Minnesota State Interagency Committee (MnSIC) has the responsibility to develop and implement a coordinated, multidisciplinary service system for children and youth with disabilities ages three to 21. The Committee brings together the Minnesota Departments of Education, Employment and Economic Development, Commerce, Corrections, Health, Human Rights, and Human Services to develop needed policy change to reduce duplication of local effort and to improve local response to the needs of children and families by developing a coordinated, multidisciplinary service system.

Minnesota's Olmstead Plan supports freedom of choice and provides a framework and a series of key activities that must be achieved to ensure Minnesotans with disabilities have the opportunity to live, learn, work and enjoy life in the most integrated setting desired by the person. Governor Mark Dayton appointed an Olmstead Subcabinet to develop and implement this plan. The Subcabinet consists of representatives of the MnSIC agencies listed above, the Housing Finance Agency, the Department of Transportation, the ombudsman for mental health and developmental disabilities, and the Executive Director of the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities.

VRS and SSB are involved in several joint projects with the above agencies:

- Individual Placement and Support (IPS): IPS services bring together mental health treatment services and vocational rehabilitation to help move people with serious mental illness into competitive employment. Participants are more likely to achieve employment success, leading to increased income, improved self-esteem, improved quality of life and reduced symptoms.
- Way to Work Project: Also referred to as the Ohio model, VRS has placed vocational rehabilitation counselors in a sheltered workshop to assess consumer needs and develop strategies to move people from segregated employment to competitive integrated employment. Dakota County, the Department of Human Services and VRS are studying effective ways to provide training, supports and benefits planning to assist people transition into the community.
- SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) Employment and Training: The Departments of Human Services and Employment and Economic Development are currently studying opportunities to blend SNAP funds with other anti-poverty funding to help move more people out of poverty.

COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

Minnesota State Services for the Blind (SSB) takes a coordinated approach in utilizing policies and procedures in developing activities to ensure that a comprehensive system of personnel development is maintained. This approach ensures there are staff in the numbers and quantities needed throughout the state and that all staff have access to ongoing development opportunities. SSB intends to provide the highest quality services to SSB customers who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind.

This comprehensive system of personnel development consists of:

- An annual review and analysis of data on current staffing and future needs, as well as a review of each vacancy when it occurs;

- Collaboration with institutions of higher education and communication regarding the number of students in the counseling graduate programs;
- Policies and actions related to recruitment, preparation, and retention of qualified staff;
- Personnel standards in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act; and
- Personnel development including methods to assess individual and organizational staff training needs and the provision of in-service training.

DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

SSB maintains data on the number of employees in each personnel category for all of its programs. This data is reviewed on an annual basis and each position is reviewed when a vacancy occurs to determine whether a change in personnel category or services is necessary to meet the current needs of SSB customers. Personnel levels are also reviewed annually when the VR program budget is developed.

SSB's WorkForce Development Unit (WDU), the VR field unit, employs 48 permanent staff positions (excluding those assigned to the Randolph-Sheppard Program). Sixteen positions are currently earmarked for qualified VR counselors. During FFY2015 the ratio of qualified VR counselors (17) to individuals served (1,094) is one to 64.4. The ratio of qualified VR counselors to individuals served during FFY16 and into FFY17 is expected to average between one to 60 and one to 61 depending on the number of counselor vacancies. It is the intention of SSB to fill all counselor positions.

The following table provides the personnel categories used by SSB's WDU program, the current number of people filling those positions, and the projection for new staff needed over the next five years.

Personnel Category	Current Staff	Projected New Staff Needed Over Next Five Years
State Director	1	1
Deputy Director, Program Services	1	0
Field Operations Supervisor IV	4	1
Qualified VR Counselor	16	5
Placement Staff	4	3
Assistive Technology Specialist	5	0
VR Technician	7	3
Support Staff	3	2
Deputy Director, Operations	1	0
Central Office Admin. Staff	6	2
Temporary Support Staff	0	0
Total	48	17

The WDU is implementing a team approach to each case. Teams are composed of the counselor, a vocational rehabilitation technician, an assistive technology specialist and a placement specialist. This approach establishes relationships between the customer and team members from the beginning of case services thereby expanding the understanding of customer needs for both the placement and technology staff and increasing the odds for a successful employment outcome.

Data on the rate of blindness, visual impairments and DeafBlindness indicators suggest the potential population of customers served will increase due to aging workers remaining in the workforce. We expect greater numbers of individuals will be accessing SSB services to help remain in employment. SSB has a dedicated outreach staff member who is increasing marketing to potential customer groups

through presentations and electronic information. Given these changes, SSB will continue evaluating and revamping its structure to meet the increased needs over the next five years.

Staff retirement and attrition are a factor in the estimated 17 positions turning over in the next five years. A major recruitment strategy specifically for incoming rehabilitation counselors is focusing on their understanding and experience of the business world. Counselor Business Intelligence is believed to correlate to better employment outcomes and building effective relationships with employers. SSB wants counselors who are able to effectively do this.

COLLABORATION WITH INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Minnesota has two credentialed graduate programs in vocational rehabilitation counseling. The two programs are Minnesota State University at Mankato (MSU-M) and St. Cloud State University (SCSU). SSB management maintains contact with the Directors of the Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling graduate programs through direct one-on-one conversations and by serving on advisory committees.

Through discussion with the Director of the program, SSB learned that for this current academic year, MSU-M has 10 students. From the summer 2014 to summer 2015, there were 4 students who graduated with their CRC.

The Director at SCSU reported that in addition to its traditional Rehabilitation Counseling Education (RCE) Master's program, they are now piloting a new Rehabilitation and Addiction Counseling (RAC) Master's program. Both of these programs prepare students to work in the field of Vocational Rehabilitation. There are currently 22 first and second year students in the RCE program. There are 11 first year students in the pilot RAC program. For the previous academic year (fall 2014-Spring 2015) the RCE program graduated 12 Masters level students.

The University of Wisconsin at Stout is very close to the Minnesota border. SSB has now hired several graduates from their programs. The master's Vocational Rehabilitation program at Stout offers concentration in two main areas: rehabilitation counseling (RC) or dual concentration in vocational evaluation and rehabilitation counseling (VE/RC). As a CORE accredited rehabilitation counseling (RC) program, graduates of either the RC or the VE/RC concentrations are eligible to apply for the certified rehabilitation counselor (CRC) and/or the professional counselor (PC) training certificate (leading to Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC)). In addition, graduates of the dual VE/RC concentration meet or exceed any existing criteria for certification or registration of vocational evaluation specialists. They offer their program both on campus and online.

Stout had 20 students graduate in the 2014-2015 academic year. Of those 20 students, 10 were doing on campus programs (6 RC; 4 VE/RC) and 10 were online students (all RC). Currently there are 20 on campus students enrolled (11 RC; 9 VE/RC) and 47 online students (all RC) for the 2015-2016 academic year.

All graduates from these three programs have the necessary credentials to qualify for national certification. All graduates meet the Minnesota standard for a qualified rehabilitation counselor. This represents a significant pool of qualified counselors that more than meets the anticipated staffing needs of SSB.

The Supervisors of WDU have periodic opportunities to meet with students at these three universities and, as a result, students with disabilities and from minority backgrounds will frequently express interest

in paid internship experiences with SSB. The Deputy Director of Program Services provides feedback to the counseling program staff regarding the skill needs of VR counselors at SSB.

PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL

SSB annually reviews and updates its plan to address current and projected needs for qualified personnel. This review looks at overall staffing patterns, expected customer demand and overall needs of the unit. SSB employs three main strategies around the recruitment and retention of qualified personnel.

1. Recruitment-In addition to more traditional forms of advertising for vacant positions, SSB utilizes social media and national search groups to help with attracting qualified candidates. The close relationship established with the three local universities helps with promoting openings and getting viable candidates. Recent changes in the economic climate have once again provided raises for state employees and SSB is now able to offer a more attractive starting salary and opportunities for promotion.
2. Use of Internships- SSB offers paid internship opportunities to select students enrolled in Master's-level rehabilitation counselor education programs in Minnesota and throughout the nation. Use of these internships continues to be one means to attract individuals, including those from minority backgrounds and individuals with significant disabilities, to enroll in rehabilitation counselor education programs, have a positive experience with the public VR program, and increase the probability of their future employment in the public system.
3. Workplace Culture/Employer of Choice- SSB strives to have a vibrant workplace culture and becoming an employer of choice to help retain employees. From the point of onboarding employees to throughout their career with SSB, efforts are made to be inclusive, interactive and to utilize each employee's strengths to the fullest. Additionally, SSB offers many internal and external training opportunities that are attractive to counselors wanting to maintain their CRC. This includes seven weeks of adjustment to blindness training which gives a unique opportunity for full immersion into the blind visually impaired customer experience.

PERSONNEL STANDARDS

Policies and procedures are in place for establishing and maintaining standards that ensure personnel needed by SSB are appropriately and adequately prepared and trained. Such policies and procedures, including negotiated labor agreements with exclusive bargaining representatives, also cover the selection, retention, development, and termination of staff employed by SSB, and includes requirements of State law concerning the classification of SSB positions by Minnesota Management and Budget.

The academic degree standard for a vocational rehabilitation counselor at SSB is the Master's degree in rehabilitation counseling with graduate-level coursework in each of the following: theories and techniques of counseling; medical/psycho-social aspects of disability; assessment; and occupational information or job placement. A Master's degree in a closely related field also meets the necessary standard.

SSB works closely with its human resources to ensure that only those individuals who have earned a Master's degree in rehabilitation counseling or a closely related field qualify for placement on eligible lists for rehabilitation counselor. Therefore, all counselors fully meet the position standard and SSB does not have any expenditures for staff training to obtain a graduate degree in rehabilitation counseling. SSB does not anticipate any factors that would adversely affect the ability to hire qualified staff.

New employees come to SSB with a variety of knowledge, skills and abilities. Nearly all need SSB to provide them with additional information, and in some cases training, to ensure they have the tools and resources to do their job. Minnesotans expect SSB to be "experts" in the field of blindness. As the only public organization providing blind services, SSB has an obligation to train staff on the essential aspects of blindness, visual impairment and DeafBlindness. To meet that expectation, SSB has a comprehensive training program about blindness, visual impairment and DeafBlindness consisting of:

- **Introduction to Blindness and Visual Impairment —PHASE I.** Responsibilities of SSB staff do vary, but there are minimum requirements for all positions and are part of this course which is required of all new employees.
- **Introduction to Blindness and Visual Impairment —PHASE II.** "Under the blindfold" and with simulators are training activities which will be required of some new staff as determined by SSB management.
- **Continuing Education in Blindness and Visual Impairment —PHASE III.** Training consists of specialized and ongoing training related to blindness and vision loss and will be required of staff as determined by SSB management.
- **Orientation to DeafBlind.** All new WDU staff have a one-on-one training session with the WDU's DeafBlind specialist.

For development purposes staff may request additional or more advanced training. These requests are considered on a case-by-case basis taking into account organizational needs and resources. All WDU staff members new to SSB will receive Introduction to Blindness —Phase 1 and Phase 2 training on the essential aspects of blindness and visual impairment and Orientation to DeafBlind within three months of hire. Statutory language requires all Rehabilitation Counselors to successfully complete a minimum of 6 weeks of intensive training under sleep shades from an adjustment to blindness center.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

In collaboration with other offices of the DEED (DEED), SSB utilizes a collaborative model when looking at employee performance and creates a dialogue between supervisor and staff. Together, they create goals for the upcoming year and put plans into place that will help the individual reach those goals. A final component is completing a review of any essential professional and job-related training that is either desired by the employee or required by the employer. Ongoing in-service training offerings give employees a wide variety of options for enhancing and improving skills.

With the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and with the extensive emphasis in WIOA on Pre-employment Transition Services (PETS) SSB is looking forward to the Acts final interpretations from the Rehabilitation Services Administration. The interpretations will guide training plans for the remainder of this year and into the next.

Meanwhile, staff training will include fundamental counseling and job placement skills that now will include all staff that make up the WDU teams.

Finally, SSB assures that all materials are available to staff in the desired format. Print material is, as appropriate, made available to staff in braille and other alternate formats.

STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

2015 COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES PROVIDED TO BLIND MINNESOTANS

GENERAL BACKGROUND

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) requires that a comprehensive needs assessment be conducted every three years to identify where gaps may exist in the services that are provided. This assessment is undertaken by a Needs Assessment Task Force of the State Rehabilitation Council – Blind (SRC-B) along with staff members of State Services for the Blind.

Although the comprehensive assessment is produced every three years, there are activities each year that are part of this process. These activities break down as follows:

- Define how the comprehensive needs assessment will be conducted
- Create the Comprehensive needs assessment
- Collect information about actions taken as a result of the comprehensive needs assessment and document them in a "findings" report.

The approach that the task force adopted last year for this comprehensive assessment included updating relevant statistics to look for trends, follow up on observations made in the previous "findings" report, and making use of information supplied by other SRC-B committees and staff reports provided to the Council. As a result of this approach, the following five areas have been identified as gaps that deserve continuing attention:

- Increase in the number of Unsuccessful Closures since previous comprehensive assessment
- Challenges associated with transition-aged customers and new budgetary requirements
- Handling the projected sharp increase in the number of customers who are senior citizens
- Addressing the needs of the increasing number of customers who are part of minority groups
- Addressing communication barriers that impede services provided to DeafBlind customers

In addition, the Needs Assessment Task force and State Services for the Blind staff felt that past comprehensive assessments have been thorough but difficult to read. An effort is being made here to create a report that will remain thorough but perhaps more useful.

In the remaining pages, we will explore each of the areas identified above.

UNSUCCESSFUL CLOSURES

Over the past several comprehensive Needs Assessments, the issue of unsuccessful closures has been examined. In the assessment submitted in 2012, it was noted that a tremendous improvement had been achieved as unsuccessful closures decreased from 105 in 2009 to 36 in 2011. One of the factors that contributed to this success was the increased use of the "interrupted status" category. There had been a tendency to close cases rather than use this category when customers were unable temporarily to continue with their rehabilitation plans. This practice resulted in persons who had circumstances that caused their vocational rehabilitation plans to be delayed to be categorized as an unsuccessful closure in 2009 and before. Besides having a positive effect on statistics, it reduced the effort required by customers to resume moving toward a vocational goal when circumstances changed.

However, as the findings were prepared in 2013, it was noted that there had been a sharp increase in the number of customers in the category "Closed after Services Initiated without employment." Statistics through 2015 show that there were 36 customers in this category in 2011, 73 in 2012, 68 in 2013, 70 in 2014, and 63 in 2015. These numbers are significantly better than the 105 which caused

concerns to be raised before 2010, but also seem to be a step back from the progress made in 2010 and 2011.

The increase from 36 in 2011 to 73 in 2012 is alarming. However, the numbers in 2013 and 2014 are consistent with 2012 so there does not seem to be an increasing trend. It is also possible that there is another explanation for this fluctuation that is related to procedures or statistical processes. This statistic also needs to be viewed in conjunction with other statistics as well. For example, while unsuccessful closures have remained fairly constant in 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015, the number of successful placements has increased from 87 to 143. This means that the number of unsuccessful closures has actually decreased in significance over the past three years even though the raw numbers have remained high. Being certain we understand this fluctuation and watching for future trends is important.

Another aspect of unsuccessful closures is the constant challenge faced by blind persons when looking for employment. One issue that needs to be addressed is the balancing of the use of external placement services with the development of in-house placement expertise. Still, the increase in successful outcomes over the past three years noted above indicates that progress is being made.

Nevertheless, by raising this issue in this comprehensive assessment, we hope to be able to include an explanation as part of our findings in 2016 regarding the large increase in unsuccessful closures from the low levels achieved in 2011 and 2012. It should be noted that we are very aware that some steps are already being taken. For example, there is already work underway to make changes to the in-take process, and there is additional analysis of cases ending as unsuccessful closures to understand them better. The Needs Assessment Task Force has received communications from Carol Pankow, SSB's director, describing these efforts. The purpose of this document is to spotlight gaps, and the results of the positive steps that are already being taken will be included as part of our findings next year.

TRANSITION-AGED CUSTOMERS

An important and unique group of possible customers for State Services for the Blind are those who are considered to be of transition age. In general, this category has included students between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one years of age, however recent legislation has expanded this category to include those who are not students with an upper age limit of twenty-four. We have identified two gaps that need to be filled. As is generally the case, identifying gaps does not imply that nothing is currently being done in these areas. The intent here is, rather, to indicate that the need for more attention is a priority.

There is significant anecdotal evidence from disabled students' offices in colleges and universities that many students are not well-equipped to handle the requirements of college as they begin that phase of their education. This appears to be the case even though they have the necessary qualifications on paper to have been accepted. There are many reasons for this, particularly wide variations between services available in various school districts. Minnesota State Services for the Blind has been making significant efforts to reach transition-aged students to attempt to connect them with training and experience that will better equip students for the future. For a number of reasons, though, this continues to present challenges. Some students are located long distances from services that could be of help. In other cases, students and parents do not realize the importance in thinking beyond high school graduation.

In addition to State Services for the Blind being aware of the difficulties faced by transition-aged students, Congress has also tried to confront this problem. With the recent passage and signing of the

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), there has been attention directed toward this category of Vocational Rehabilitation customers. Agencies have been directed to spend 15 percent of their federal dollars on transition-aged students, and, as mentioned above, the category has been expanded. This has created a second gap that must be addressed. While there is plenty that needs to be done, the mandate to spend 15 percent of federal dollars means that effective approaches of spending this money must be developed quickly. In addition, this could cause dollars that were being spend on the provision of other services to be diverted to services for transition-aged students. This means that priorities might change and additional funding for other services may need to be sought quickly.

SSB has hired a former high school teacher as a Transition Coordinator in an effort to better address the increasing needs of transition aged youth and students. Additionally, SSB has created transition programs to provide student work experiences and programming to augment work done by school districts by offering activities for students in the evening and/or on weekends. The goal of the program is to provide more opportunities for Minnesota students who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind to enhance their skills and readiness for post-secondary work and training.

In summary, there are two gaps that are related to transition-aged students. They are reaching more transition-aged students, and dealing with the challenges of allocating and effectively spending 15 percent of federal dollars as prescribed by WIOA. We know that Minnesota State Services for the Blind is already aware of both of these gaps and that they are working on addressing them. We will be working to gain a better understanding of these efforts in the next year of this process.

INCREASING NUMBERS OF SENIOR CITIZENS

The Senior Services Unit of Minnesota State Services for the Blind provides a variety of services to assist senior citizens who are experiencing vision loss to remain independent. While many of these services fall within those considered to be "independent living" rather than "vocational rehabilitation," they are important and can have an impact on vocational rehabilitation programs. There are two primary gaps that are becoming increasingly important and need to be addressed. The increasing number of seniors that need the services offered by State Services for the Blind will put increasing pressure on other programs, and there will be an increasing need for seniors to find employment.

The sharp increase in the numbers of persons considered seniors is in and of itself a driving force behind all of the challenges in this area. Providing training to seniors who have recently lost vision promotes living independently, reducing the need for assisted living situations. It is anticipated that the number of seniors who will be eligible to receive services is going to increase dramatically. According to the University of Minnesota Humphrey Institute report, commissioned by Minnesota State Services for the Blind, the number of seniors in Minnesota will double during the next fifteen years. By the year 2030, one in five Minnesotans will be considered senior citizens. Even more significant than this increase, is the fact that the incidence of vision loss increases dramatically as people age. It is estimated that over 12 percent of Minnesotans aged 65-74 will experience significant vision loss as will over 16 percent of Minnesotan 75 and over. In almost all cases, this will be the first loss of vision experienced which means that most of these individuals would benefit by the services that the Senior Services Unit can provide. Even now, according to the conservative estimates included in the Humphrey Institute report, as many as 26,000 Minnesotans 65 and older could be in need of services today. Such numbers must be viewed along with the smaller but respectable 3,200 seniors served in 2014 and 4,036 in 2015.

These statistics show that the number of persons over 65 who experience vision loss will increase much faster than will the numbers of persons under 65, putting considerable pressure on State Services for

the Blind's resources. In addition to meeting the expanding needs of this population, efforts will need to be made to avoid the negative effects this could have on the remaining resources allocated to help the rest of those who are blind and visually impaired find employment. Fortunately, this won't happen during a single year, but the effects will be felt quickly, over the next several years and on into the next decade.

While services to senior citizens has primarily fallen into the category of independent living, trends indicate that there could be a significant increase in the numbers of persons considered to be "seniors" who will be seeking employment. Two factors that make this likely are the increasing numbers of those considered to be "seniors," and the increased average life expectancy.

For example, men and women who have reached the age of 65 will live on average to 81 and 84 respectively. While this means that one can look forward to more years of retirement than ever before, it also puts more strain upon personal budgets. In addition to supplementing one's income, there are significant incentives to delaying the use of Social Security retirement benefits. While the age for full retirement benefits has been raised to 66 for those approaching retirement, there is a significant gain for each year that social security benefits are delayed until the age of 70. Some companies that provide pension programs, determine the size of monthly payments by the five years of highest earnings of the recipient. This means that the size of a pension payment can often be significantly increased by working one or two more years. The result of these factors is that there will be more pressure on seniors to continue in their current jobs or seek part time work after dealing with vision loss. It will be necessary to develop some knowledge of the problems faced by seniors when seeking employment.

The very fact that an analysis by the Humphrey institute was requested and funding indicates that State Services for the Blind recognizes that this is a serious challenge, and the findings of the Humphrey Institute report have frequently been referenced by the agency's director and other staff members. Still, the magnitude of this challenge is well worth spotlighting here.

NEEDS OF BLIND PERSONS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF MINORITY GROUPS

While Minnesota has always been a home for persons considered part of minority groups, the numbers and the diversity of these groups has changed significantly over the past twenty-five years. According to census statistics, Minnesota's population of individuals classified as White increased by only 2.8 percent between 2000 and 2010 while Black, American Indian, Asian and Hispanic populations increased by 59.8 percent, 10.8 percent, 50.9 percent and 74.5 percent respectively. The significant increase in the population of Black Minnesotans is due to an influx of individuals from several African countries which have been in the throes of famine and civil war. For example, Minnesota's Somali population is the largest in the United States according to a Census Bureau report released in October 2011. That report estimated the number of people of Somali ancestry in the state to be more than 32,000.

The United States Hmong population in 2009 was 226,522 and 54,524 resided in Minnesota. This number makes up a significant portion of the increase in our Asian population.

According to the [Suburban Stats website](#) populations of minority groups as of 2014 are:

- Black 274,412;
- American Indian 60,916;
- Asian 214,234;
- Hispanic and Latin 250,258.

These groups represent 15 percent of Minnesota's total population of 5,303,925, and, according to the same source, there another almost 250,000 persons of multiracial background who do not fit into the above. For reasons beyond the scope of this report, these groups experience higher unemployment, lower average income, and less education.

Members of these groups who are blind face additional challenges which do fall into the scope of this report. In order to receive the services that are needed to help them reach their full potential as blind people, they must deal with agencies of a government they may not trust. They must understand information about services and what is expected of them even though this information is written in a language that is new to them. Finally, even with the best efforts of everyone involved, cultural differences can be a barrier to rehabilitation.

Fortunately, Minnesota State Services for the Blind and other service providers in Minnesota have been aware of the existence of these barriers for some time now. A number of concentrated efforts have been made by State Services for the Blind over the past few years to reach blind persons in minority groups. Examples of such efforts include:

- Outreach to state Councils which advocate for minority communities in Minnesota
- Outreach to Wisdom Steps (state program in Native American Communities that promotes healthy living for seniors)
- Outreach to CLUES, and Urban Ventures
- Participation in Hmong Resource Fair
- Published an Article about SSB services in the Spokesman-Recorder, a publication for the African-American community in Minnesota

A Minority Outreach committee of the SRC-B has been in existence for some time, and has played an active advisory role in the developments of some of these efforts. Community Rehabilitation Programs have started to develop tailored programs to meet the needs of this population as well. Blind, Incorporated, for example, has worked for more than a decade to help those for whom English is new to learn the English Language while starting on the road to success as a blind person.

So what remains to be done? RSA Indicator 1.2 has been used to measure the effectiveness of services offered to customers who are members of minority groups by comparing their rate of successful closures to the rate of those not considered members of minority groups. The goal is 80 percent, and this standard is applied when a state agency has more than 100 customers from minority groups closed from services. Minnesota did not reach that number until very recently so there are no historical statistics to reference. The number was 0.7128 in 2012, 0.77 in 2013, and 0.88 in 2014 to the current calculation of 0.817. This shows that meaningful progress has been made but that there is still work to be done. This fact has been acknowledged by the development of strategies to address this gap within the goals and priorities documents of the past several years. We will examine the effectiveness of these strategies and the progress made with respect to increasing the effectiveness of services to members of minority groups in the next year.

NEEDS OF DEAFBLIND CUSTOMERS

There are additional challenges faced by customers of State Services for the Blind who, in addition to blindness, are hard of hearing or deaf. To assist in developing policies and processes that more effectively meet the needs of these customers, a committee of the State Rehabilitation Council of the blind was established some time ago. Their work has been used here to identify gaps. There are three

gaps outlined here although work is already in progress to address them. They are staff training, communication, and dealing with the isolation experienced by transition-aged DeafBlind customers.

Since most people have little exposure to persons who are part of this group, and because they represent a fairly small portion of all customers, efforts have been made to develop some expertise by designating that particular staffs receive specific training and experience. Nevertheless, normal staff turn-over means that there is an on-going need for training to meet the needs of this customer group. It is also important that other staff who may interact with DeafBlind customers, even if not directly, are aware of the specific needs of this customer group. Therefore, it is important that further development of staff training regarding the needs of DeafBlind customers continue.

Communication is a second area that requires continued efforts. The DeafBlind Committee has been working on developing guidelines on the creation of documents using simplified English to assist customers who are still developing their language skills. This work also has a positive impact on other customers who come from other cultures where English is not the primary language. A number of documents have been produced, but work is still in progress on developing a generalized approach to creating documents using simplified English. Work remains to fill this gap.

Finally, it has become apparent that DeafBlind customers of transition age are often very isolated. According to the "Unduplicated Child Count" available from the Minnesota Department of Education, there were 32 transition-aged students primarily identified as DeafBlind in 2013. The total number of transition-aged students who were identified as visually impaired or DeafBlind was 137. Over the past four years, the percentage of DeafBlind transition-aged students was consistently between 20 percent and 25 percent. This is a small enough number, that when distributed throughout the state, would indicate that these students are most often not going to be in contact with other DeafBlind students. The DeafBlind Committee is working on the development of a mentoring program to provide contact with adults who can serve as role models and suggest ways of handling social and educational challenges. It seems likely that this might be an area into which some of the newly required 15 percent of federal dollars that must be used for transition customers could be directed.

FINAL COMMENTS

As has been noted several times in this report, the Needs Assessment Task Force is well aware that our conclusions are not going to be new or surprising. Efforts are already underway to address the indicated gaps, but our observations indicate that continued focus on these areas is justified. A new challenge has developed as an unintended consequence of the Work Opportunities and Innovation Act (WIOA) that cannot be ignored; that is the immediate burden of balancing the funding requirements for transition aged youth that has reduced needed funding for all other services. Because of this unintended imbalance, SSB has had to implement Order Of Selection, causing a disruption to the ability for SSB to provide employment related service for those who currently need services to become competitively employed.

Also, it needs to be acknowledged that there continues to be outside challenges faced by blind persons that State Services for the Blind is continually trying to address. The need to provide high quality based skills training to allow blind, visually impaired and DeafBlind persons to be competent and effective citizens who contribute to their communities is a real and constant challenge. Additionally, the stereotypical attitudinal barriers that still exist within workplaces and result in yet a high rate of unemployment, presents another serious challenge. Balancing these general challenges with the gaps outlined here is essential in achieving overall success.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's three year American Community Survey, Minnesota has an estimated 75,000 citizens between the ages of 18 and 64 who have visual difficulties.

Minnesota State Services for the Blind estimates approximately 830 individuals will receive case services under title I of the Act in 2016. Approximately 15 individuals will concurrently receive case services under title VI, part B of the Act.

Minnesota State Services for the Blind will be implementing an order of selection October 1, 2015 and will be not be able to serve all eligible individuals.

Costs for case services provided under title I of the Act are estimated at \$6,200,000. Costs for supported employment case services under Title VI, Part B of the Act are estimated at \$70,000.

Category	Title I or Title VI	Estimated Funds Used in 2016	Estimated Number of individuals who will be provided services in 2016	Average Cost of Services
VR Basic Grant	Title I	\$6,200,000	830	NA
Category A	Title I	\$2,046,000	228	\$9,000
Category B	Title I	\$2,666,000	343	\$7,800
Category C	Title I	\$1,488,000	259	\$5,700
Supported Employment	Title VI	\$70,000	15	\$4,666
Totals		\$6,200,000	830	\$7,420

STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

SECTION #1: Jobs, More Jobs, Better Jobs.

PRIORITY #1.1: Employment Outcomes—Increase employment outcomes by 3 percent from the previous year to meet SSB's Olmstead Plan commitment. (This priority is included as the Olmsted Plan is a significant law that Minnesota must comply with in order to ensure individuals with disabilities live and work in the least restrictive environments.)

PRIORITY #1.2: Success Rate--- Increase the percentage of eligible individuals achieving employment outcomes from 55 percent to 70 percent. (We have not yet achieved this priority so it remains)

PRIORITY #1.3: Implement the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS). (This new priority is a result of WIOA becoming law this past July and the emphasis on youth with disabilities who are transition students to better prepare for the world of work through a variety of activities.)

SECTION #2: SSB-Your Resource Within Reach.

PRIORITY #2: All Blind, Visually Impaired, and DeafBlind Minnesotans are aware of and have access to information about SSB.

SECTION #3-SSB- A Great Place to Work.

PRIORITY #3: Develop and maintain a positive work environment.

ORDER OF SELECTION

NEED FOR ORDER OF SELECTION

Minnesota State Services for the Blind (SSB), in consultation with the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRC-B), has determined it cannot serve all individuals who are determined eligible for services. The actual total costs of services and administration for FFY14 was \$12.8M (\$8.8M federal, \$2.4M state, \$1.6M program income). The FFY15 budget was \$11.7M; estimated costs of services and administration is projected at \$13.0M, of which \$1.2M is pre-employment transition services (\$8.5M federal, \$2.5M state, \$1.3M program income, \$0.7M reallocated federal). Out of the 1,015 individuals served in FFY 15, 406 did not have direct charges associated with their case. Looking at FFY 16 and the individuals receiving services, there will be more direct service provision resulting in spending at the same level as FFY 15. FFY 16 case service budget is \$5M (includes pre-employment transition services) and needs are \$6.2M. SSB is working to address overage by implementing Performance Based Agreements and schedules.

There were some expenses during FFY15 that SSB absorbed and there are additional factors for FFY16. They are as follows:

- A. Necessary rewrite of the state's case management system which incorporates changes needed to implement WIOA. The budget projection for SSB's share of the rewrite is \$897,000 in FFY16 and again in FFY17. The estimated cost for FFY15 is \$200,000.
- B. Lower return on Social Security Administration (SSA) program income than expected. In FFY15 SSB had claims of \$3.7 million, received \$1.3 million and have pending claims of \$743,000.
- C. WIOA required a 15 percent set-aside toward transition age students equaling \$1.27 million for FFY15. SSB has previously spent between \$100,000 and \$200,000 on transition aged youth. Spending \$1.27 million for students diverts funds previously available and necessary to serve adults.
- D. Discontinuation in FFY16 of training grant funds will require SSB to redirect dollars needed to ensure staff training required by Minnesota statute. For FFY15 this amount equaled \$60,000

It is the policy of SSB to provide rehabilitation services to eligible individuals under a statewide order of selection. SSB consults with the SRC-B regarding the:

- Need to establish an order of selection, including any re-evaluation of the need;
- Priority categories of the particular order of selection;
- Criteria for determining individuals with the most severe disabilities;
- Administration of the order of selection, and;
- The decision to open or close priority categories.

SSB will work in conjunction with the SRC-B to examine strategies to reduce or eliminate the need for Order of Selection. A sub-committee of the SRC-B has been formed to jointly develop proposals on cost saving measures including the use of fee schedules to present to the SRC-B. The SRC-B will also be involved in planning public hearings regarding any proposed strategies

Effective October 1, 2015, SSB proposes to close categories B and C. SSB is exercising its discretion under Section 101(a)(5)(D) of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended by WIOA, to serve eligible individuals,

whether or not they are receiving vocational rehabilitation services, who require services and equipment to maintain employment.

PRIORITY CATEGORY

An assessment for determining assignment to a priority of services category shall be conducted with each individual determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services. This assessment shall be based, to the degree possible, on data used to determine eligibility. To the extent necessary, additional information required for this assessment will be secured.

Selection and placement in a priority category is based upon the severity of the eligible individual's disability and the functional limitations, and is not based upon the type of disability, geographical area in which the individual lives, projected type of vocational outcome, age, sex, race, color, creed, religion, or national origin of the individual.

Each eligible individual will be assigned to one of the following priority of services categories:

Category A: Individual with a most significant disability

An eligible individual who:

- Has a severe physical or mental impairment that results in serious limitations in terms of an employment outcome in five or more of the following functional areas: mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, work skills, interpersonal skills or job seeking skills;
- Is expected to require multiple VR services over an extended period of time; and
- Has a significant disability" under Section 7(21) of the Rehabilitation Act and meets the definition contained in "List of physical or mental disabilities.

Category B: Individual with a significant disability

An eligible individual who:

- Has a significant physical or mental impairment that results in serious limitations in terms of an employment outcome in more than two and less than five of the following functional areas: Mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, work skills, interpersonal skills, or job seeking skills; and
- Is expected to require multiple VR services over an extended period of time; and
- Meets the definition contained in "List of physical or mental disabilities."

Category C: All other eligible individuals

- E. Has a disability that makes them eligible for services but they do not have a serious limitation in a functional area.

LIST OF PHYSICAL OR MENTAL DISABILITIES

Physical or mental disabilities resulting from amputation, arthritis, autism, blindness, burn injury, cancer, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, deafness, head injury, heart disease, hemiplegia, hemophilia, respiratory or pulmonary dysfunction, intellectual disability, mental illness, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, musculoskeletal disorders, neurological disorders including stroke and epilepsy, paraplegia, quadriplegia, and other spinal cord conditions, sickle cell anemia, specific learning disability, and end-stage renal disease, or another disability or combination of disabilities determined on the basis of an

assessment for determining eligibility and priority for services to cause comparable serious functional limitation.

IMPLEMENTATION OF ORDER OF SELECTION

Prior to the start of each fiscal quarter, or when circumstances require, the SSB Director will determine in which priority categories new Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE) will be written and initiated. The SSB Director may restrict the writing and initiation of new IPE's within a priority category to cases having application dates falling on or before a specified date providing that all individuals in higher priority categories are being served.

Considerations in making this determination will include, but not be limited to, the projected outcomes, service goals, expenditures, and resources available for each priority category.

Projected costs and resources for each priority category will be based upon costs of current IPE's, anticipated, assessments of eligibility, pre-employment transition services, availability of financial resources, and adequacy of staffing levels.

The SSB Director will implement actions under the order of selection through written notice to SSB staff. The written notice will specify the implementation date of the action and direct SSB staff on how to handle cases by priority category and application date.

The SSB Director will notify SSB staff in writing when finances allow staff to begin serving wait listed customers. Customers with the most significant disabilities are to be served first based on application date. Once all customers who have a most significant disability are served first, then the next category can be served.

SSB will determine eligibility for services for all applicants within 60 days of their application. It will provide services to all eligible individuals until a reduction in services must be imposed due to a shortage of funds, staff, or other resources.

In the event such a shortage occurs, SSB will implement an Order of Selection for services which will potentially impact individuals who are not receiving services under an Individualized Plan for Employment on the implementation date.

Services will, consistent with federal law, continue to be provided without restriction to all individuals who have begun to receive services under an Individualized Plan for Employment prior to the implementation date of the Order of Selection. Individuals who require job retention services may receive only those services required to maintain employment outside of the order of selection for services.

A waiting list will be established and maintained, by priority category and application date for all eligible individuals. Within categories, individuals will be served on a "first come, first serve" basis utilizing their date of application.

Based on availability of funds, individuals in Category A will be served first. Individuals in other categories will be served in descending order (from Category A down through Category C) based on the availability of funds. Order of Selection requirements will be applied uniformly throughout the state.

NOTIFICATION PROCESS AND ADMINISTRATION

If SSB determines it must implement an Order of Selection (a limitation on services) then individuals shall be notified about Order of Selection at various points in the rehabilitation process.

- A. At the time of application, the individual will be informed of the SSB policy regarding Order of Selection for services. Definitions of priority categories and the criteria used in assigning individuals to these categories will be provided to the individual in writing and will be explained by SSB Staff.
- B. At the time an applicant is determined eligible for services, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will assign that individual to the highest priority category for which he or she is qualified. The priority category and the rationale for the decision to assign the individual to that priority category will be documented in the case record. A detailed description of how the functional limitations restrict the individual's capacity to obtain, maintain or prepare for employment must also be included.
- C. The individual will be notified in writing as to the priority category he or she has been assigned and which priority categories are currently being served. The individual will also be notified in writing of his or her right to appeal that decision and will be given information about the Client Assistance Program.
- D. An individual, once assigned to a specific priority category, cannot be moved from that priority category unless changes in that individual's functional limitations occur that would put the individual in a different priority category. If such a change results in placement in a different priority category, the individual will be advised in writing of the change. The individual will also be notified in writing of his or her right to appeal that decision and will be given information about the Client Assistance Program. All individuals who have not started to receive services under an Individualized Plan for Employment prior to the date the Order of Selection is implemented will be advised in writing of its implementation and their assignment to a specific priority category. Individuals will also be notified in writing of their right to appeal, the decision regarding their priority category assignment and will be given information about the Client Assistance Program.
- E. SSB will inform all consumer groups, referral resources, and vendors in a timely manner of the date an Order of Selection is to be implemented.
- F. Supervisors in the Workforce Development Unit will be responsible for reviewing assignments of individuals to priority categories and monitoring the provision of services to individuals based on the principles of the Order of Selection.
- G. Priority categories will be opened on the basis of the availability of resources. Individuals within each respective categories will be served on a "first come, first serve" basis, determined by date of application for services.
- H. The Director of the Workforce Development Unit will monitor the activities of the Order of Selection to determine any needed changes in terms of the number of individuals served by opening or closing additional Order of Selection priority categories.
- I. Information and Referral services will be made available and provided to all eligible individuals on a waiting list. These services are designed to ensure that individuals on a waiting list are provided accurate vocational rehabilitation information and guidance, using appropriate modes of communication to assist them in preparing for, securing, retaining, or regaining employment. Individuals will be appropriately referred to other federal and state programs including other components of the statewide workforce investment system.

An appropriate referral shall include, for each of these programs, provision to the individual of:

1. a notice of the referral by SSB to the agency carrying out the program;

2. information identifying a specific point of contact within the agency carrying out the program; and
 3. Information and advice regarding the most suitable services to assist the individual to prepare for, secure, retain, regain, or advance employment.
- J. SSB will be managing the wait list by designating a wait list manager. The wait list manager will be responsible for contacting those customers on the wait list twice per year, notifying them of the current wait list status and providing them with resources. The wait list manager will also assist in moving people off of the wait list when categories become open.

BUDGET DETERMINATIONS

Prior to the start of each fiscal quarter, or when circumstances require, the SSB Director will determine in which priority categories new IPE's will be written and initiated.

1. Determine the amount of money to set-aside for determining eligibility of new applicants. This beginning amount is usually based on the average expenditures of the past two years for diagnostics and assessments adjusted monthly for current year increases or decreases in applicant activity and expenditures.
2. Determine the amount of money to set-aside for the continuation of current plans. This beginning amount is usually based on the average expenditures of the past two years for existing plans adjusted monthly for the current year increases or decreases in expenditures. Due to limitations in the reporting systems, SSB is unable to pull historical data by priority category to the current fiscal year.
3. Determine the amount of money for the WIOA required 15 percent set-aside for pre-employment transition services.
4. The remaining amount of dollars are available to fund new plans.

FFY15 ESTIMATED OUTCOME GOALS

	Individuals Served	Exit w/Employment	Estimated Expenditures
Priority A	282	27	\$2,046,000
Priority B	423	57	\$2,666,000
Priority C	310	40	\$1,488,000
Total	1,015	124	\$6,200,000

FFY16 Estimated Outcome Goals

	Individuals Served	Exit w/Employment	Estimated Expenditures
Priority A	228	30	\$2,046,000
Priority B	343	47	\$2,666,000
Priority C	259	70	\$1,488,000
Total	830	147	\$6,200,000

GOALS AND PLANS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI, PART B FUNDS

Minnesota State Services for the Blind's (SSB) goal and plan for Title VI, Part B funds, is to use them on an individualized, fee-for-service basis to purchase needed services for customers whose vocational

rehabilitation goal is competitive employment with supports. All funds authorized under Title VI, Part B, less a maximum of five percent set-aside for administrative expenses, are distributed and authorized by VR counselors to purchase needed services for customers under a supported employment plan. The money is administered and tracked, in accordance with federal requirements, through SSB's electronic tracking system.

During FFY2013, SSB provided services to 15 individuals under a plan for supported employment. The total Title VI Part B expenditures for FFY2013 were \$89,063.78. In FFY2014 the expenditures were \$70,222 and \$75,259 in FFY2015.

SSB purchases needed services from community rehabilitation programs. Those purchases are governed by operating agreements with either SSB or the General VR agency for the specific services required.

SSB has set a specific, measurable goal for supported employment for FFY2016. This goal is set taking into account the number of individuals in a supported employment plan currently within counselor caseloads, where the individuals are in the process of completing their rehabilitation plan, when they are expected to be ready for employment, and the ongoing services available. SSB will assist five SSB customers to secure competitive employment with supports following the provision of supported employment services using Title VI Part B funds.

STATE'S STRATEGIES

SECTION #1: JOBS, MORE JOBS, BETTER JOBS.

PRIORITY #1.1: Employment Outcomes—Increase employment outcomes by 3 percent from the previous year to meet SSB's Olmstead Plan commitment. (This priority is included as the Olmsted Plan is a significant law that Minnesota must comply with in order to ensure people with disabilities live and work in the least restrictive environments.)

Strategies:

The WDU will develop an annual employment outcome goal for each federal fiscal year. The goal will be reviewed mid-year and revised to reflect current case information together with the increase specified in the priority.

PRIORITY #1.2: Success Rate--- Increase the percentage of eligible individuals achieving employment outcomes from 55 percent to 70 percent. (We have not yet achieved this priority so it remains)

Strategies:

1. Based on findings from FFY 15, by April 1, 2016, SSB will implement and evaluate new processes to improve the percentage of successful employment outcomes.
2. By April 1, 2016, SSB will develop an electronic method of tracking minority and nonminority referrals and disseminate information in a bi-monthly report to the Minority Outcomes committee of the Council.

PRIORITY #1.3: Implement the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS). (This new priority is a result of WIOA becoming law this past July and the emphasis on youth with disabilities who are transition students to better prepare for the world of work through a variety of activities.)

Strategies:

1. Identify and communicate with all transition aged students who are blind, visually impaired, and DeafBlind who are not currently engaged with SSB so they are informed of services available.
2. By October 31st, 2015, identify all engaged transition students that are college bound in the fall of 2016. By December 31st, 2015, complete a technology assessment and O and M assessment if not completed. By June 1, 2016, complete all technology and O and M training as indicated by the assessment.

SECTION #2: SSB-YOUR RESOURCE WITHIN REACH.

PRIORITY #2: All Blind, Visually Impaired, and DeafBlind Minnesotans are aware of and have access to information about SSB.

Strategies:

1. Develop and implement an outreach and marketing strategy targeted towards eye care professionals so they meet their legal obligations to refer individuals to SSB.
2. Network with leaders of five minority communities (Russian, Hmong, Native Americans, Hispanic and East African) in Minnesota to jointly develop marketing and outreach plans.
3. Develop and implement a marketing and outreach plan targeting Regional Low Incidence Facilitators and Special Education directors.
4. Develop a collaborative opportunity for SSB, VRS, Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Services of the Department of Human Services and teachers of the blind, visually impaired and DeafBlind to market and provide information to people throughout

SECTION #3-SSB- A GREAT PLACE TO WORK.

PRIORITY #3: Develop and maintain a positive work environment.

Strategies:

1. By December 31, 2015, implement a team oriented model of customer service.
2. By December 31, 2015, implement accepted assistive technology workgroup recommendations for providing ongoing customer support and training.
3. Continue hiring practices that reflect the customer base served.

EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS

1. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (VR) GOALS

Progress in Achieving Identified Vocational Rehabilitation Program Goals and Priorities

The goals, priorities and strategies for the State Services for the Blind's (SSB) vocational rehabilitation program were jointly developed and formally agreed to by SSB and the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRC-B) in 2014. The goals, priorities and strategies were based on an analysis of the results of the 2013 State Plan statewide needs assessment; SSB's performance on the federal standards and indicators; findings and recommendations from the annual Section 107 review conducted by RSA; and the actions and recommendations of the SRC-B, its committees and task forces.

Progress on FFY15 Goals, Priorities, and Strategies

The Goals, Priorities, and Strategies for FFY15 include two main goals-increasing successful employment and increasing SSB's outreach. The priorities for the first goal are increasing employment outcomes, increasing the percentage of eligible individuals achieving employment outcomes, and increasing partnerships.

Highlights from the year include the following.

- 143 successful employment outcomes were achieved for FFY15, exceeding the 121 outcomes needed to meet this priority. Of these closures, 13 were homemakers. WIOA's proposed federal regulations eliminate homemakers as competitive integrated employment. It is anticipated that after the federal regulations are put into effect, SSB's Workforce Development Unit (WDU) will no longer be claiming homemakers as a successful employment outcome.
- WDU has projected to achieve over 140 successful competitive, integrated employment outcomes for FFY16.
- SSB has increased the percentage of individuals achieving employment outcomes from 61.10 percent in FFY2014 to 69.41 percent in FFY2015.
- The WDU has assigned a staff person to coordinate incoming referrals. This person is responsible for providing information specific to the programs available within SSB. The intent is to ensure all new referrals have a complete and accurate understanding of the purpose of the vocational rehabilitation program, as well as the responsibilities and expectations of participants. This allows individuals the opportunity to make an informed choice regarding their application.
- WDU also established an intake workgroup, designed to evaluate and implement a new and improved intake system. This involved a group orientation and clear, consistent messaging. This workgroup is still in the process of implementation.
- In FFY15, SSB's Minority and Outreach Sub-Committee proposed collecting information at time of referral regarding the demographic information of the individual. Collecting this information at that time in the VR process appeared discriminatory. Instead, the referral system was improved to provide more information, better information in a way that the person can access it. This could include language interpreters, translated documents, and other methods to be serve all referrals.
- SSB as a whole will also be piloting a group orientation for any new referrals to enhance the effort for individuals to make an informed choice regarding their intent to achieve an employment outcome. This orientation will be designed to meet the needs of ALL incoming referrals, regardless of culture or disability.
- In the area of increasing partnerships, WDU has developed relationships with Gillette Hospital and Ecolab to increase the likelihood of employment outcomes. We have achieved three successful employment outcomes from these employer relationships.
- WDU's employment team is actively involved in Statewide Placement Partnerships that has resulted in approximately seven successful employment outcomes. The Statewide Placement Partnerships include VRS and other employment agencies throughout the state.
- WDU is working collaboratively with VRS on a model Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Natural Resources, Department of Administration, and the Department of Corrections. The MOU indicates that if a vocational rehabilitation applicant meets the minimum qualifications, they are guaranteed an interview with the department.
- WDU and VRS are working together on the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP), which is managed by the National Employment Team.
- WDU hired a transition coordinator, who has continued to develop relationships with the Department of Education and other transition-related agencies. The goal of the transition coordinator is to ensure all SSB transition students receive Pre-Employment Transition Services, including work-based learning opportunities. In the summer of 2015, 80 out of 100 transition age students were involved in summertime activities at State Services for the Blind's (SSB)

transition program at the Duluth Lighthouse and BLIND, Inc. There were also other programs offered through various school districts. In addition to summertime programs, some of the students were able to hold part-time jobs and gain work experience.

- WDU participated in the Summer Opportunities Fair this past spring in collaboration with MDE and VRS.

Goal two for FFY15, is to increase SSB's outreach to all Minnesotans and targeted groups. Priorities and strategies for FFY15 focus on outreach and marketing strategy, networking with targeted communities, reaching Regional Low Incidence Facilitators and Special Education Directors, and DeafBlind service and outreach.

- An outreach and marketing strategy has been developed and implemented. The strategy included messaging targeted to eye care professionals, using a positive tone to remind them of their obligation, and let them know about the extensive services available through SSB's Workforce Development Unit, Senior Services Unit, and the Communication Center. SSB obtained a list of 16,000 eye care professionals within the state. Extensive culling was required to remove invalid entries. SSB is also working with the Communications, Analysis, Research and Design Agency in the Department of Employment, and Economic Development, to use their database of email contacts for state business to target Ophthalmologists, Optometrists, and Eye Clinics. An emailing and postcard campaign to the contacts will be begin in 2016.
- SSB has worked extensively with the Hmong Community in terms of outreach through the Hmong Resource Fair. Several SSB staff volunteered to work at the booth at the Resource Fair to talk with Hmong community members about SSB and the services it provides. The FFY2015 fair was held on October 4, 2014.
- SSB continues to provide technical assistance to the American Indian communities-particularly to those on the Red Lake and White Earth reservations. The yearly meeting was held to talk about any needs these programs may have and technical assistance from SSB.
- A member of the Minority Outreach Committee has maintained contact with the VRS New Americans Project which works with many minority groups (especially East African communities) and staff from the New Americans Project have willingly linked SSB staff to community programs.
- Planning was done at one of the SRC-B Outreach committee meetings to reach out to the Hispanic and Russian communities. Several agencies serving these populations were assigned to members for contracting which will begin during FFY2016.
- SSB and VRS directors spoke at a training targeting Special Education Directors at the Department of Education on September 11, 2015.
- In the area of increasing the numbers of minority individuals served and vocational outcomes achieved, SSB had representation at the Hmong Resource Fair and visited the Red Lake and White Earth Vocational Rehabilitation Programs for the annual technical assistance meetings. Guidelines are in the final draft format and are anticipated to be available in January 2014. During FFY13, SSB have been kept informed of current marketing and outreach activities to minority communities through email alerts from SSB staff.
- The DeafBlind Sub-Committee received a very low response rate (almost 0 percent) on the needs assessment for the past two years. The committee has chosen not to continue conducting the needs assessment. Instead, the DeafBlind committee is focusing on three areas: partnering with the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) on training orientation and mobility vendors on DeafBlindness, partnering with HKNC on best practices for DeafBlind placement, and finally

increasing DeafBlind membership and representation on the SRC-B and DeafBlind Sub-Committee.

The third goal seeks to develop and maintain a positive work environment by developing and implementing a team orientated model of customer service, ongoing customer support and training plan for the assistive technology team and hiring practices that reflect the customer based served.

- SSB formed a workgroup to research, develop, and implement a team approach to service delivery. The purpose of the team approach is to increase the probability of success for customers by offering a structure to provide the maximum support to a counselor and their caseload. This approach was piloted to WDU staff, and there is now an approximately 85 percent participation rate. The goal is to have 100 percent of staff involved in the team approach for FFY16.
- Recommendations from the SSB Assistive Technology Workgroup have identified strategies for realizing this strategy which were recently approved by SSB senior management. Strategies focus on 3 areas including: SSB making the commitment to be "The Model" for accessibility standards; adopting and implementing the CETT framework of how we approach customers at the beginning of their vocational rehabilitation process; and providing customers with multiple training options. The WDU Assistive Technology staff are now working to implement them. The CETT or Customer Environment Task Tool is based on the SETT Framework by [Joy Zabala](#).
- SSB has been working with DEED human resources to ensure that position postings include appropriate preferred qualifications that support SSB's customer base. SSB management is now adding to preferred qualifications a second language proficiency to encourage minority candidates to apply. SSB management is also taking a more active approach in screening potential candidates for job postings.

2. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS

Achieving the goal was accomplished through collaborative efforts with private placement and, as necessary, county supports. All efforts included establishing structured and stable work settings.

Determining on-going supports, particularly those requiring funding, can be the make or break for some situations. It can be very time consuming to arrange supports and funding. We have seen some jobs that have not been possible to successfully close because of a lack of on-going funding.

3. SSB PERFORMANCE ON FEDERAL STANDARDS AND INDICATORS

Although the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) no longer uses the established standards and indicators for measuring vocational rehabilitation program performance in the United States, SSB has calculated its performance using them. Standard 1 pertains to employment outcomes and Standard 2 pertains to the service rate between minority and nonminority populations. RSA requires that each agency pass 4 of the 6 indicators and 2 of 3 Primary Indicators on Standard 1. In FFY2015, SSB met 5 of 6 Indicators and all three Primary Indicators in Standard 1. SSB has a long history of consistently meeting the three primary indicators.

Standard 1

- 1.1 The number of individuals exiting the VR program who achieved an employment outcome during the current performance period compared to the number of individuals who exit the VR program after achieving an employment outcome during the previous performance period.

Required Performance Level: Performance in the current period must equal or exceed performance in the previous period. In FFY2015 SSB assisted 42 more individual to obtain employment than in FFY2014.

- 1.2 Of all individuals who exit the VR program after receiving services, the percentage who are determined to have achieved an employment outcome.
Required Performance Level: The required performance level is 68.9 percent. In FFY2015, SSB rose above this measure, achieving 69.41 percent.
- 1.3 Of all individuals determined to have achieved an employment outcome, the percentage who exit the VR program in competitive, self-, or business enterprise program (BEP) employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage.
Required Performance Level: SSB exceeded the required performance level of 35.4 percent by achieving a level of 91.34 percent.
- 1.4 Of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-, or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage, the percentage who are individuals with significant disabilities.
Required Performance Level: SSB achieved a performance level of 100.00 percent, exceeding the requirement of 89.0 percent.
- 1.5 The average hourly earnings of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-, or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage as a ratio to the State's average hourly earnings for all individuals in the State who are employed (as derived from the Bureau of Labor Statistics report, "State Average Annual Pay" for the most recent available year).
Required Performance Level: SSB surpassed the required performance level of .59 by achieving a level of .772.
- 1.6 Of all individuals who exit the VR program in competitive, self-, or BEP employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage, the difference between the percentage who report their own income as the largest single source of economic support at the time they exit the VR program and the percentage who report their own income as the largest single source of support at the time they apply for VR services.
Required Performance Level: SSB achieved a level of 28.20 percent, falling below the requirement of 30.4 percent.

Standard 2

- 2.1 The service rate for all individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds as a ratio to the service rate for all individuals with disabilities from non-minority backgrounds.
Required Performance Level: This ratio is not calculated if fewer than 100 persons from minority backgrounds exit the program during the fiscal year. For FFY15 SSB's rate was .817 percent.

4. FUNDS RESERVED FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION (I&E) ACTIVITIES

SSB used Title I funds for innovation and expansion in support of the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRC-B) meetings, for meetings of the Council committees and task forces, and in support of member travel to national rehabilitation meetings. The SRC-B actual expenditures for FFY2015 were \$28,728.

SSB resources for support of the Statewide Independent Living Council come from Title VII rather than Title I funds. SSB will continue to use Title I funds for innovation and expansion in support of the SRC-B's resource plan of \$35,730 for FFY16.

QUALITY, SCOPE, EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Supported employment services promoting the integration of people with the most severe disabilities into employment in Minnesota have become increasingly available. The scope and quality of supported employment services have improved as more entities become aware of the benefits of ongoing employment supports for individuals with the most significant disabilities. However, the demand for supported employment exceeds the capacity of systems in Minnesota to provide the necessary extended ongoing employment supports.

In addition to the goals for Title VI Part B described in Section N, SSB will continue to engage in capacity building and technical assistance efforts with other state agencies and community service providers. For example, SSB is working with the Minnesota Department of Human Services regarding the need for ongoing employment supports for individuals who are DeafBlind. SSB counselors have had some success working with county social workers to obtain waiver funding for those ongoing supports.

Vocational rehabilitation services provided by SSB to individuals under a supported employment plan over the last two years are described in Section N. The services are similar to those provided to other customers under an IPE but how the services are provided and the supports that are needed, will vary significantly depending on the needs of the individual. When vocational rehabilitation services are completed, a customer transitions to extended services. That transition occurs when the individual achieves the goals set out in their supported employment IPE, when they reach stability on the job, and when a service provider agrees to begin providing the needed ongoing employment supports. In most cases, the transition from vocational rehabilitation services to extended services occurs within three months.

In Minnesota, the sources of ongoing support primarily include the counties, community rehabilitation programs or other private non-profit organizations.

CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES

CERTIFICATIONS

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1. The (enter the name of designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate,) is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by WIOA, and its supplement under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act;
2. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the (enter the name of designated State agency) agrees to operate and administer the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan, the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations, policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under Section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of VR services and the administration of the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan;
3. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated State agency agrees to operate and administer the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan, the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations, policies and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made

available under title VI are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan;

4. The designated State agency and/or the designated State unit has the authority under State law to perform the functions of the State regarding the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan and its supplement;
5. The State legally may carry out each provision of the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan and its supplement;
6. All provisions of the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan and its supplement are consistent with State law;
7. The (enter title of State officer below) has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan and its supplement;
8. The (enter title of State officer below) has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment Services;
9. The agency that submits the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement.

ASSURANCES

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Combined State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in Sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances:

The Combined State Plan must provide assurances that:

1. **Public Comments on Policies and Procedures:** The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Service Portion of the Combined State Plan, as required by Section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.
2. **Submission of the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan and Its Supplement:** The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by Sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.
3. **Administration of the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan:** The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:
 - a. the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by Section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act.
 - b. the establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by Section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (Option A or B must be selected):
 - A. is an independent State commission.
 - B. has established a State Rehabilitation Council

- c. consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan, in accordance with Section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act.
the non-Federal share, as described in 34 CFR 361.60.
 - d. the local administration of the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan, in accordance with Section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds, (Yes/No)
 - e. the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with Section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs, (Yes/No)
 - f. statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in Section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. Is the designated State agency is requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan? (Yes/No) See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Combined State Plan.
 - g. the descriptions for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by Sections 101(a)(11), (24)(B), and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.
 - h. all required methods of administration, as required by Section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act.
 - i. the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in Section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act.
 - j. the compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by Sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.
 - k. the reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under Section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities.
 - l. the submission of reports as required by Section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.
- 4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services:** The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:
- a. comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with Sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.
 - b. impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with Section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act.
 - c. provide the full range of services listed in Section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with Section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act? (Yes/No)
 - d. comply with all required available comparable services and benefits, determined to be available to the individual in accordance with Section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act and.
 - e. comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with Section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.
 - f. comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with Section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act.

- g. provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with Section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act.
- h. comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual review, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, as required by Section 101(a)(14) of the Rehabilitation Act.
 - (i) meet the requirements in Sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs

5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:

- a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Combined State Plan all information required by Section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act.
- b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by Section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.

6. Financial Administration:

- a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under Section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with Section 606(b)(7)(G) and (H) of the Rehabilitation Act.
- b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with Section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act.

7. Provision of Supported Employment Services

- a. The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in Section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.
- b. The designated State agency assures that:
 - (i) the comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under Section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of Section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act
 - (ii) an individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of Section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with Sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTNER PROGRAMS

CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION – CARL PERKINS

- [Minnesota Five-Year State CTE Plan](#)
- [Minnesota State Plan Narrative Revisions 2015-16](#)

TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES

- [Minnesota State Plan for TANF](#)

EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING PROGRAMS UNDER SNAP AND WORK PROGRAMS UNDER THE FOOD AND NUTRITION ACT

PART I. SUMMARY OF THE MINNESOTA SNAP EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAM

ABSTRACT OF THE MINNESOTA EMPLOYMENT TRAINING PROGRAM

PROGRAM NAME – MINNESOTA SNAP E&T PROGRAM

Minnesota will provide a mandatory employment and training program for able-bodied adults without dependents. Other eligible SNAP recipients from age 18 and up who are not required to meet a Title IV-A work requirement will be served on a voluntary basis. The purpose of the SNAP E&T program is to assist these individuals in becoming employed by offering a variety of services delivered by Employment Services Providers (ESPs).

Participant service strategies are determined by assessing the individual's barriers to employment. Assessments are completed by ESPs and include active participant involvement. Goals to achieve employment are then outlined in individualized employment plans (EPs).

The SNAP E&T program includes Diversionary Work Program participants. Minnesota has a Diversionary Work Program (DWP) for persons with children under the age of 18. Participants in DWP are not complying with Title IV-A TANF work requirements. This program is geared toward rapid placement in unsubsidized employment. It is limited to four months of participation in a twelve month period. Participants who are not successful in achieving employment in this time period are referred to the state's TANF program – the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP). DWP participants are tracked in the E&T Program Activity Report - Form FNS-583 as volunteers.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS/LIMITATIONS

Minnesota transitioned back to a mandatory ABAWD program on 11/1/2013. ABAWDs receiving cash benefits such as GA, MSA or RCA are exempt from SNAP E&T participation and the three month limitation. ABAWDs working an average of 20 hours per week/80 hours monthly will be deferred from SNAP E&T services as they are presumed to be meeting the ABAWD work requirements for continued eligibility. Deferred ABAWDs with negative changes in work hours will be noted by county workers and referred to E&T as necessary. While deferred, they will be offered the opportunity to receive services to enhance their employment possibilities and engage in seeking full-time employment. Those who fail to comply with their employment plans will be terminated from E&T but not sanctioned as they are considered be meeting the minimum ABAWD requirements. In Minnesota, we defer those ABAWDs the eligibility workers have coded as working 20 hours or more per week for SNAP E&T services. Since we

have established a mandatory program again, those ABAWDs in this situation have been deferred from being sent to E&T for their first six months. At the time of their six month review if there is no change, they are offered the opportunity to be referred to E&T to see other services such as full-time work or education. Because they are meeting the minimum requirements they are not sanctioned for failure to comply with their employment plan but closed on Workforce One by service providers. We believe this group deserves an opportunity to improve their earnings through E&T exposure.

- SNAP E&T services are provided to eligible mandatory SNAP recipients each month SNAP is received, who reside within the designated service area. Services are limited based on the amount of funding available from the state and federal resources. ABAWDs are sanctioned for failure to comply with E&T requirements. The sanctioning process work like this. The service provider contacts the county worker via email or fax with the pertinent information to substantiate non-compliance. The client is notified at the same time as the county worker and within 10 days of the non-compliance occurring a closing notice is issued. County workers will review cases to establish if good cause exits prior to sanctioning. The first time sanctioning occurs the client is closed for one month. The second sanction period is two months and the third is three months. Once a sanction is imposed it cannot be cured. The sanction period must be served out unless the client provides an exemption reason.
- Voluntary participation is encouraged by county workers at time of SNAP approval via verbal explanation of program benefits and/or county/provider generated fact sheets. Volunteers who engage in E&T services are terminated from E&T if they fail to follow their employment plans or keep appointments. They are not sanctioned or closed on SNAP.

Program legislation requires county agencies to provide advance notification of participation activities to all mandatory SNAP E&T participants in non-waived areas.

Program Highlights

Minnesota changed the distribution methodology of 100 percent grant funds. Diminishing 100 percent grants over the past few years necessitated change in operations. Limited resources make statewide operation unfeasible.

Request for Proposals are released each year to counties and service providers interested in operating SNAP E&T. By replacing the county allocation process with an invitational proposal process we are able to maintain current providers along with hoping to add one or two more to expand the service area based on increased 100 percent funding for this year. The proposal process encourages one county to become a host county for a region or workforce service area (WSA). Within a WSA, counties could elect to become part of the regional program with money spent within the region where needed and not restricted to certain amounts being spent within individual counties.

By changing fiscal reporting from monthly to quarterly and reducing the number of allocations distributed we reduced state level administration which enabled us to provide additional money to the field for direct service.

Attached to this Plan is a list of counties that are operating a SNAP E&T program and those counties that are exempt for one year and reservations that are exempt for 2 years from the ABAWD Work and Time Limits effective 10/1/2015.

For FFY16 and FFY17 all tribal reservations are exempt from the ABAWD work and time limits. If tribal reservations want to use their own funds to operate a volunteer SNAP E&T program they will be able to utilize the Federal Financial Participation (FFP) of 75 percent rate for their documented allowable expenses.

Vernon LaPlante, the DHS Commissioner's Tribal Representative, is kept apprised of SNAP Program changes including SNAP E&T by DHS/DEED staff. Mr. LaPlante connects with each tribe/reservation in Minnesota on behalf of DHS.

DHS/DEED staff will continue to work with Mr. LaPlante and his staff to discuss potential SNAP E&T opportunities with each reservation utilizing FFP at the 75 percent rate. Tribal Reservations will be encouraged, with DHS/DEED assistance, to develop local programs designed to provide volunteer SNAP E&T services/activities to their members. As these programs develop, they will be added to this SNAP E&T Plan and submitted for approval to FNS.

DEED is currently working with the Northwest Indian Occupational Industrialization Center (OIC) which was provided a Career Pathways grant to provide Career Pathways opportunities for Indians residing on or off the reservations. We hope to expand this project to other areas along with increasing Adult Basic Education (ABE) to better reach and serve this population.

Minnesota's program is broken down into several categories as follows:

- 100 percent grant funds are used exclusively for ABAWDs and other individuals ages 18 and up who do not receive any form of cash grants. These individuals would be considered SNAP only participants.
- 50 percent FFP funds are separated into several areas including Diversionary Work Program (DWP), Two Parent MFIP participants, MFIP Family Stabilization Service (FSS) participants, Heading Home program participants, and the Navigator Career Pathways Wraparound Project.
- We are adding new programs beginning October 1 from DEED: Minnesota Job Skills Partnership and FastTRAC/Career Pathways along with other DEED state funded initiatives listed below. The OHE project is moving into a fall semester start up and expanding to a larger group of campuses for the winter semester in January 2016.

Minnesota operates a mandatory program for ABAWDs and a volunteer program for other SNAP eligible individuals 18 years of age and older who are not required to meet Title IV-A work requirements. Priority of service will be given to ABAWDs due to time limitations

The MFIP program in Minnesota provides cash assistance to 2-parent families including families who participate in family stabilization services (FSS). Benefits for these families are provided through state-only funding which is not used to meet any federal maintenance of effort requirements. Minnesota has a Diversionary Work Program (DWP) which lasts for 4 months whose funding comes from state funds. These DWP cases are part of 50 percent SNAP E&T match requests to FNS. Minnesota will claim 50 percent SNAP E&T match for state-funded child care assistance provided to these families who are SNAP E&T eligible. Minnesota uses MEC², which allows the state to track child care costs related to SNAP E&T program participation. We estimate that of the 8,750 average monthly FSS cases and 2,750 average monthly 2-parent families receiving benefits, approximately 470 FSS families and 250 2-parent families will receive child care assistance for which federal SNAP E&T match is permitted.

Child care costs for these groups are projected to be over \$5 million in 2016. However, the state legislature has capped the amount at \$4 million dollars annually that can be applied towards FFP. These estimates are included in the budget pages. Child care that is provided by child care providers who are related to the child is excluded from these estimates as required by FNS rule.

Minnesota has an established retention policy for SNAP E&T purposes. We allow retention services up to but no more than 90 days from the participant employment date. The SNAP E&T counselor enters this date in WF1 which generates a tickler message informing the counselor when the 90 days will expire. Services are limited to case management and allowable retention support services as provided in the revised FNS SNAP support service worksheet which we have adopted. Retention Services are available for all participants who lose SNAP eligibility due to increased earnings from employment.

Heading Home

Minnesota will continue address the growing issue of homelessness among SNAP eligible single able-bodied adults in the Twin Cities metropolitan area through the Heading Home project via the current provider network. This population presents many challenges and is largely underserved by Minnesota's various employment programs thus limiting their access to training and employment opportunities. Huge gaps in services exist because there is little or no coordination between rapid re-housing agencies and employment and training providers. These functions have been considered mutually exclusive of one another. Heading Home providers for FFY16 are: Goodwill Easter Seals, Catholic Charities, and Project for Pride in Living.

The three service providers use their own resources as well as Community Development Block Grant funds, United Way grants and foundation grants to fund the project. These agencies have agreements/contracts with the state. The state will seek 50 percent FFP reimbursement through FNS for allowable E&T expenditures/activities for SNAP recipients to be reinvested in the project so more SNAP recipients can be served. The state will assure that these matching funds meet all federal requirements to be eligible for FFP through fiscal monitoring of providers. Through the process of annual program and fiscal monitoring by DEED staff experienced in program evaluation, monitoring tools have been developed to capture accurate expenditures of all programs under DEED's watch. Fund sources used for match must be listed by type and amount. Fiscal monitoring includes budgetary reviews, cost allocation plans, staff charges and support service charges along with references to applicable OMB circulars. Each provider must submit an annual audit conducted by a third party. Providers included in this plan are also providers of other DEED programs. Due to this relationship, DEED must ensure the program specific expenditures are separated and traceable. The budget for Heading Home for FFY16 is \$958,078.

Update (August 15, 2015)

Heading Home has enrolled 1106 participants since conception including 208 during SFY15. Seven hundred and four participants have left the program to date. Of those, 34 percent have found employment averaging 36 hours per week at an average wage of \$10.34 per hour.

Details of the Heading Home project have been discussed in previous plans and are not included in the 2016 plan document.

SNAP Career Pathways Navigator Project

Minnesota implemented a project designed to enhance post-secondary outcomes for SNAP recipients as a way to boost their economic stability via training in industry needed occupations. A detailed outline

was presented in the FFY13 Plan. The project began July 1, 2013. It is officially titled: Minnesota Adult Career Pathway Navigator Wraparound Services.

Three providers for FFY16 are Goodwill Easter Seals, Project for Pride in Living and HIRED.

Originally established as a pay for performance project focusing on outcomes (milestones) achieved by participants it has not succeeded as expected. Following consultation with Greater Twin Cities United Way (the project funder) and the three service providers an agreement has been reached to move the project to a reimbursement model covering program and support service costs. In addition to this change, all parties are developing a much stronger outreach program to maximize SNAP recipient involvement in training services. The project budget for FFY16 is set for \$831,920.

Federal financial participation received from FNS for these two projects will be reinvested to expand services and support services to participants as well to increase enrollment in each program.

PROGRAM CHANGES

Office of Higher Education Vocational Education Proposal

Minnesota seeks to expand its career pathways strategy for SNAP E&T for FFY16. We will offer participants a way forward that leads to vocationally focused post-secondary training coupled with good paying jobs.

As the state's unemployment rate continues to drop to record levels, unemployed and marginally employed SNAP recipients lack skill sets necessary to enter occupations which lead to self-sufficiency. Good jobs require additional education at entry levels. Roughly half of Minnesota's ABAWD population lacks a high school or GED education while many others possess only a 12 grade level. Many non-mandatory SNAP recipients also have limited education and lack relevant job skills necessary to progress to self-sustaining occupations. We seek to engage these individuals voluntarily in training opportunities as well.

In collaboration with the Office of Higher Education (OHE), DHS and DEED are forging a relationship between higher education and SNAP recipients requiring additional job training/education to be successful. Minnesota has modeled their approach after the Washington state model. A state level match source has been identified which can be used to build and expand the SNAP E&T program. OHE is the state agency responsible for the applications of and dissemination of Pell Grants and the Minnesota State Grants to post-secondary students through local college campuses

The Minnesota State Grant (MSG) program is offered to students who require assistance in paying for tuition and books that their Pell grants do not cover. The grant program is funded by state general revenue funds. The MSG program contains no federal resources nor is it used for maintenance of effort (MOE) for other federal programs. In addition, OHE possesses additional state funds which support students in ways other than tuition and books. The average MSG grant is approximately \$1200 per student per year.

For the purposes of this expansion we are concentrating on participants/students who will enter vocationally driven courses which can be completed in two years or less. DEED will use Minnesota's labor market forecasting reports and high demand job reports to providers and students to assist in

course determination. Four categories of high demand/high growth industries that Minnesota will focus on are: Information Technology, Health Care Services, Advanced Manufacturing, and Agriculture.

The dropout rate of college attendees is high. There are many SNAP recipients or SNAP eligible persons among this group. Because as a state we have already made an investment in their education through federal and state grants it is important to offer additional case management to allow them to complete their course of study and join the ranks of employed citizens. Without our intervention many of these students who drop out will have acquired student loan debt which only adds to their inability to move forward. Saddled with this debt and marginal employment opportunities assures a continued long term presence on public assistance programs including SNAP.

In approaching this issue, we are mindful that we really have two variations to the problem. First are those students who may or may not be on SNAP attending school. Second, are those who are considering school, not on SNAP.

When considering those presently attending classes we need to ensure that if they do receive SNAP that they meet the student definition under 7 CFR 273.5. For those who are planning on attending school but not on SNAP, this process will be used to determine if the students may be SNAP eligible.

Pilot Plan for Fall Semester August/September 2015

We had intended to start the project with a pilot set for the summer session in June 2015. Due to the late approval date for this startup we have been working towards a pilot implementation plan for fall semester. We have selected campuses to work with us as we fine tune this approach. These are all Minnesota state colleges.

Using DEED's labor market information surveys, the goal is to strive for training in four categories of high demand/high growth industries: information technology, health care services, advanced manufacturing, and agriculture. Within each of these industry sectors are different occupations which will provide long term employment opportunities for successful graduates.

Information Exchange Plan

In order to reach students and potential students considering vocational level education, a planning committee was created with OHE, DHS, DEED and Minnesota's local college campuses.

Individual campuses will use their email system to send out targeted emails regarding SNAP E&T program opportunities. These emails will encourage anyone interested in more information to set up an appointment or call to a SNAP E&T provider. Because this method will be individual student initiated, this will mean no sharing of private data.

Campuses will offer space for counselors to come to each site, or students will be advised to contact a counselor at a pre-determined number. Campuses and providers will work out details locally. A number of Minnesota's SNAP E&T providers are currently co-located with colleges.

Two attachments to this plan outline Minnesota's questions to discuss with students about the SNAP application process.

Enrollment in SNAP E&T

No TANF, also known as Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), participants will be enrolled in any SNAP E&T component.

Technical/community colleges that wish to participate with this initiative have agreed to be the primary and active outreach partner by providing information about SNAP and SNAP E&T to all of their students.

It is the goal of each the school to have all their students complete their coursework timely so the student can graduate with the skills necessary to obtain gainful employment. The school wants their students to be aware of all the support services available to them so they can get the training necessary to be self-sufficient.

This outreach will be done in several ways: 1) a generic email blast giving basic information about the program; 2) placing more detailed information about SNAP eligibility and SNAP E&T in the admissions/student counselor offices along with providing some basic screening questions.

Once the student has reviewed the basic eligibility guidelines for SNAP and expressed interest in applying, the role of the job counselor will be to have a short conversation with the student to see if their education/vocational goals are compatible or could be worked into an employment plan with the end goal of short term training credentials to lead to gainful employment.

Once the financial worker has determined SNAP eligibility, the job counselors at the technical/community colleges will be completing and employment and training plan and working in partnership with the school to verify ongoing eligibility in the student's training goals.

Prior to completing this educational vocational component, counselors will work with students to develop resumes and exposure to job search techniques necessary to compete in today's fast paced environment.

Our intent is to have clients focus on courses with completion dates of two years or less directly related to a career pathway. To that end, DEED has a long list of approved post-secondary institutions with proven outcome track records which are used by the state's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act providers. While WIOA and SNAP E&T are two distinct and separate programs, the state does encourage co-enrollment where feasible to share the cost of client expenditures

SNAP E&T program providers will play an active role in each student's vocational training from start to finish offering support along the way as needed on an individual basis.

Participant Performance and Time Tracking

E&T counselors, students, along with campus staff will establish monthly reporting requirements for students at local institutions. Student performance will be based on course completion, gaining training related employment and pre and post earnings records.

- Students will be required to meet either face to face or by phone with their counselor once each month classes are in session.
- Students will provide copies of class schedules at the beginning and grades at the end of each semester to support continued attendance with SNAP E&T assistance.
- Counselors will be responsible for capturing school attendance hours biweekly on all participants to ensure they continue to maintain their SNAP eligibility. These hours are recorded in WF1 and shared with appropriate county staff monthly.

How will 50 percent Match Funds Be Utilized?

Federal reimbursement from allowable match (MSG) will be reinvested in SNAP E&T in the following ways:

- Additional participant reimbursement for transportation, child care, items necessary to complete an educational course or related internship not paid for through other sources, items necessary to start and maintain employment in a retention activity.
- Educational incentives to encourage SNAP recipients who are Native American (on or off reservations), young adults aging out of foster care and persons experiencing homelessness to engage in career pathways activities. These incentives may include additional supports for tuition and books as many of these students will receive insufficient Pell and MSG grants which may not cover their costs along with increased counselor contact.
- Development and expansion of the current process of navigators to assist students in connecting with community resources for co-enrollment with local partners including WIOA delivery systems.
- Additional case managers for wrap around services in areas of high participant populations.
- Necessary administrative expenditures to oversee and aid in the delivery of this component.

The SNAP E&T counselors will work with and support students throughout their educational experience to ensure course of study. During or at the close of their post-secondary education, students will be afforded job seeking classes consisting of job search, resume development, and interviewing skills. Students will be able to search DEED's MinnesotaWorks.net job bank for a comprehensive listing of jobs.

Minnesota has received approval from FNS that allows the state to accept Office of Higher Education Minnesota State Grants as third party fund source for SNAP E&T post-secondary program operations for all eligible SNAP E&T participants.

Reconciliation of Expenditures

To ensure that all MSG grant expenditures are allowable, DEED and OHE will exchange client data consisting of full name, social security number, birth date, E&T enrollment date and end date if available. This level of data will satisfy DEED's requirement to ensure that participants were receiving SNAP benefits and enrolled in SNAP E&T prior to making any reimbursements. Any participants deemed not eligible will be excluded from the reimbursement amount. Data exchanges will occur 30 days after the add/drop dates for each semester. All pertinent data will be kept for 7 years as required by Minnesota statute. Each student in this post-secondary initiative, will have a signed release to allow the transfer of data between the college, the provider, DEED, DHS and OHE.

The Office of Higher Education will have administrative costs for staff time devoted to the post-secondary initiative for which reimbursement will be sought.

All reimbursements will be directed back to the providers that enroll and manage post-secondary participants so to provide continuous service for these students.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is being developed between the three agencies outlining roles and responsibilities relating to the establishment of this component. A copy of this will be sent to FNS upon completion.

ABAWD POPULATION

It is estimated that 41,000+ ABAWDs will receive benefits at some point in time during FFY16.

ADDITIONAL ALLOCATION FOR "PLEDGE" STATES

Minnesota does not wish to participate in this program.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

SNAP E&T is a multi-activity (component) program consisting of: Orientation, Assessment and Employment Plan, Job Seeking Skills, Job Club, Job Search, Education, Vocational Training including FastTRAC/Career Pathways and MSJP training, Work Experience, Workfare, Retention Services and Social Services. These are described further in Part I. B.

SEQUENCING OF COMPONENTS (ACTIVITIES)

Activities within SNAP E&T are sequenced to meet the training needs of participants. ESPs may direct participants to engage in multiple activities at any given time based on findings of assessments and the compatibility of those activities along with the need to engage in countable activities.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

Minnesota statute require SNAP E&T services to be operated through its WorkForce Center (WFC) system. There are currently 48 WorkForce Centers statewide. Only one metro county, Hennepin, operates outside the WorkForce Center system due to a grandfather clause. In counties where WFCs do not exist, WFC staff provides SNAP E&T services locally, usually at county human service offices.

INTEGRATION WITH WIOA

Minnesota will be aligning SNAP E&T with the new WIOA Plan being developed by DEED and DHS. SNAP E&T outcomes will be measured along with WIOA. By aligning SNAP E&T, we hope to offer more opportunities for co-enrollment to take advantage of the services WIOA has to offer. The majority of current SNAP E&T providers are also WIOA providers. We will be working with the Governor's Workforce Development Council to strengthen SNAP E&T's place in the WIOA frame work. DEED and DHS will incorporate SNAP E&T into the state's WIOA plan which is to be developed by 7/1/2016. No WIOA programs will be funded with SNAP E&T funds.

OUTCOME DATA

In SFY14 (7/1/14 to 6/30/15), the percentage of 100 percent grant funded participants placed in unsubsidized employment was 39.7 percent, a slight decrease from SFY 2014. The average wage at placement rose to \$10.36 per hour. Participants who gained employment averaged 31.5 hours per week at program termination. This is number increased decreased almost two hours per week from the SFY14 result.

Participant characteristics and additional information for 100 percent, DWP, FSS and two parent programs can be found in Part II. A. 3.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS (ACTIVITIES)

SNAP E&T components consist of non-work and work related activities. Participants must receive services within thirty days of the SNAP eligibility determination according to Minnesota statute. Each activity in Minnesota's plan is described in the activity summary tables in the next few pages. Locally, each component is arranged to meet work and assessment activities.

Minnesota does not reimburse ESPs by activity, but instead provides counties/regions with an annual 100 percent allocation. Counties/regions use their allocation to provide services as needed. A separate

support services allocation is issued annually. The state reimburses counties/regions for actual expenditures.

The Diversionary Work Program, Two Parent cases and FSS cases are funded through the Consolidated Fund issued annually by DHS to counties each calendar year.

COMPONENT (ACTIVITY) SUMMARY

Minnesota SNAP E&T State Plan for FFY 2016

Name of Activity: Orientation							
FFY 2016 Activity Cost: \$1,600,000							
Description:	<p>Participants must receive services within thirty days of SNAP eligibility determination. While this activity is not a 'countable' activity, it is required by state statute. Orientation must inform the participant of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the ability to participate in SNAP E&T; the date, time, and address to report to for services; the name and telephone number of the ESP; the services and support services available through the SNAP E&T program and other providers of similar services; the need to view SNAP as a temporary means of supplementing the family's needs until the family achieves self-sufficiency through employment; <p>Orientations may be provided through audio-visual methods, but participants must have the opportunity for face-to-face interaction with program staff.</p>						
Geographic Areas Covered:	Anticipated Number of ABAWDS:	Anticipated Number of Volunteers:	Anticipated Number of Notices of Adverse Action (NOAAs):	Targeted Population:	Duration:	Organizational Responsibilities:	Type of Component:
Statewide	6,500	21,500	3,000	Mandatory SNAP E&T (DWP) (2 Parent cases) (FSS) Participants	2-4 hours	Employment Services Providers	Non-work Orientation requires two to four hours of participation effort. Orientation is provided to participants once in a twelve-month period.

Minnesota SNAP E&T State Plan for FFY 2016

Name of Activity: Assessment and Employment Plan							
FFY 2016 Activity Cost: \$ 2,600,000							
Description:		<p>Individualized employability assessments are mandatory for all participants within 30 days of eligibility determination. ESPs must consider the following when preparing an assessment: the person's literacy; ability to communicate in the English language; educational and employment histories; occupational and employment assets; and barriers to employment. This information is incorporated into an employment plan (EP). Assessments are completed in person with client input. Like Orientation, this activity is not countable but is required by state statute.</p> <p>The results of individual assessments are used to develop EPs. Goals and overall work plans must be achievable and directly relate to participant self-sufficiency. Employment plans are completed in an interactive, face to face meeting with participants. Both provider and participant sign the document. EPs must be written at or below the 7th grade reading level. Participants must receive a copy of the signed EP. Plans specify any support services necessary to achieve goals stated in the EP.</p> <p>For volunteers who are determined functionally illiterate, the county agency or designated ESP must assign suitable participants to openings in literacy programs and provide transportation to ensure that participants have the opportunity to complete the required training.</p>					
Geographic Areas Covered:	Anticipated Number of ABAWDS:	Anticipated Number of Volunteers:	Anticipated Number of (NOAAs):	Targeted Population:	Duration:	Organizational Responsibilities:	Type of Component:
Statewide	5,800	17,500	1,200	Mandatory SNAP E&T participants, DWP, 2p and FSS participants.	2-4 hours	This activity is carried out by the ESP with information provided by the county human service agency. Under Minnesota Statute, ESPs are chosen by local service units.	Non-work Orientations, assessments and EPs are generally delivered at the same time. However, county flexibility offers some variation to this sequence.

Minnesota SNAP E&T State Plan for FFY 2016

Name of Activity: Job Seeking Skills (Job Readiness)							
FFY 2016 Activity Cost: \$ 2,400,000							
Description:	Structured group sessions ranging from 4 to 20 total hours weekly, with schedules left to the discretion of ESPs. Sessions cover resume writing, finding job openings, telephone techniques, completion of applications, interviewing techniques (with mock interviews), and motivational issues. Sessions normally include out-of-class assignments.						
Geographic Areas Covered:	Anticipated Number of ABAWDS:	Anticipated Number of Volunteers:	Anticipated Number of (NOAAs):	Targeted Population:	Duration:	Organizational Responsibilities:	Type of Component:
Statewide	2,700	15,500	550	Mandatory SNAP E&T Participants and voluntary FSS, 2p and DWP participants who have little or no work history.	4-20 hours	Employment Services Providers	Non-work

Name of Activity: Job Club							
FFY 2016 Activity Cost: \$ 2,850,000							
Description:	Group monitored job seeking activities involves use of ESP facilities (e.g. phone bank), assistance with telephone techniques, and job reporting to staff. Important aspects of this activity are assistance and direction from staff and interaction with other clients. This segment will involve 8-20 hours per week, depending on participant status and locality of in-office participation.						
Geographic Areas Covered:	Anticipated Number of ABAWDS:	Anticipated Number of Volunteers:	Anticipated Number of (NOAAs):	Targeted Population:	Duration:	Organizational Responsibilities:	Type of Component:
Statewide	3,200	11,050	750	Mandatory SNAP E&T Participants and voluntary FSS, DWP and 2p	8-20 hours	Employment Services Providers	Non-work

Minnesota SNAP E&T State Plan for FFY 2016

Name of Activity: Job Search							
FFY 2016 Activity Cost: \$ 5,350,000							
Description:							
Geographic Area Covered:	Anticipated Number of ABAWDs:	Anticipated Number of Volunteers:	Anticipated Number of (NOAAs):	Targeted Population:	Duration:	Organizational Responsibilities:	Type of Component:
Statewide	6,200	16,500	1100	Mandatory and voluntary participants who are Job-ready individuals	8-32 hours per week	This activity is operated by the ESP which is selected by the county. The provider may be the local WIA provider, Job Service, or a county agency.	<p><u>Level of Participant Effort:</u> Minimum of 8 hours per week, with actual level of participant effort dependent on the locality and participant status. Job search may be reduced for those participating in other activities.</p> <p><u>Resources:</u> All available resources are used, as appropriate, to assist the individual in securing employment. These include Job Service, MN Youth and WIA/WIOA, which provide job-search assistance, relocation assistance, and non-SNAP funded subsidized employment.</p> <p><u>Monitoring Job Contacts:</u> Participants are required to report job contacts and review job search with SNAP E&T staff. Contacts are verified on a sample basis as deemed appropriate at the local level.</p>

Minnesota SNAP E&T State Plan for FFY 2016

Name of Activity: Work Experience							
FFY 2016 Activity Cost: \$ 620,000							
Description:		<p>Work Experience: is designed to improve the employability of participants through actual work experience and/or training. The goal of this experience is to enable participants to move into regular employment. In contrast to the workfare component, work experience placements can be with private, for-profit companies. Work experience assignments may not replace the employment of a regularly employed individual, and they must provide the same benefits and working conditions provided to regularly employed individuals performing similar work for equal hours. SNAP E&T providers can place E&T participants in work experience positions with private sector entities. However, households that include work experience participants must not be required to work more hours monthly than the total obtained by dividing the household's monthly SNAP allotment by the Federal minimum wage. Depending on the amount of the household's monthly SNAP allotment, mandatory E&T participants can be required to work up to 30 hours per week, and the individual's total hours of participation in both work and non-work components is limited to 120 hours per month.</p>					
Geographic Areas Covered:	Anticipated Number of ABAWDS:	Anticipated Number of Volunteers:	Anticipated Number of (NOAAs):	Targeted Population:	Duration:	Organizational Responsibilities:	Type of Component:
Statewide.	<u>Anticipated Number of Work Slots Offered to ABAWDS per Month, 80</u> <u>The number of anticipated work slots filed per month, 25</u>	1050	40	Mandatory and voluntary participants who are determined to need skill development as determined by assessments.	Individualized to participant's needs. Most positions last from 1-4 months and are designed to increase participant's employment potential through actual experience in the workplace.	The ESP will determine whether this activity is used during the assessment. ESPs are responsible for securing work sites, developing work contracts, providing work site supervisor orientation, monitoring time sheet submission and participant performance.	Work <u>Level of Participant Effort:</u> Monthly hours equal to 80 or some subset of that if used in conjunction with other allowable activities. <u>Link to Employment:</u> Work sites are selected where ever possible to match participant needs for unsubsidized employment and skill development.

Minnesota SNAP E&T State Plan for FFY 2016

Name of Activity: Education							
FFY 2016 Activity Cost: \$ 3,200,000							
Description: Remedial, ESL, high school equivalency, high school completion, Adult Basic Education program, Adult Diploma program.							
Geographic Areas Covered:	Anticipated Number of ABAWDS:	Anticipated Number of Volunteers:	Anticipated Number of (NOAAs):	Targeted Population:	Duration:	Organizational Responsibilities:	Type of Component:
Statewide	650	5,800	70	Those needing ESL, adult basic education, literacy or other training to become job-ready. Minnesota refers any SNAP E&T participant who is considered functionally illiterate, reading below the 8 th grade level, to be involved in literacy training.	Individualized to participant's need and program availability. DWP participants are limited to educational activities which can be completed in 4 months or less.	The ESP, during the initial assessment, will determine whether education is needed through testing, and if so, will either provide this activity directly or refer the individual to another agency and monitor progress.	<p align="center">Non-Work</p> <p><u>Level of Participant Effort:</u> Determined by structure of remedial education program and literacy status of participants. Educational agencies will determine the amount of effort for certificate or degree programs.</p> <p><u>Types of Education Activities:</u> ESL, adult basic education, literacy training, GED or other educational activities designed to enhance the employability of participants.</p> <p><u>Link to Employment:</u> Functional illiteracy is considered a barrier to employment. Education is used where necessary to assist the individual in becoming job-ready. Wherever possible, educational activities are linked to potential labor market attachments.</p> <p>Depending on individual circumstances, the participant may be assigned solely to this activity or may attend remedial education classes in conjunction with job search or other activities.</p>

Minnesota SNAP E&T State Plan for FFY 2016

Name of Activity: Vocational Training							
FFY 2016 Activity Cost: \$ 4,106,000							
Description: Post-secondary education designed to provide the participant with additional skills with which to gain employment. Training programs are selected based on the availability of jobs and the participant's ability to succeed in completion of course work. This activity includes FastTRAC/Career Pathways and Minnesota Job Skills Partnership bridge training as well.							
Geographic Areas Covered:	Anticipated Number of ABAWDS:	Anticipated Number of Volunteers:	Anticipated Number of (NOAAs):	Targeted Population:	Duration:	Organizational Responsibilities:	Type of Component:
Statewide	400	4500	150	Mandatory and voluntary participants who require additional training beyond secondary education to become self-sufficient.	From 9-24 months. May also include some short term direct employment related training lasting from 4 to 6 weeks. Again, DWP participants are time restricted.	ESPs and participants jointly determine which fields of study are best suited to the immediate employment openings and the participant's ability to succeed in the training.	Non-Work <u>Level of Participant Effort:</u> Usually 30 hours per week depending upon educational institution. <u>Link to Employment:</u> All training is related to job openings and where possible internships are part of the course work.

Minnesota SNAP E&T State Plan for FFY 2016

Name of Activity: Workfare							
FFY 2016 Activity Cost: \$ 30,000							
Description:	<p>Workfare: Workfare is a component in which SNAP recipients are required to work off the value of their household's monthly SNAP allotment through an assignment at a private or public non-profit agency as a condition of eligibility. In lieu of wages, workfare participants receive compensation in the form of their household's monthly benefit allotment. The primary goal of workfare is to improve employability and encourage individuals to move into regular employment while returning something of value to the community. Workfare assignments cannot replace or prevent the employment of regular employees. Workfare assignments must provide the same benefits and working conditions provided to regular employees performing comparable work for comparable hours.</p>						
Geographic Areas Covered:	Anticipated Number of ABAWDS:	Anticipated Number of Volunteers:	Anticipated Number of (NOAAs):	Targeted Population:	Duration:	Organizational Responsibilities:	Type of Component:
Statewide.	<u>Anticipated Number of Work Slots Offered to ABAWDS per Month: 50</u> <u>The number of anticipated work slots filled per month: 15</u>	275	35	Mandatory and voluntary participants who are determined to need skill development as determined by assessments.	Individualized to participant's needs. Most positions last from 1-4 months and are designed to increase participant's employment potential through actual experience in the workplace.	The ESP will determine whether this activity is used during the assessment. ESPs are responsible for securing work sites, developing work contracts, providing work site supervisor orientation, monitoring time sheet submission and participant performance.	<p align="center">Work</p> <p><u>Level of Participant Effort:</u> Monthly hours determined by participant SNAP allotment divided by federal minimum wage and depend on the participant's background, work references, work history and EP.</p> <p><u>Link to Employment:</u> Work sites are selected where ever possible to match participant needs for unsubsidized employment and skill development.</p>

Minnesota SNAP E&T State Plan for FFY 2016

Name of Activity: Social Services							
FFY 2016 Activity Cost: \$1,250,000							
Description:							
Geographic Areas Covered:	Anticipated Number of ADAWDS:	Anticipated Number of Volunteers:	Anticipated Number of (hOAAa):	Targeted Population:	Duration:	Organizational Responsibilities:	Type of Component:
Statewide.	375	6,800	50	Mandatory and voluntary participants who are determined to need personal development as determined by assessments.	Individualized to participant's needs. Services are designed to increase participant's employment potential.	The ESP will determine whether this activity is used during the assessment. ESPs are responsible for following up with participants to ensure these activities take place.	<p align="center">Non-Work</p> <p><u>Level of Participant Effort:</u> Monthly hours determined by participant needs</p> <p><u>Link to Employment:</u> Determined by assessment which is employment focused.</p>

PART II. PROGRAM PARTICIPANT AND EXEMPTIONS

MIS data for the SNAP E&T program is tracked on the Minnesota Workforce Development Division's Workforce One (WF1) MIS system. This multi-program system is operated by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) with data input from local Employment Services Providers.

WORK REGISTRANT POPULATION

The following work registrant data is anticipated:

Number of Work Registrants	
a. Expected number of work registrants in October 2015 caseload	74,500
b. Expected number of new work registrants between November 1, 2015 and September 30, 2016	152,000
c. Expected total number of work registrants between October 1, 2015 and September 30, 2016	226,500

These figures do not reflect the number of TANF cases who are exempt from work registration because of Title IV-A work requirements (see Part I. A.).

UNDUPLICATED WORK REGISTRANT COUNT

The work registrant count is an unduplicated number. The Department of Employment and Economic Development combines data from the statewide MAXIS system with its demographic database to formulate a reporting system for SNAP E&T. This system is programmed to meet SNAP E&T requirements for reporting assures an unduplicated count.

Minnesota uses the following methodology to obtain a count of all work registrants on the first day of the new fiscal year.

All data for the count is housed in MAXIS, DHS' client based eligibility determination system. A work registration screen is completed by county workers for each recipient at enrollment. Workers identify those individuals who are required to work register via numeric codes. To establish the count, all persons who are required to work register who are active (not closed) in MAXIS on September 30th and subsequently not closed on MAXIS on October 1 are included in item Number 1 on the FNS-583 form. FNS-583 report programming was reconfigured and approved by FNS staff. It now includes all work registrants according to federal regulations and has increased Minnesota's annual October count as well as monthly counts of work registrants. The updates continue to ensure that counts remain unduplicated.

The October count is achieved by accessing warehouse information on all SNAP recipients determined to be work registered at midnight on September 30th of each year. Each individual must be open on SNAP at the time the data is pulled.

Subsequent monthly counts of new work registrants uses data from the warehouse to determine which SNAP recipients have first opened their case in the past twelve months in the report month. This process ensures that only the openings occurring during the report period are captured. Programming prevents persons from being counted more than once in a federal fiscal year.

The following is a breakdown of the projected FFY16 registrants by program status, based on reported data:

SNAP Recipients	226,500
Other	
TOTAL	226,500

CHARACTERISTICS OF WORK REGISTRANTS

Selected demographics of Work Registrants in SFY14 and SFY15.

Minnesota SNAP E&T State Plan for FFY 2016

3. Characteristics of Work Registrants

Selected demographics of Work Registrants in State Fiscal Year 2014 and 2015.

SNAP Work Registrant Characteristics					
Minnesota Statewide Client Demographics					
Categories	Total Enrollments %		Categories	Total Enrollments %	
	7-1-2013 to 6-30-2014	7-1-2014 to 6-30-2015		7-1-2013 to 6-30-2014	7-1-2014 to 6-30-2015
Gender			Achievement Levels		
Female	54%	56%	Limited English Proficiency	4%	5%
Male	46%	44%	Family Status		
Race			Family size - 1 Member	42%	41%
White	57%	55%	Family size - 2 Members	43%	44%
African American	32%	34%	Family size - 3 Members	12%	13%
Asian	7%	6%	Family size - 4 Members	2%	2%
Native American	5%	5%	Family size - 5 + Members	1%	1%
Ethnicity			Labor status		
Hispanic or Latino	6%	7%	Full Time	5%	6%
Disability Status			Part Time	24%	27%
Yes, Employment Barrier	5%	6%	Not Employed	69%	67%
Age			Prv Self Employ - Farm	1%	1%
Age 18	3%	4%	Prv Self Employ - Non Farm	2%	1%
Age 19 to 21	16%	17%	Barrier to Employment		
Age 22 to 39	46%	45%	Offender	NA	NA
Age 40 to 54	30%	29%	Recovering Chemically Dependent	NA	NA
Education			Non Citizen	8%	NA
Less than High School	30%	28%	Outcomes		
High School Graduate / GED	58%	59%	Avg. Weeks Participated	NA	NA
Post High School	11%	10%	Avg. Hourly Wage Placement	NA	NA
College Graduate	2%	2%	Avg. Hours/ Week Placement	NA	NA
Beyond Bachelors Degree	1%	<1%			

**Note - percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding of figures. Date of data call: 8/10/2015. Data Source: DHS Data Warehouse*

Selected demographics of 100 percent grant participants from SFY14 and SFY15.

Minnesota SNAP E&T State Plan for FFY 2016

Selected demographics of 100% grant participants from state fiscal year 2014 and 2015.

SNAP E&T Program Participants Served with 100% Grant Funds Minnesota Statewide Client Demographics						
			Total Enrollments %			
Categories	7-1-2013 to 6-30-2014	7-1-2014 to 6-30-2015	Categories	7-1-2013 to 6-30-2014	7-1-2014 to 6-30-2015	
Gender			Achievement Levels			
Female	40%	40%	Limited English Proficiency	4%	4%	
Male	60%	60%	Family Status			
Race			Family size - 1 Member	77%	76%	
White	74%	71%	Family size - 2 Members	11%	15%	
African American	20%	20%	Family size - 3 Members	6%	5%	
Asian	3%	3%	Family size - 4 Members	3%	2%	
Native American	4%	3%	Family size - 5+ Members	3%	1%	
Ethnicity			Labor status			
Hispanic or Latino	6%	7%	Full Time	3%	3%	
Disability Status			Part Time	14%	15%	
Yes, Employment Barrier	0%	12%	Not Employed	79%	78%	
Age			Prv Self employ - Farm	1%	1%	
Age 18	3%	6%	Prv Self employ - Non Farm	2%	3%	
Age 19 to 21	11%	13%	Barrier to Employment			
Age 22 to 39	52%	52%	Offender	19%	25%	
Age 40 to 64	34%	29%	Recovering Chemically Dependent	12%	15%	
Education			Non Citizen	4%	1%	
Less than High School	20%	18%	Outcomes			
High School Graduate / GED	60%	56%	Avg. Weeks Participated	12.0	13.5	
Post High School	12%	16%	Avg. Hourly Wage Placement	\$10.24	\$10.35	
College Graduate	3%	4%	Avg. Hours/ Week Placement	29.9	30.1	
Beyond Bachelors Degree	2%	2%				

**Note - percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding of figures.*

Date of data call: 5/10/2015 Data Source: MN Workforce One

Selected demographics of DWP participants from SFY14 and SFY15.

Minnesota SNAP E&T State Plan for FFY 2016

Selected demographics of DWP participants from state fiscal year 2014 and 2015.

Diversions Work Program (DWP) Minnesota Statewide Client Demographics					
Categories	Total Enrollments %		Categories	Total Enrollments %	
	7-1-2013 to 6-30-2014	7-1-2014 to 6-30-2015		7-1-2013 to 6-30-2014	7-1-2014 to 6-30-2015
Gender			Education		
Female	75%	77%	Less than High School	24%	23%
Male	25%	23%	High School Graduate / GED	55%	52%
Race			Post High School	15%	16%
White	58%	51%	College Graduate	3%	3%
African American	32%	34%	Beyond Bachelors Degree	1%	1%
Asian	6%	6%	Family Status		
Native American	8%	6%	Family size - 1 Member	9%	7%
Ethnicity			Family size - 2 Members	29%	30%
Hispanic or Latino	7%	7%	Family size - 3 Members	28%	28%
Age			Family size - 4 Members	18%	17%
Age 18 to 19	2%	2%	Family size - 5 + Members	17%	18%
Age 20 to 29	45%	45%	Labor status		
Age 30 to 39	36%	37%	Full Time	9%	7%
Age 40 to 49	14%	13%	Part Time	16%	10%
Age 50 to 59	3%	3%	Outcomes		
Achievement Levels			Avg. Weeks Participated	11.9	11.3
Limited English Proficiency	9%	10%	Avg. Hourly Wage Placement	\$10.77	\$11.02
			Avg. Hours/ Week Placement	31.7	32.1

**Note - percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding of figures.*

Date of data call: 8/10/2015 Data Source: MN Workforce One

Selected demographics of Two Parent Family participants from SFY14 and SFY15.

Minnesota SNAP E&T State Plan for FFY 2016

Selected demographics of Two Parent Family participants from state fiscal year 2014 and 2015.

SNAP E&T Program Two Parent Family Participants Minnesota Statewide Client Demographics					
	Total Enrollments %			Total Enrollments %	
Categories	7-1-2013 to 6-30-2014	7-1-2014 to 6-20-2015	Categories	7-1-2013 to 6-30-2014	7-1-2014 to 6-20-2015
Gender			Achievement Levels		
Female	44%	45%	Limited English Proficiency	28%	22%
Male	56%	55%	Family Status		
Race			Family size - 1 Member	<1%	<1%
White	43%	44%	Family size - 2 Members	3%	3%
African American	36%	37%	Family size - 3 Members	35%	37%
Asian	16%	15%	Family size - 4 Members	26%	25%
Native American	8%	7%	Family size - 5+ Members	35%	33%
Ethnicity			Labor status		
Hispanic or Latino	6%	5%	Full Time	10%	11%
Disability Status			Part Time	9%	8%
Yes, Employment Barrier	NA	NA	Not Employed	81%	80%
Age			Prv Self Employ - Farm	NA	NA
Age 18 and under	<1%	1%	Prv Self Employ - Non Farm	NA	NA
Age 19 to 21	4%	5%	Barrier to Employment		
Age 22 to 39	74%	73%	Offender	NA	NA
Age 40 to 54	23%	22%	Recovering Chemically Dependent	NA	NA
Education			Non Citizen	NA	NA
Less than High School	41%	42%	Outcomes		
High School Graduate / GED	48%	46%	Avg. Weeks Participated	51.4	52.2
Post High School	8%	10%	Avg. Hourly Wage Placement	\$10.54	\$10.67
College Graduate	1%	1%	Avg. Hours/ Week Placement	33.5	35.2
Beyond Bachelors Degree	1%	1%			

*Note - percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding of figures.

Date of data call: 5/10/2015. Data Source: MN Workforce One

Selected demographics of FSS participants from SFY14 and SFY15.

Minnesota SNAP E&T State Plan for FFY 2016

Selected demographics of FSS participants from state fiscal year 2014 and 2015.

SNAP E&T Program Family Stabilization Service Participants (FSS) Minnesota Statewide Client Demographics						
			Total Enrollments %			
Categories	7-1-2013 to 6-30-2014	7-1-2014 to 6-20-2015	Categories	7-1-2013 to 6-30-2014	7-1-2014 to 6-20-2015	
Gender			Achievement Levels			
Female	83%	84%	Limited English Proficiency	18%	17%	
Male	17%	16%	Family Status			
Race			Family size - 1 Member	5%	4%	
White	41%	40%	Family size - 2 Members	39%	40%	
African American	37%	38%	Family size - 3 Members	28%	27%	
Asian	13%	12%	Family size - 4 Members	6%	5%	
Native American	11%	12%	Family size - 5+ Members	5%	6%	
Ethnicity			Labor status			
Hispanic or Latino	5%	6%	Full Time	5%	6%	
Disability Status			Part Time	11%	10%	
Yes, Employment Barrier	NA	NA	Not Employed	85%	84%	
Age			Prv Self Employ - Farm	NA	NA	
Age 18	0%	1%	Prv Self Employ - Non Farm	NA	NA	
Age 19 to 21	3%	4%	Barrier to Employment			
Age 22 to 39	72%	71%	Offender	NA	NA	
Age 40 and over	27%	26%	Recovering Chemically Dependent	NA	NA	
Education			Non Citizen	15%	14%	
Less than High School	36%	37%	Outcomes			
High School Graduate / GED	54%	52%	Avg. Weeks Participated	NA	NA	
Post High School	11%	12%	Avg. Hourly Wage Placement	NA	NA	
College Graduate	NA	NA	Avg. Hours/ Week Placement	NA	NA	
Beyond Bachelors Degree	NA	NA				

**Note - percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding of figures.*

Date of data call: 8/10/2015 Data Source: MN Workforce One

Selected demographics of Heading Home participants from SFY14.and SFY15

Minnesota SNAP E&T State Plan for FFY 2016

Selected demographics of Heading Home participants from state fiscal year 2014 and 2015

SNAP E&T Program Heading Home Participants Client Demographics						
			Total Enrollments %			
Categories	7-1-2013 to 6-30-2014	7-1-2014 to 6-30-2015	Categories	7-1-2013 to 6-30-2014	7-1-2014 to 6-30-2015	
Gender			Achievement Levels			
Female	24%	25%	Limited English Proficiency	2%	3%	
Male	76%	75%	Family Status			
Race			Family size - 1 Member	97%	95%	
White	29%	25%	Family size - 2 Members	3%	4%	
African American	68%	67%	Family size - 3 Members	NA	NA	
Asian	2%	2%	Family size - 4 Members	NA	NA	
Native American	5%	5%	Family size - 5 + Members	NA	0%	
Ethnicity			Labor status			
Hispanic or Latino	4%	5%	Full Time	11%	6%	
Disability Status			Part Time	5%	5%	
Yes, Employment Barrier	6%	8%	Not Employed	81%	88%	
Age			Prv Self Employ - Farm	NA	NA	
Age 18	1%	NA	Prv Self Employ - Non Farm	NA	1%	
Age 19 to 21	2%	NA	Barrier to Employment			
Age 22 to 39	29%	32%	Offender	44%	47%	
Age 40 to 64	68%	67%	Recovering Chemically Dependent	23%	29%	
Education			Non Citizen	0%	0%	
Less than High School	15%	16%	Outcomes			
High School Graduate / GED	51%	51%	Avg. Weeks Participated	38.5	38.5	
Post High School	25%	21%	Avg. Hourly Wage Placement	\$10.47	10.52	
College Graduate	3%	4%	Avg. Hours/ Week Placement	35	34	
Beyond Bachelors Degree	2%	2%				

*Note - percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding of figures.

Date of data call: 8/10/2015 Data Source: MN Workforce One

EXEMPTION POLICY

EXEMPTION CRITERIA JUSTIFICATION

Categorical Exemptions

Minnesota does not have categorical exemptions.

Individual/Personal Exemptions

Minnesota began using Individual Exemptions effective 1/1/2015 for four counties and one reservation. See Table 1 for breakout.

NUMBER OF WORK REGISTRANTS EXEMPT FROM EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAM

See Table 1 for breakout.

PLANNED EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

See Table 1 and Table 2 for FFY16 estimated participant and placement levels.

ABAWD INFORMATION

We estimate 43,000+ non-exempt ABAWDs will receive SNAP in Minnesota during FFY16.

PART III. PROGRAM COORDINATION

PROGRAM COORDINATION

NARRATIVE COORDINATION STATEMENT

SNAP work registration occurs at SNAP application and certification, and again at recertification. The county agency determines eligibility for SNAP and refers voluntary participants to the SNAP E&T program. The Employment Services Provider (ESP) provides orientation; issues advance notices to participants which contain a schedule of activities (employment assignments) for each 30 days of enrollment; and monitors compliance with program requirements. ESPs monitor client progress as established in employment plan. DEED staff monitor both county and ESP compliance for program operation. ABAWDs are referred from counties to service providers in the following manner: SNAP applications are taken at local county human service offices. Once a worker approves a case for benefits, they look to see if the applicant meets Minnesota's mandatory referral to E&T. If so, the worker will select the appropriate provider from a pop up screen in MAXIS and when the SNAP benefits approved the MAXIS system then sends the referral to DEED's WF1 system. WF1 deposits the referrals in the selected agency referral queue. From that point, SNAP staff in each agency retrieve the referrals and create a general information tab in WF1 which is a placeholder for information until clients come in for orientation. At this point, the counselor sends out letters to those in the referral queue inviting them to orientation. When clients attend the SNAP E&T Orientation, a WF1 record is completed and client is enrolled in SNAP E&T. There is a communication between county workers and counselors regarding clients. This communication takes place via status updates which come from MAXIS electronically on case changes and from WF1 via status updates that are faxed to workers.

INFORMATION COORDINATION

Information is exchanged between the county agency and the ESP (e.g., referrals and notification of status changes). Currently, this exchange occurs through forms, direct phone contact and computer listings.

DEED, in consultation with DHS, developed a Management Information System (MIS) which provides interfaces between DHS' MAXIS system and DEED's Workforce One system. This interface provides live

electronic transfer of information pertinent to participant referrals and participant status changes between agencies and the ESP. The DHS child care management system (MEC²) is part of MAXIS.

The SNAP E&T Coordinator and DHS financial management staff meet quarterly to review expenditures and prepare fiscal material for federal reporting. Reporting requirements have been established and disseminated to all appropriate staff. Additional meetings are held as necessary.

DEED's Adult Services staff monitor operational conditions between county agencies and ESPs. Monitoring includes individual participant file review to determine interagency correspondence related to participant actions. Both State agencies encourage open and regular communication between ESPs and county agencies.

The SNAP E&T expansion with the Office of Higher Education (OHE) will encompass biweekly meetings between DHS, DEED and OHE at the project manager level throughout the next year. Managers will continuously meet to discuss program operations and program performance.

Data exchanges between DEED and OHE will take place two weeks after the add/drop dates issued by the local institutions. This data will be uploaded to OHE and a composite file sent to DEED for verification for SNAP eligibility using the data warehouse and Workforce 1 for SNAP E&T enrollments. This procedure will take place 4 times a year with the start of fall, semester, spring semester, first summer session and second summer session. DEED will physically monitor local colleges to ensure that data has been properly collected and returned to DEED.

COORDINATION TIME FRAMES

- County agency and the ESP ensure that services for participants are scheduled to occur within 30 days of eligibility determination. DWP providers must meet with participants within 24 hours of application.
- The ESP notifies the county agency within 24 hours when a DWP participant fails without good cause to comply with program requirements. This action does not affect SNAP eligibility.

INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

AREAS OF COORDINATION

County agencies are required by Minnesota statute to coordinate program service delivery with any and all employment and training programs/providers within their jurisdiction. This includes educational agencies, WIOA providers and other referral agencies as deemed necessary to ensure participants have access to all programs which may benefit them. Coordination may result in financial or non-financial agreements. However, only allowable SNAP E&T Activities are recorded by the DEED staff when the FNS-583 report is completed and sent to FNS.

METHODS OF COORDINATION

The Departments of Human Services (DHS) and of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) jointly manage the administration of SNAP E&T/DWP/MFIP at the State level via an interagency agreement. Program directives are transmitted to counties and ESPs through DHS/DEED informational and instructional bulletins. Training is provided by state agency staff to local agencies and ESPs as needed.

Minnesota law requires county agencies to submit annual SNAP E&T plans describing how SNAP E&T services are delivered within the county, coordination with other employment programs, and client

support systems. Plan development consists of a joint effort between the county and ESP. Counties are also required to outline DWP services in a separate planning document. A copy of the county annual plan guidance is included as an attachment.

Development of SNAP E&T Plans (local level) encourage local agencies to coordinate public assistance programs with all other available employment and training resources to maximize the use of funds and resources as well as expertise in the employment and training service provision. Referrals to all applicable programs such as WIOA, Job Service, Rehabilitation Services, ESL, ABE, and various educational programs help ensure that participants receive the necessary services to enable recipients to strive towards self-sufficiency.

The Departments of Employment and Economic Development and Human Services review these plans on an annual basis to determine if counties and ESPs are carrying out their respective roles and responsibilities according to program requirements. DEED performs SNAP E&T monitoring on a scheduled basis and corrective actions are issued to areas where deficiencies occur.

SNAP E&T expansion with OHE extends coordination with DEED and DHS. It further builds on a partnership to provide high quality career/technically based post-secondary training to eligible SNAP recipients. A joint implementation team meets biweekly to establish roles, responsibilities and to plan joint training for college staff, county financial workers and E&T counselors. Training will be conducted statewide by financial worker regions. This approach provides all partners with the same level of understanding of the process and procedures required to implement this component.

DEED and DHS are working together to develop a service delivery pilot which assists SNAP recipients residing in group residential housing facilitates with mental health issues the opportunity to stay employed or gain employment through intensive case management and supports. This will be addressed in more detail in a later plan modification along with a proposed budget. This effort aligns with DEED's program titled Individual Personal Strategy which supports these ideals as well.

Minnesota statute require SNAP E&T services be carried out by statewide system WorkForce Centers unless such services are not available locally.

CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS

The Department of Human Services is not responsible for contracting out SNAP E&T services. This is the responsibility of the counties through the state supervised, county administered arrangement. As noted elsewhere in this plan, counties must contract with ESPs to carry out SNAP E&T program requirements or have received a waiver from DEED. DWP, 2 parent and FSS services may or may not be contracted with ESPs.

The interagency agreement between DHS and DEED is required by Minnesota statute and has been in place since 1987. The agreement, which is renegotiated every two years, specifies work efforts to be carried out by each department.

- DEED contracts with Heading Home partners and the Greater Twin Cities United Way and is reimbursed by DHS under the terms of the interagency agreement. Heading Home consists of five agencies: Catholic Charities, Goodwill Easter Seals and Project for Pride and Living. Greater Twin Cities United Way, will continue to fund three service providers in the SNAP Navigator Project. DEED contracts with each of these three providers to carry out Navigator objectives.

- DEED and OHE will enter into an interagency agreement for the purposes of carrying out the data and funding exchanges between the two departments. The amount of funds and work plans for DEED will be part of the DEED/DHS interagency agreement mentioned above. These agreements will be modified as necessary throughout the year to reflect any changes in the amounts or functions of each agency. A copy of the MOU will be sent to FNS upon completion.

PART IV. PROGRAM COSTS AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

PLANNED COSTS OF THE STATE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAM

OPERATING BUDGET

Minnesota operates SNAP E&T/DWP/Two Parent/FSS as state supervised county administered programs. County agencies are provided an annual allocation to cover costs of all components, participant reimbursement and overhead expenditures. It is not possible to break out costs by individual components due to this method of operation. Funding for DWP, two parent and FSS is distributed to counties based on a formula allocation. SNAP E&T funds are distributed based on county plan requests and available resources.

The contractual costs for SNAP E&T represent funds that flow from DHS to county agencies and subsequently to Employment Services Providers (ESP) for Employment and Training (E&T) costs. Under Minnesota law, counties are responsible for employment and training service delivery, including choice of ESPs, except where prohibited by federal law. Some counties provide component services directly, while others contract with outside providers (such as WIOA, Job Service or educational agencies). Minnesota has 48 WorkForce Centers operating statewide at this time. Local arrangements with county agencies extend WFC services beyond the brick and mortar to outlying areas.

Program employment service costs (other than participant reimbursement) consist of program and administrative costs for Job Search, Job Club activities, Orientation, Education, Assessment and EP and Work Experience (Workfare). The costs of other program activities (other than allowable participant reimbursement) are paid from other sources, such as WIOA, federal basic/post-secondary financial aids, or other county/state appropriations.

SOURCES OF EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING FUNDS

Minnesota's E&T funds for SNAP Employment and Training program funds for FFY15 includes FNS 100 percent funds, a small amount of state funds for support services, and state funds for the DWP, FSS and two parent and child care programs. State Workforce Development Grants fund FastTRAC/Career Pathways and MJSP programs. Non-monetary sources such as WIOA, adult basic educational programs (ABE), vocational rehabilitation programs, and post-secondary financial aids extend the service capability of SNAP E&T beyond the limited federal allocation.

Diversionsary Work Program, 2 parent and FSS funds are a combination of state and federal resources. Minnesota earmarked state revenue to be used for inclusion in this plan. State funds for the programs listed above are not required to meet any federal match requirements. Minnesota uses state funds to cover E&T program and support service costs for DWP. Federal TANF funds are used for grants issuances. Due to the program's length limitation (4 months) there are no TANF work requirements. DWP participants are not counted as part of the TANF work participation rate.

Additional local tax revenue, foundation and income generated funds from local non-profits provide match for 50 percent FFP for Heading Home. Greater Twin Cities United Way will contribute funds as well. These fund sources all meet federal match requirements for this purpose.

Matching funds are contained in the latest amendment from the Office of Higher Education (OHE). These funds titled Minnesota State Grants (MSG) detailed elsewhere are from state appropriated funds dispersed through OHE. MSG grants are used to provide tuition and book assistance to SNAP eligible post-secondary students in career/technically driven two year or less programs.

As New Models develop over the next few months, matching funds will be added from FastTRAC and Minnesota Job Skills Partnership.

USE OF FUNDS

Minnesota agrees to abide by FNS rules which govern the use of SNAP E&T 100 percent funds and federal financial participation.

JUSTIFICATION FOR EDUCATION COSTS

Some areas of the state have a shortage of remedial education funds. In other areas, specialized programs have been established to serve SNAP E&T populations. Minnesota is quite generous in supporting federal ABE funds. Even with state support, the influx of welfare reform has created a burden on resources and staff thus any SNAP E&T funds used are supplementing, not supplanting federal, state or local funds. Each employment and training program bears its portion of the costs for expanded educational services. Last year 84,000 plus Minnesotans received ABE services. This level of participation has strained resources in some areas of the state.

CONTRACTS

There are two basic types of contractual arrangements with the SNAP E&T Program. One arrangement involves the Department of Human Services and the Department of Employment and Economic Development for program administration. The other is between county agencies and ESPs for the provision of program services to participants. These local contracts, by law, must be filed with DEED annually. No county is permitted to operate SNAP E&T without the submission and approval of a local plan. DEED contracts out SNAP E&T funds to Heading Home and Navigator Projects via Greater Twin Cities United Way.

County agencies reimburse ESPs for their actual cost of providing services including participant support. DHS reimburses the county's actual costs.

PARTICIPANT REIMBURSEMENT

SNAP E&T Program

Minnesota does not provide direct participant reimbursement for transportation, child care and other support services. Support services deemed necessary for program participation are provided through a local network of vendors who are paid by the ESP or the county agency.

Minnesota has implemented the support service changes outlined in last year's plan which were taken from a planning document from FNS regarding the changes in support services.

The Diversionary Work Program, 2 parent and FSS provide support services including child care.

Child care costs for 2 parent and FSS are included in this plan. Procedures have been developed to ensure that all child care costs are non-employment related.

All participants complete an employment plan. Counselors and participants decide if child care is necessary in order to complete plan requirements. Once a determination on the hours of child care needed is made, the counselor and/or the participant contacts the county child care worker to set up child care services. The type of child care offered the participant is dependent on location and type of child care service available. In most situations, the county pays child care providers directly rather than reimburse clients for out of pocket expenditures. Each county has a listing of approved child providers from which the participant can choose. Child care is provided from infants to children through age 12. Child care is provided beyond age 12 as warranted.

Sources and Status of Funds

Support services provided to participants are derived from state funds appropriated by the Legislature as well as local tax revenues and foundation aid as provided to the local project operator Heading Home.

METHOD OF REIMBURSEMENT

Included above.

PROCEDURE FOR REIMBURSEMENT

Included above.

COST ALLOCATION

DHS requires counties to report program costs separately.

County agencies generally contract with outside agencies (which may be within the county government) to provide E&T services for public assistance and SNAP recipients. ESPs are instructed to establish accounting procedures which separate FS from non-FS costs. Fiscal monitoring by DEED staff ensures acceptable accounting procedures are implemented according to federal and state laws and regulations. Employment providers are required to have an annual audit conducted by certified public accountant/agency. Costs for provider audits are not paid with SNAP E&T funds. Audits must be sent to DEED. Staff review these for compliance. The State Auditor's Office monitors county agencies on an annual basis.

DEED requires ESPs to submit cost allocation plans for approval. Any changes/modifications to an approved plan must be submitted for review and approval as necessary. Monitoring of counties and ESPs includes the fiscal aspect of program operation.

PART V. PROGRAM REPORTING AND MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

METHOD FOR OBTAINING INITIAL COUNT OF WORK REGISTRATIONS

The Department of Human Services MIS system, MAXIS, has been programmed to meet SNAP E&T reporting requirements. SNAP cases are entered into MAXIS by SSNs and given case numbers. Once a person is in MAXIS, the case number or SSN allows the person to be opened and closed numerous times while retaining only one identity for reporting purposes.

Unduplicated counts of work registrants who are on-going as of September 30th are calculated. Then all new registrants during the month of October are calculated. Both numbers are derived using case numbers or SSNs to ensure an unduplicated count. The sum of these two numbers is reported on Line 1 of the FNS-583 form.

All pertinent work registrant data is extracted from MAXIS monthly and transferred to DEED's data base for SNAP E&T reporting purposes. This process allows DEED to analyze program performance as well as complete the FNS-583 form. The system is programmed to ensure participants are counted only once in a twelve month period using SSNs as identifiers.

The DHS/DEED Data Warehouse contains client level data from both systems for SNAP. This past summer 583 report programming was reconfigured and approved by FNS staff. It now includes all work registrants according to federal regulations and has increased Minnesota's annual October count as well as monthly counts of work registrants. The updates continue to ensure that counts remain unduplicated.

The October count is achieved by accessing warehouse information on all SNAP recipients determined to be work registered at midnight on September 30th of each year. Each individual must be open on SNAP at the time the data is pulled.

Subsequent monthly counts of new work registrants uses data from the warehouse to determine which SNAP recipients have first opened their case in the past twelve months in the report month. This process ensures that only the openings occurring during the report period are captured. Programming prevents persons from being counted more than once in a federal fiscal year. This process was reviewed and approved by FNS staff this past summer.

METHOD FOR ENSURING AN UNDUPLICATED WORK REGISTRANT COUNT

Numbers for each month are recorded separately. This ensures that numbers used in Line 1 of FNS-583 form are only used once during the federal fiscal year. Again, by programming MAXIS and DEED's MIS to calculate monthly reports using only SSNs, Minnesota is assured of an unduplicated count.

METHODS FOR MEETING ON-GOING FEDERAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (MIS) METHOD

Type of MIS

Automated MIS. See (b) for explanation.

Local Reporting Requirements

The Department of Human Services employs a statewide data system (MAXIS) to generate work registrant reports at the state level. County income maintenance workers input information into MAXIS via an online system.

The Department of Employment and Economic Development uses Workforce One statewide MIS system for tracking participation in the SNAP E&T/DWP/MFIP program. Providers will report participant enrollments, status changes and terminations electronically to DEED via a live online system. Edits in Workforce One are designed to prevent duplicate enrollments. All participant characteristics, support services, and component usage are tracked along with termination data. DEED produces the FNS-583 Report utilizing extracts from MAXIS and information from Workforce One. The only activities listed for provider use are activities approved in Minnesota's SNAP E&T plan.

ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING REPORTING

Responsibility for Non-Financial Reporting

Work Registrant/Exemption Data:

Shawn Welch

Department of Human Services
Research and Statistics, (651) 431-2940

Employment and Training Data:

Steve Erbes
Department of Employment and Economic Development
Workforce Development Division, (651) 259-7539

Work registrant/exemption data is available at DEED and DHS.

[Responsibility for Financial Employment and Training Reporting](#)

Matt Hanson
Department of Human Services,
Financial Management Division, (651) 431-3747

Shawn Tobias
Department of Human Services,
Financial Management Division, (651) 431-3728

ESTIMATED PARTICIPANT LEVELS

Table 1		
Estimated Participant Levels		
Federal Fiscal Year 2016		
A.	Total number of work registrants in the State during the planned Federal Fiscal Year:	95,000
B.	List exemptions and the number of work registrants categorically exempt from E&T participation:	0
	TOTAL	95,000
C.	List exemptions and the number of work registrants individually exempt from E&T participation:	
	1. Involved with protective / court-ordered services	200
	2. Unemployable (as determined by assessment)	1250
	3. Residing more than two hours round trip	50
	4. Child under age 18 not living with parent or legal custodian*	2,600
	5. DWP adults with dependents under age 18	13,600
	6. Work registrants between ages of 50-60	25,000
	7. Receiving RCA or GA	9,500
	TOTAL	52,200
D.	Total number of work registrants exempt from E&T (B+C):	52,200
E.	Percent of all work registrants exempt from E&T (D/A):	55%
F.	Number of E&T mandatory participants* (A-D):	42,800
G.	Total number of ABAWDs in the State during the planned FFY:	43,000
H.	Total number of ABAWDs in waived areas of the State during the planned FFY:	4,000
I.	Average monthly number of ABAWDs exempted under the State's 15 percent ABAWD exemption allowance:	3,500

*Regulations define someone as a "mandatory participant" if the person is a work registrant who is not exempt under the State E&T program. A mandatory participant is not necessarily actively participating in a State E&T component.

**ESTIMATED EMPLOYMENT TRAINING PLACEMENT
ESTIMATED INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPATION**

Table 2

Estimated Employment & Training Placements ¹

Federal Fiscal Year 2016		
1.	Number of ABAWD applicants and recipients expected to participate in a qualifying ABAWD component each month:	375
2.	Number of all other applicants and recipients (including ABAWDs involved in non-qualifying activities) expected to participate in a component each month:	14,250
3.	Total number of applicants and recipients the State agency expects to participate in a component each month during the fiscal year.	14,625

Estimated Individual Participation ²

Federal Fiscal Year 2016	
Number of individuals expected to participate in the E&T Program during the fiscal year:	42,050

¹ Estimate the numbers that will participate in components each month and total them on line 3. This information represents a duplicate count of participants over the course of the fiscal year and corresponds to lines 3 and 4 on the E&T Program Activity Report - Form FNS-583. This full name should be used first, then need to correct all other references.

² Estimate the unduplicated numbers of individuals who will participate during the fiscal year. This information corresponds to Line 7 on the FNS-583 form.

SUMMARY OF INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION FOR THE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAM

Table 3

Summary of Inter-Agency Coordination for the E&T Program

Federal Fiscal Year 2015			
Area of Coordination	Agencies (list all that are involved)	Number of E&T Placements Expected	Methods of Coordination
1. Delivers an E&T component	DEED – State Level	N/A	Contracts
2. The E&T program delivers a service for another agency or program	DEED – State Level	N/A	Contracts
3. Joint component of the E&T program and another agency or program	DHS/DEED	N/A	Contracts
4. Referral of individuals from the E&T program to another program or agency	Local Agencies and Employment Services Providers	55,000	Contracts, Coordinated Services, Formal Procedures
5. Other forms of coordination (specify): Local Projects, Heading Home, Office of Higher Education for post-secondary career based training	DEED, DHS, OHE, Local County Agencies, Employment Service Providers	3,800	Contracts

OPERATING BUDGET

Table 4							
Operating Budget							
Federal Fiscal Year 2016							
Components	State Agency Costs		Contractual Costs	Participant Reimbursement (State plus Federal)		State Agency Costs for Dependent Care Services	TOTAL
	Salary & Benefits	Other Costs		Dependent Care	Transportation & Other Costs		
SNAP E&T	\$480,532		\$10,918,116	\$4,000,000	\$632,884	\$7,835,000	
Total Component Costs							\$23,386,000
Overall State Agency E&T Operational Costs							\$480,532
Total State E&T Costs							\$23,866,532

PLANNED FISCAL YEAR COSTS OF THE STATE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAM BY CATEGORY OF FUNDING

Table 5

Planned Fiscal Year Costs of the State E&T Program by Category of Funding

Federal Fiscal Year 2016			
	Funding Category	Approved FFY 2015 Budget *	FFY 2016 Budget
1.	100 Percent Federal E&T Grant:	\$1,396,858	\$1,741,532
2.	Share of \$20 Million ABAWD Grant (if applicable)	0	0
3.	Additional E&T Administrative Expenditures	\$ 6,500,000	\$9,657,156
	a. 50% Federal	\$ 3,250,000	\$4,828,578
	b. 50% State	\$3,250,000	\$4,828,578
4.	Participant Expenses:		
	a. Transportation / Other	\$250,000	\$632,844
	50% Federal	\$125,000	\$316,442
	50% State	\$125,000	\$316,442
	b. Dependent Care	\$5,000,000	\$4,000,000
	50% Federal	\$2,500,000	\$2,000,000
	50% State	\$2,500,000	\$2,000,000
5.	Total E&T Program Costs (1+2+3a+3b+4a+4b=5)	\$ 13,146,858	\$16,031,532
6.	100% State Agency Cost for Dependent Care	\$7,835,000	\$7,835,000
7.	Total Planned Fiscal Year Costs (must agree with Table 4, Operating Budget)	\$ 20,981,858	\$23,866,532

*Includes immediately preceding fiscal year's approved budget figures for each spending category.

TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE FOR WORKERS

The Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program is a Federal program that offers a variety of benefits and services to workers whose employment has been adversely impacted by foreign trade. Through a number of benefits and services, the TAA program provides trade-affected workers with opportunities to obtain the support, resources, skills, and credentials they need to return to the workforce in a good job. These include employment and case management services, training, job search allowances, relocation allowances, reemployment and alternative TAA wage subsidies for older workers, and income support in the form of Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA).

*(a) The TAA program is a required partner in the one-stop delivery system, established under Section 121 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Therefore, given that the TAA program is part of the broader workforce system and a key goal for the TAA program is to ensure that trade-affected workers are able to successfully return to work, **ETA strongly encourages States to integrate their TAA program activities in concert with other workforce system core and partner programs that may also address the needs of trade-affected workers.** WIOA Sec. 103(3)(A)(B). Consistent with the Governor-Secretary Agreement, the States agree to use funds obligated under the TAA Annual Cooperative Financial Agreement (CFA), to carry out the TAA program, including: 1) ensuring integration of the TAA program into its one-stop delivery system; 2) using the centers in this system or network as the main point of participant intake and delivery of TAA program benefits and services; and 3) ensuring the terms of the Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with the Local Workforce Investment Boards, as established under WIOA Section 121(c) will apply to the assistance provided by other one-stop partners to TAA participants. (Trade Act Sec. 239 (a) as amended by WIOA Section 512 (hh)).*

Describe the State's process for operating the TAA program that ensures coordination and integration with WIOA core and partner programs. Provide examples, if available, of how the co-location of Wagner-Peyser in one-stop centers and the addition of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), have improved access to these services for trade-affected workers.

Minnesota embraces the Employment & Training Administration's (ETA's) requirement to integrate Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program activities to meet the needs of trade-affected workers. All trade-affected workers are strongly encouraged to use core workforce system services in the one-stop delivery system throughout the state. WorkForce Centers (one-stop locations) are used as the main location for initial participant intake, Rapid Response and information session events as available, and ongoing program delivery and services. MOUs are created yearly with local workforce development boards to outline how to provide TAA services in each service area, in compliance with WIOA Section 121(c).

Minnesota does have a multi-program Individual Employment Plan (IEP) policy to allow trade-eligible participants to enroll in necessary services to seek gainful employment. This allows participants to use Wagner-Peyser resources, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), WIOA Dislocated Worker program, and others, to fit participants' needs.

Programs affected include but are not limited to:

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I-B Adult
- WIOA Dislocated Worker and Minnesota Dislocated Worker programs
- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)
- Pathways to Prosperity
- Adult Workforce Development Program
- Minnesota Adult Workforce Development Program
- Women in High Earning Non-Traditional Jobs (WESA)
- And other state appropriations under the WDD

The completion and implementation of an IEP is an integral part of the delivery of employment and training services. Organizations receiving funds to administer programs for adult job seekers must create an IEP for each enrolled participant. The IEP outlines the responsibilities of both the participant and the service provider as the participant prepares to achieve the program goal of full-time, long-term, unsubsidized employment at the most realistic and highest possible wage (see “Required Components” Section in this policy).

Service providers must keep IEPs current to ensure all parties involved are accountable for their responsibilities. Training, support services, and intensive services cannot be obligated or distributed until the participant and employment counselor have signed and dated the IEP.

Definition

Individual Employment Plan: A record of an individual’s work plan and goals. This document is an ongoing strategy to identify employment goals, achievement objectives, and an appropriate combination of services including support services.

Objective Assessment: An examination of the capabilities, needs, and vocational potential of a participant.

Required Components of a Complete IEP

- I. Participant’s full, legal name (including middle name(s)) must be recorded on the IEP. If, while enrolled, the participant’s name changes, service provider must update the IEP and participant’s file must contain legal documentation of the name change. Acceptable documentation includes any one of the following:
 - A. legal certificate of name change,
 - B. driver’s license, or
 - C. social security card.
- II. Eligibility documentation
A program-specific eligibility document must be completed at intake. This document must be in participant’s file. The program-specific eligibility document must include justification for the participant’s enrollment as per program-specific eligibility criteria.

Dislocated Worker (DW) and National Dislocated Worker Grants (NDWG) Only: If determining eligibility for DW (including NDWG), must include documentation attached to IEP, to support “Unlikely to Return” (see DW Eligibility Policy). The service provider must make this determination prior to enrollment into the DW program, using regional labor market information which provides justification that the individual will not return to their previous occupation.

- III. Objective Assessment
 - A. All participants must receive an objective assessment. The assessment should include consideration of the participant’s:
 - work history,
 - education and basic skills,
 - occupational skills,
 - interests,
 - aptitudes (including interests and aptitudes for non-traditional occupations),
 - obsolete skills or skill gaps,

- family or other caregiving needs,
 - need for any accommodations,
 - support service needs (including transportation or housing needs), and
 - legal assistance to reduce job search barriers.
- B. Method of Objective Assessment: The service provider will choose the most appropriate way to conduct the Objective Assessment of the participant. Methods will include at least one of the following:
- structured interviews,
 - performance tests (e.g., skill and/or work samples),
 - observational assessment,
 - interests and/or attitude inventories,
 - career guidance instruments,
 - aptitude tests, and/or
 - basic skill assessments (math and reading skills test).

Objective assessment is an ongoing process. The service provider must review any additional information about a participant as it becomes available and adjust the IEP as appropriate.

- C. Skills Assessments: Every participant in pursuit of training (see Credentials and Training Policy) who has attained less than a bachelor's degree must take a basic skills assessment (math and reading). The results of their standardized skills assessment must be documented in the participant's case file or IEP prior to beginning the training.

IV. Employment Goal

All participants must have:

- A. a written employment goal, which considers non-traditional employment; and
- B. documented justification for the employment goal; this justification will include action steps and required services; the justification must be on and/or attached to the IEP; and
- C. appropriate intermediate objectives, including training objectives; and
- D. documentation to support training (e.g., LMI data, etc.) and support services planned.

Note: Individual instances of support services are not required on the IEP.

The service provider must include projected completion dates for each objective and goal on the IEP. IEPs must be updated when a goal is reached or the completion date passes (see "Updating the IEP").

The service provider must develop the IEP jointly with the participant and remain consistent with nondiscrimination and equal opportunity laws and policies. When developing the IEP, the service provider must inform the participant whether enrollment in an education program will require the participant to pay a portion of the cost.

Procedure

An IEP is a living document. It must be updated on an on-going basis as a participant's needs or information changes. Service providers may house the IEP electronically in WF1 or on paper in the participant's file and reflect in WF1 that the paper IEP exists. If using a WF1 IEP, service provider must attach a printed copy of the IEP with signatures and date of signatures from the participant and service provider.

I. Updating the IEP

A. Original Signatures: DEED requires signature and date on the original IEP from the participant and service provider. The IEP is not complete without these dated signatures.

B. The service provider should re-evaluate the appropriateness of the participant's training plan, where applicable. This includes an evaluation of the participant's progress in acquiring basic skills and occupational skills as appropriate, and the adequacy of the supportive services provided. The service provider must include the results of each monthly live contact in case notes. (Policy Pending)

C. Annual IEP review: If the participant is or will be enrolled for longer than 365 days, DEED requires the service provider to review the IEP formally with the participant on an annual basis (TAA participants exempt).

1. Annual review must occur between 335 – 395 days, which is 30 days before or after the year mark of 365 days after the original signatures were obtained on the IEP.

2. Annual review must include a re-evaluation of the participant's plan. The service provider must update the IEP as appropriate.

3. The service provider must obtain new dated signatures from the service provider and the participant.

4. The service provider must file documentation of the annual IEP review in the participant's file. Acceptable documentation of the annual IEP review can either be on the original IEP or on a separate updated IEP. If changes to the IEP are not necessary, a notation on the IEP explaining why changes are not required along with the signatures of both participant and counselor. Additionally, counselors will note the participant's current status.

II. Co-Enrollment across other WDD programs

When co-enrolling within one service provider, one completed IEP for a WDD program will be accepted by other WDD program. Enrollment in one program does not necessarily guarantee enrollment in any or all other programs. Eligibility and available resources in each of these programs governs co-enrollments. Service providers should ensure the employment goal, action steps, and appropriate services are kept current on the IEP, and a copy of the participant's IEP is accessible to all programs in which that participant is enrolled or made available upon request by DEED staff. The IEP must be updated to denote co-enrollment status of participant in other programs.

When co-enrollment occurs within one service provider, coordination of services is strongly encouraged to streamline services and prevent unnecessary duplication of staff time and effort.

DEED reserves the right to disallow costs due to failure to comply with any component of this policy.

Our state adopted a 100 percent co-enrollment process for where all trade-eligible participants would also enroll in the State or WIOA (formerly WIA) Dislocated Worker program in 2004, and fully implemented in 2005. Where dislocated workers are eligible under both programs, TAA provides certified training and WIOA provides job search assistance, supportive services, and additional individual counseling and case management. In essence, WIOA provides wrap-around services to TAA participants; WIOA services are those not provided by TAA, which avoids duplication. WIOA and TAA co-enrollment, allowing for both programs operationally work together to streamline services. The Minnesota Rapid Response team is deeply integrated with both the WIOA Dislocated Worker and TAA programs. Rapid Response, WIOA and TAA staff members work side-by-side, along with local providers, for each Rapid Response event as a coalition to integrate services for all laid off workers in Minnesota.

(b)States must develop and manage resources (including electronic case management systems) to integrate data, including co-enrollment data, provided through different agencies administering benefits and services to trade-affected workers in order to ensure consistent program administration and fiscal integrity, as well as reliable fiscal and performance reporting. (WIOA Section 103(b)(3))

Describe how the State will use TAA funding for infrastructure, other shared costs, and the promotion of the development of integrated intake, case management and reporting systems.

Minnesota developed an integrated data structure through Workforce One (WF1) to assimilate data from multiple state agencies to align services, and allow for seamless benefit administration. The database is used for intake services, ongoing case management, fiscal tracking, and co-enrollment communication. The data structure allows for reliable, consistency performance and fiscal reporting. Each state agency pays a portion of the development and ongoing maintenance of WF1, based on the percentage of database use.

(c)Except for States covered by the regulatory exemption 20 CFR 618.890 (c) or to perform non-inherently governmental functions, States must engage only State government personnel to perform TAA-funded functions undertaken to carry out the TAA program, and must apply to such personnel the standards for a merit system of personnel administration applicable to personnel covered under 5 CFR part 900, subpart F. (20 CFR 618.890)

Describe how TAA program-funded benefits and services are approved by merit-staffed employees in accordance with 20 CFR 618.890.

All requested TAA benefits are approved by highly-trained State-Merit staff in Minnesota. Program participants are assigned a WIOA DW case manager in their local area, and assigned a TAA Specialist, State-Merit staff, from the central office in St. Paul, MN. The process has been reviewed and approved by Region V US Department of Labor TAA Coordinators.

ASSURANCES

The Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program is a Required Partner in the one-stop system, established under Section 121 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). However, to receive TAA program funds, States must adhere to the signed Governor-Secretary Agreement, in addition to the terms and conditions provided in the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Annual Cooperative Financial Agreement (CFA) and the Unemployment Insurance (UI) Annual Funding Agreement, executed each fiscal year between the State and ETA.

The CFA, which is incorporated by reference into the Governor-Secretary Agreement, explains program requirements, limitations on the use of funds, assurances and other important grant provisions that States must follow to receive TAA program funding for Training and Other Activities (which includes training, employment and case management services, and allowances for job search and relocation and State administration of these benefits and services).

At the beginning of each fiscal year, ETA provides each Cooperating State Agency (CSA) with a CFA for that year, which the CSA is required to execute and submit to ETA's Office of Grants Management. The Unemployment Insurance (UI) Annual Funding Agreement is the mechanism for funding the State administration of TRA and older worker wage subsidies through the State agency that administers the unemployment insurance laws for the State.

Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program Assurances

The State Plan must include assurances that:

- I. On an annual basis, the CSA will execute TAA Cooperative Financial Agreements and UI Funding Agreements for each fiscal year during the four-year State planning cycle.*

Minnesota assures compliance with the Governor-Secretary Agreement, along with the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Annual Cooperative Financial Agreement, and the Unemployment Insurance Annual Funding Agreement. Minnesota will execute TAA Cooperative Financial Agreements and UI Funding Agreements for each fiscal year of the State planning cycle.

JOBS FOR VETERANS STATE GRANT PROGRAM

A. PROJECTED EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK FOR VETERANS

There were an estimated 60,389 job vacancies in Minnesota during the fourth quarter 2013, up 2.5 percent from one year ago. During fourth quarter 2012, there were 2.7 unemployed people for each vacancy statewide. During the fourth quarter 2013, there were about 2.3 unemployed people for each vacancy.

About 55 percent (33,153) of all job vacancies were located in the Twin Cities seven-county area while the remaining 27,236 were in Greater Minnesota. There were 2.7 unemployed people per job vacancy in Greater Minnesota while there were 2 unemployed people per job vacancy in the Twin Cities.

Although the number of job vacancies was up overall during the fourth quarter of 2013, job vacancies in some industries were down, and up in others. Industries with fewer job vacancies from fourth quarter 2012 to 4th quarter 2013 were: Finance and Insurance (down 1,729 vacancies, and 38.9 percent, Mining (30, 32.6 percent) Transportation and Warehousing (787, 26.7 percent), Information (250, 24.9 percent), Accommodation and Food Services (1,359 and 20.1 percent), Utilities (30, 15.6 percent), Educational Services (596, 15.1 percent), Management of Companies and Enterprises (292, 13.7 percent), Public Administration (65, and 5.1 percent), and Professional and Technical Services (67, 2.6 percent).

Industries that increased job vacancies from the 4th quarter of 2012 to the 4th quarter of 2013 were: Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting (up 543 vacancies, 274.2 percent), Real Estate and Rental and Leasing (301, 167.2 percent), Construction (2,121 and 142.1 percent), Other Services Except Public Administration (753, 45.5 percent), Wholesale Trade (707, 40 percent), Manufacturing (1,141 and 21.1 percent), Administrative and Waste Services (281, 15.4 percent), Retail Trade (548, 6.7 percent), Health Care and Social Assistance (328, 2.8 percent), and Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (8, 1 percent).

By size, firms with 50 or more employees account for 56.2 percent of total job vacancies. Very small firms, those with fewer than 10 employees, had the fewest vacancies at 12.7 percent.

Some of the key characteristics of the 4th Quarter 2013 were:

- 39 percent of the job vacancies were for part-time employment. Part-time is defined as fewer than 35 hours per week;
- 14 percent of job vacancies were for temporary or seasonal work;
- 38 percent of vacancies required some level of post-secondary education or training beyond a high school diploma, and 34 percent required a high school diploma or GED. This means that the majority of vacancies required no education beyond a high school diploma or equivalent;
- 53 percent require one or more years of experience related to the position, 47 percent less than one year, 37 percent between one and three years, and 16 percent required four or more years of experience;
- The median wage offer for all job vacancies was \$13.00 per hour. Wage offers are highly correlated with experience and education requirements.
- 56 percent of vacancies offered health insurance.

In the six months following 4th quarter of 2013, 15.1 percent of employers expected to increase their employment levels (up 2.5 percent from 4th quarter of 2012). The majority of employers, 80.2 percent, expected their employment levels to remain the same. The remaining 4.7 percent planned to decrease their current employment levels.

Within the Twin Cities metro area the top 20 occupations in demand currently are:

1. Registered Nurses
2. Customer Service Representatives
3. Software Developers and Applications
4. Computer Systems Analysts
5. Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers
6. Stock Clerks and Order Fillers
7. Computer User Support Specialists
8. General Office Clerks
9. All Other Computer Occupations
10. Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers
11. Accountants and Auditors
12. Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists
13. Social and Human Service Assistants

14. Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers; 15. Personal Care Aides; 16. Financial Managers; 17. Network and Computer Systems Administrators; 18. Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses; 19. Management Analysts, and 20. Cashiers.

Federal contractors and subcontractors will be identified through VetCentral and through the assistance of the OFCCP office and websites such as [FedSpending](#), [Government Contracts Won](#), and [System for Award Management](#). SrVERs will be responsible for establishing working relationships with employers that are awarded Federal contracts. This core responsibility will provide a conduit of job opportunities for Veterans.

Minnesota State Departments have been notified through Governor's Executive Order 06-02 and 10-13 to provide Priority of Service (POS) to veterans. This EO provides DVOPs and SrVERs a segway for networking with state civil service opportunities among State Departments that use the [state's civil service website](#). A dedicated link is provided for veterans at this site.

Federal job opportunities will be encouraged, and enhanced by providing assistance and information on [how to apply for federal jobs](#) and where to search for opportunities.

Local government jobs in Minnesota's 87 counties and many cities will be promoted through the [Association of Minnesota Counties](#). SrVERs will be providing contacts and visits to local government human resource departments to promote and provide veterans preference for veterans.

B. TARGETING SERVICES TO VETERANS WITH SIGNIFICANT BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT (SBE):

Services for Minnesota Veterans may be accessed through a variety of systems and service providers in addition to the DVOP's and LVER's. Partner staff are being trained in providing services to Veterans via the NVTI eLearning course "Preparing Veterans for Meaningful Careers." In addition, Minnesota is planning on bringing NVTI in early 2015 for "Leadership for the Implementation of Veterans Services" to provide instruction and guidance to ensure Priority of Service (POS) is being observed, and that the new roles and responsibilities of DVOP/LVER staff as described in VPL 03-14/04-14 are implemented and supported in the WorkForce Centers. In attendance will be management from Local Workforce Development Areas, including Adult WIOA, Dislocated Worker, Wagner-Peyser, and other various organizations operating DOL programs. This training session will help ensure all WFC management are aware of not only POS, but also service priority based on need and SBE's.

An eligible veteran or eligible spouse is determined to have a SBE if he or she **attests** to belonging to at least one of the six criteria below:

1. A special disabled or disabled veteran, as those terms are defined in 38 U.S.C 4211(1) and (3); Special disabled and disabled veterans are those:
 - who are entitled to compensation (or who but for the receipt of military retired pay would be entitled to compensation) under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs; or,
 - were discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability;
2. Homeless, as defined in Section 103(a) of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11302(a));
3. A recently-separated service member, as defined in 38 U.S.C 4211(6), who at any point in the previous 12 months has been unemployed for 27 or more consecutive weeks;

4. An offender, as defined by WIA Section 101(27), who has been released from incarceration within the last 12 months;
5. Lacking a high school diploma or equivalent certificate; or
6. Low-income (as defined by WIA at Sec. 101(25)(B)).

Minnesota has had an Intensive Service Coordinator (ISC) for several years. This DVOP is stationed in the VR&E office at the Regional DVA office, and works closely with VR&E counselors and management. She is also coordinator for the VRAP program. The ISC is responsible for the distribution of all CH31 cases to DVOP staff, and coordinates initial communication between the Veteran, the VR&E counselor, and the DVOP. DVOP's typically receive notification of an upcoming CH31 Veteran client within 90 days of graduation or upon designation as "job ready" by the VR&E office. Due to this DVOP's close proximity to DVA hiring managers and staff, she also makes regular referrals on open Federal positions and non-competitive jobs available to those Veterans rated at 30 percent or more.

Once referred to a DVOP, an Individual Service Plan is created, agreed upon and signed, and an assessment of needs is completed. If there are additional significant barriers to employment or related issues, resources are identified, and referrals made as necessary.

Like other States, Minnesota has begun putting more emphasis on the Veteran coming in the WFC seeking services by converting some LVER positions to DVOP positions as the LVER's retire. Minnesota has an active Business Services Program that employs 34 Business Services Representatives that are tasked with providing services to Minnesota businesses. They have been provided with "talking points" regarding the value Veteran employees bring to a business, and contact information for Local Veterans Employment Reps. In addition, they promote the hiring of Veterans through brochures, fact sheets and discussions with hiring managers. Their focus is Veterans with SBE's, and CH31 Veterans.

Additionally, Minnesota will put special emphasis on the following Veteran groups.

- Homeless Veterans
In Minnesota, estimates indicate that a little over 1 percent, or 4000 Veterans per year will experience homelessness, or struggle with other life crises edging them toward homelessness. Of those 4000 Veterans, 27 percent have returned from service in Iraq or Afghanistan, and over 30 percent are disabled Veterans. Approximately 15 percent of Veterans served that are homeless are women Veterans. Many are single with children to care for.

Minnesota Veterans Representatives work closely with Minnesota's HVRP grantee, Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV). In addition to referring clients between the two agencies, we also collaborate with them on three StandDown events across the state each year, and provide a liaison (LVER) to provide business contacts and help with some of their client focused events.

- Native American Veterans
According to the most recent Census, Minnesota is ranked #13 in number of Native Americans living in the state. Native American population in Minnesota numbers approximately 70,465 or 1.3 percent of the population. By the end of 2015 it is expected to increase to over 72,000. 31 percent live on one of 11 different Reservations in Minnesota. Seven of these are in the northern part of the state, with the remaining four located near Minneapolis/St. Paul, or southern Minnesota. In addition, 37 percent of the Native American population live in the 9

county metropolitan area. Unemployment among Native Americans is reported to be 3-4 times that of non-Indians. *The UI rate for Native American **Veterans** is even higher.*

Most of Minnesota's Tribal Reservations have poverty rates double that of the rest of the state. In addition, 93 percent of white students graduate high school, where only 64 percent of Native Americans graduate. This negatively impacts employment opportunities and future training plans.

In fact, among the Shakopee Mdewakanton tribe, the statistics are more unsettling. This is a Tribe located just southwest of a major metropolitan area, near resources and opportunity, but has had little focused effort for their Veteran population. Their high school graduation rate hovers close to 45.7 percent. Their unemployment rate is over 13 percent, compared to a Minneapolis/St. Paul rate of around 4.4 percent. Per capita income is \$27,119. Minnesota's plan to serve this population includes a DVOP position in the Bemidji area to focus on this population on Red Lake, Leech Lake, and White Earth Reservations in the northern part of the state. The local American Indian OIC has agreed to provide space for this DVOP to conduct outreach activities, and provide employment support and guidance. One additional DVOP would focus on the Native population living on Tribal lands south and west of the Minneapolis/St Paul area. We have had preliminary discussions with two Tribal Councils, and local WFC management who are anxious to partner with us on this project. Both of these DVOP positions will be funded through a recent JVSG grant modification.

- **Female Veterans**

Female Veterans represent approximately 17 percent of returning National Guard and Reserve troops in Minnesota. Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs estimates there are almost 23,000 female Veterans in Minnesota. Of that number, about 8700 have served in the Persian Gulf, or OIF/OEF. Minnesota has a LVER that is active in two different Women's Veterans groups, and serves as a liaison with the local DAV chapter. Minnesota currently employs 2 women LVER staff and 3 DVOP staff. They are all engaged with local organizations that cater to women and women Veterans. As mentioned earlier, we work closely with the local HVRP grantee and WFC partners to identify female Veterans seeking services.

- **Incarcerated Veterans**

Minnesota currently operates two projects for incarcerated persons. Since these are funded with Wagner-Peyser money, they provide Priority of Service for Veterans wishing to participate. These projects are located in two inner-city offices, using two different models. One is a case management model, where the other focuses on a two week long workshop incorporating job search and living skills together. Local DVOP's assigned in those locations participate in the selection of participants, and in the case management process. We also submitted (and received approval from DOL) a grant modification that will provide specialized staff to work with Veterans being released from correctional facilities. The plan includes locating these two DVOP staff in each of two WFC's; one in Minneapolis, and one in St. Paul. Staff in these two inner-city locations estimate that 30-40 percent of the clients using these WFC's have a criminal background.

In addition, the Minnesota Dept. of Employment and Economic Development has formalized a relationship with the Dept. of Corrections, and provides job search help and counseling for offenders nearing their release date, and we participate in facility sponsored events such as

"Transition Fairs." JVSG staff attend and provide workshops and one-to-one assistance during these events.

DEED Veterans staff also sit on the steering committee of the Hennepin County Veterans Diversionary Court program. As the first court of its kind in Minnesota, it exists to provide an option for Veterans that have had encounters with the criminal court system, and to provide an alternative to prison. DVOP staff work closely with the court on assessment, referral, and job placement.

DEMOBILIZING/RECENTLY SEPARATED VETERANS

Minnesota's "Beyond the Yellow Ribbon" Reintegration Campaign is the backbone of post deployment reintegration services. Minnesota Veterans Employment Reps have been a critical part of this process which includes 5 different events for Service members and their families.

The process begins 3-4 months before deployment. "Family Readiness Academies" are designed to give families an opportunity to ask questions, and provide information to Troops and their families on what to expect during the deployment. We provide resource information and referrals for assorted common issues faced by families, information on Veterans benefits, and employment information for spouses.

Approximately 30 to 60 days before Troops return home, a "Yellow Ribbon Community Event" is sponsored to help families understand and support their returning Soldiers.

Business owners, educators, civic leaders and law enforcement are called together for a briefing on what they can expect upon their Soldiers return. We provide resource information, and answers to some difficult questions relating to their combat experience, and how that may affect their lives.

Veterans Employment Reps continue to update and modify some of their material based on the type of unit returning, and the predominant skill set of those Troops.

Twenty six (26) Minnesota service providers send staff and materials to various locations as Troops return from overseas deployment for an Initial Reintegration Event.

Veterans Reps conduct group presentations to groups of Soldiers, and work one-on-one after these sessions to prepare resumes, practice interviewing skills, and assist with job search strategy. We also provide information on unemployment insurance, dislocated worker programs, employment and reemployment, and educational opportunities.

Following the initial reintegration events, follow-up events at 30/60/90 days are scheduled. Minnesota Veterans Reps will continue to partner in these events, and plan to provide similar services to all returning Veterans from all branches via similar events.

C. PLANNED DEPLOYMENT OF GRANT FUNDED STAFF

DVOP staff will be assigned to provide case management and intensive services to Veterans with significant barriers to employment in the following locations throughout the State of Minnesota: 1) All 48 WorkForce Centers, 2) VA Vocational Rehab Center, Fort Snelling, 3) VA Medical Center, St Paul, 4) Various community libraries and post-secondary schools as available and necessary. LVER staff will be

deployed in many of these same locations for the purpose of employer outreach and education, and to facilitate networking and job search groups.

We also participate as an active partner in the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration program. As mentioned, this is a multi-phased program that includes a series of meetings and training events. Outreach, workshops and assessments are all part of these events.

D. DVOP SPECIALIST

POSITION PURPOSE - DVOP specialist provides **intensive services** and facilitates placements to meet the employment needs of veterans, prioritizing service to special disabled veterans, other disabled veterans, and other categories of veterans in accordance with priorities determined by the Secretary of Labor. The DVOP Specialist will provide or facilitate a full range of intensive services to eligible Veterans with significant barriers to employment (per VPL 03-14/04-14) who are unable to obtain suitable employment through universal services in the WorkForce Center system. This position will serve any eligible Veteran with a SBE seeking assistance with employment related needs including: job seeking assistance, referral to other agencies or services, training opportunities, licensing and certification assistance, and any other assistance as identified in order to meet the needs of the Veteran.

Core Responsibility #1 - Identify and facilitate intensive services needed by Veterans with significant barriers to employment (SBE) so that they can be placed in suitable employment or in a training program commensurate with their EDP/IDP. Tasks for this responsibility will include: 1) In cooperation with U.S Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) staff, identify Chapter 31 Veterans (CH31) who have completed or are participating in VR&E programs and who are in need of job search assistance. 2) Through use of the new standardized "Veterans Questionnaire", identify and prioritize services to disabled and other veterans with an SBE. 3) Conduct assessments to determine employment barriers and services needed. 4) Develop a documented case management file in Workforce One (WF1) for each veteran receiving intensive services. 5) Develop an employability development plan for each case managed veteran. 6) Refer veterans to appropriate supportive service providers. 7) Coordinate linkages with other employment and training providers and the VA to support Veterans in their job search activities. 8) Provide vocational guidance to eligible Veterans. 9) Refer Veterans to appropriate public and private sector jobs

Core Responsibility #2 - Conduct outreach activities to identify and make contact with SBE Veterans who would benefit from, or are in need of intensive services. Tasks for this responsibility will include: 1) Develop outreach programs in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and DOL-VETS. 2) Participate in all Military reintegration events, DEED's annual Veterans Career Fair, and all other outreach events as assigned. 3) Conduct outreach activities with VR&E to market all services to Chapter 31 Vets. 4) Conduct outreach activities to other organizations such as state Vocational Rehabilitation Providers, Homeless Veterans Reintegration Projects (HVRP), VA Hospitals and Veteran Centers, County Veteran Service Offices, homeless shelters, civic and community service organizations, other AJC/WFC partners and other sources as identified.

Core Responsibility #3 - Provide vocational guidance to eligible SBE Veterans who need assistance with vocational change or adjustment. Tasks for this responsibility will include: 1) Establish an EDP for all SBE Veterans requesting vocational guidance. 2) Provide vocational guidance using knowledge of labor market information and assessment tools. 3) Refer candidates to a qualified vocational counselor as necessary. 4) Assist Veterans in using electronic assessment and job search tools.

The DVOP works closely with other service providers in the community to provide intensive services to veterans with significant barriers to employment, as defined in VPL 03-14 and 04-14. These providers include, but are not limited to: Veterans Administration, WFC partners, Community based services, Federal, State, county and local programs, educational institutions, VA hospitals & Vet Centers, homeless programs and shelters, Rehabilitation programs, and other service providers. Supervision is provided administratively by Veterans unit Field Operations Manager and functionally by SrVER.

E. LVER STAFF

POSITION PURPOSE - The LVER's principal duties are to: (1) conduct outreach to employers in the area to assist veterans in gaining employment, including conducting seminars for employers and, in conjunction with employers, conducting job search workshops and establishing job search groups; and (2) facilitate employment, training, and placement services furnished to veterans in a State under the applicable State employment service delivery systems. This position exists to provide services to local businesses that will enhance, support, and promote the employment of Veterans, particularly Veterans receiving intensive services from a local DVOP. They will lead in the planning, development, direction, negotiation, marketing and delivery of employment services to Businesses, Veterans and other eligible persons. The LVER will functionally supervise, train, teach, and provide technical support to the state of Minnesota staff in the provision of Veteran employment services mandated by legislation and departmental guidelines. Clientele served by this position could be any Veteran, with a focus on Veterans with an SBE, including other eligible persons seeking assistance with employment related needs. Services may include, but are not limited to job seeking assistance, referral to other agencies, training opportunities, or other specialized supportive services. Employers seeking qualified Veteran applicants or information on employer incentives and training programs are primary customers. Other LVER customers include community and Veteran organizations, educational facilities, local elected officials, and other State Departments, as well as other WFC staff and management that are either mandated by law or are seeking assistance in providing priority of service to Veterans in hiring and service delivery.

LVERs should advocate for all veterans served by the AJC with business, industry, and other community-based organizations by participating in appropriate activities such as:

- Planning and participating in job and career fairs;
- Conducting employer outreach;
- In conjunction with employers, conducting job searches and workshops, and establishing job search groups;
- Coordinating with unions, apprenticeship programs and businesses or business organizations to promote and secure employment and training programs for veterans;
- Informing Federal contractors of the process to recruit qualified veterans;
- Promoting credentialing and licensing opportunities for veterans; and
- Coordinating and participating with other business outreach efforts.

Core Responsibility #1 - Develop employer outreach activities to establish, maintain, and facilitate regular contact with employers to promote employment and training opportunities for the benefit of Veterans. Tasks for this responsibility will include: 1) Develop job opportunities for Veteran job seekers through outreach efforts with Minnesota employers: job development phone contacts, in person employer visits, and participation in job fair activities on behalf of Veterans. 2) Communicate and coordinate with Business Services Representatives in the SDP to facilitate and promote job opportunities

for Veterans, especially those with significant barriers to employment. 3) Promote the "Veteran Friendly Employer" initiative to all businesses contacted. 4) Encourage employers to employ Veterans utilizing apprenticeships and OJT programs, State and Federal dislocated worker programs, and GI Bill benefits. 5) Maintain current information on employment and training opportunities. 6) Monitor Federal Contractor Job Listings (FCJL) and Vet Central job orders for Veterans using the WFC, or on the DVOP caseload. 7) Provide contacts and job leads to DVOPs.

Core Responsibility #2 - Advocate on behalf of Veterans seeking employment and training opportunities with business, industry, and community-based organizations. Tasks for this responsibility will include: 1) Contact community leaders, employers, labor unions, training programs, and Veterans organizations. 2) Promote Veterans priority of service in employment and training programs. 3) Maintain current information on employment and training opportunities. 4) Plan and participate in job fairs to promote services to Veterans, and encourage participating employers to become a "Veteran Friendly Employer." 5) Promote licensing and certification assistance and training opportunities for Veterans using training providers and credentialing bodies. 6) Work with unions, apprenticeships programs, and business community to promote employment, On the Job Training (OJT), apprenticeships and other available training opportunities to employ Veterans. 7) Establish and maintain contact with National Guard, Reserve Family Readiness Groups and Family Assistance Centers in the assigned area. Provide education and information regarding DEED Vets employment services, WorkForce Centers, and Beyond the Yellow Ribbon events.

Core Responsibility #3 - Functionally supervise and provide lead work direction to Veterans Services staff, professional employees and other WFC staff engaged in the delivery of services to Veteran eligibles. Tasks for this responsibility will include: 1) Plan, guide and evaluate Veteran Program activities of WFC staff to attain program goals and to ensure consistent application of program components by establishing and maintaining workflow/assignment requirements; monitoring and reporting program performance. 2) Train WFC staff and LWDA partners to enhance their knowledge of Veterans employment and training issues. 3) Provide technical advice and guidance to WFC staff regarding procedural questions, or issues, to ensure that program services are administered with accuracy and uniformity by providing written and verbal interpretations of applicable federal laws and departmental policies and procedures. 4) Develop and implement a local Veterans employment service delivery plan, in conjunction with local management, Veterans Staff Supervisor and Veterans State Director. Ensure community resources are utilized and eligible customers are served in accordance with federally mandated standards and delivery area objectives. 5) Analyze current delivery area operations and levels of program activity and recommend new or corrective action procedures to local management to enhance existing levels of performance. 6) Participate in interviewing process with Veterans Program Management and local management in the selection of new DVOP/LVER staff to ensure qualified personnel are hired and the integrity of the various Veterans services programs is maintained.

Core Responsibility #4 - Provide capacity building for other service providers to ensure that Veterans and other eligible persons are provided the range of labor exchange services needed to meet their employment and training needs. Work with other workforce development providers to develop their capacity to recognize, and respond to these needs. Tasks for this responsibility will include: 1) Train other staff and WFC partners to enhance their knowledge of Veteran's employment and training issues. 2) Organize and promote public events like Career Fairs that increase the visibility of Veterans. 3) Promote Veterans as a category of job seekers in the workforce development system that have highly marketable skills and experience.

Core Responsibility #5 – Manage and maintain adherence to POS, and DOL priorities for services to Veterans with an SBE, including labor exchange services.

Tasks for this responsibility will include: 1) Facilitate and maintain the provision of labor exchange services by local WFC staff to Veterans including the identification of SBE Veterans, proper referral to a DVOP, or in the absence of the DVOP, to the intensive services provider, and referral to vocational counseling, testing, job search assistance. 2) Provide job development and employer outreach on behalf of Veterans, with a focus on Veterans with an SBE being case managed by a local DVOP. 3) Coordinate or conduct job search assistance and networking workshops. 4) Provide Labor Market Information (LMI). 6) Provide referrals to training and supportive services. 7) Work with DEED Veterans Chapter 31 Program Coordinator and Veterans Affairs (VA) regarding Chapter 31 clients. 8) Refer Veterans to the Department of Labor (DOL)/Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) partner as needed to assist with reemployment rights issues covered under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) law. 9) Assist employers with special job accommodations for disabled Veterans. 10) Provide outreach and referral to employment for transitioning military personnel who have attended a Transition Assistance Program (TAP) workshop.

This position works closely with community leaders, organizations, employers, labor unions, training programs, institutions, Veterans organizations, Veterans Administration, Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS), military units and other governmental offices, staff and Veteran eligible clients. In addition the LVER must develop and maintain a relationship with management as the Veterans program lead-worker, and technical advisor. The incumbent must work closely with WFC partners, supervisors and committees in the development of WorkForce Center policies and procedures as they pertain to Veterans services. The position must relate to all WorkForce Center staff so that they are thoroughly informed about the Veterans Employment Program and are aware of their responsibility in ensuring that Veterans are provided the priority service to which they are entitled to as specified by law. The LVER must implement the directives and mandates of management, evaluate the activities of other WFC staff and coordinate efforts with other staff at the state office level. The position will functionally supervise the provision of WFC services to Veterans by WFC staff and partners. The LVER is responsible to the Veterans Program Director administratively and to State Veterans Supervisor functionally.

F. PROGRAM INTEGRATION AND LEVERAGING RESOURCES

The following activities will be used to ensure that service providers and partners work together with DVOP specialists and LVER staff to promote employment, training and placement services for veterans. 1) DVOP/LVER staff will attend and participate in local WFC staff meetings. 2) DVOP/LVER staff will be co-located with partner staff in the 48 WorkForce Centers throughout Minnesota. 3) A DVOP has been assigned as an Intensive Services Coordinator (ISC) at the VR&E location at Fort Snelling to coordinate Chapter 31 placement activity with field staff. 4) DVOP/LVER staff will train partner staff and service providers on Veteran resources and when to refer veterans to DVOP staff for intensive services.

Optimal use of services and linkage to other service providers will be assured by policies implemented to identify Veterans at point of entry in each WorkForce Center. A new, standardized Veterans Questionnaire will be offered to all self-identified Veterans coming into a MN WFC. Upon completion of the questionnaire, and assessment by non-Veteran staff, Veterans with significant barriers to employment will be referred to a DVOP, or other partner staff as the designated intensive services provider. Monthly reviews in staff meetings will be conducted to assure that new staff are trained in providing Priority of Service to Veterans and use of the new questionnaire.

The Veterans Career Fair will be used to encourage exhibitor participants to provide Priority of Service practices in their organizations and to use DVOP/LVER staff to assist in providing employment and training services. Educational Institutions will be encouraged to provide special services, credit for prior learning, and dedicated staff for Veterans. (Minnesota was chosen as one of six states to participate in a National Governors Association Talent Pipeline Policy Academy on Veterans Licensure and Certification, which runs through December 2014.) Employers will be encouraged to contact LVER staff when they have a job opportunity and to have a dedicated link on their website for veterans. Service providers who participate will be encouraged to use Veteran staff for referral and flow of information concerning services they provide. All exhibitors will be encouraged to promote the use of the DVOP/LVER staff in Minnesota WorkForce Centers, and to post all open positions on [MinnesotaWorks](#).

With the input and assistance of JVSG staff, Minnesota's [Career Information System](#) will continue to be a partner in promoting and enhancing career opportunities for Veterans by offering dedicated links for Veterans and links for translating military skills to civilian skills. Minnesota's [civil service career website](#) will continue to develop links/efforts to reach the Veteran population with the assistance of JVSG staff.

G. PRIORITY OF SERVICE

Priority of Service to Veterans will be provided to ensure Veterans receive first consideration for all opportunities for which they qualify in the WFC.

1) **Point of Entry** – Signage requests that new clients identify themselves if they are a Veteran, 2) **Questionnaire** – given to Veterans to assist reception to identify Veterans with significant barriers to employment. 3) **SBE Veterans** – will receive assistance/intensive services from a DVOP or in the absence of the DVOP, a designated intensive services provider. 4) **Referral Process** – All other non-SBE Veterans will be referred to a trained partner staff person within the WFC who will provide job search information/assistance, program information and priority referral to services and resources. 5) **Access to DOL funded programs** – Veterans and other eligible persons entitled to POS will be referred to DOL funded programs immediately. If a waiting list for the program exists, the Veteran will be put at the top of the list for service. 6) **Workshops** – All workshops available in the WFC will have open slots available to Veterans up to the day the workshop is scheduled 7) **State Job Bank** – Veterans (current and former Military members) are able to identify themselves as such, and are listed at the beginning of searches done by recruiters and employers. Employers are also able to self-designate as "Veterans Friendly Employer" so that Veterans can do keyword searches to find employers seeking Veterans for hire. 8) **Training of Partner Staff** – Non DVOP staff are trained specifically as the point-of-contact for Veterans not receiving intensive services from DVOPs.

Several processes will be used to monitor POS statewide and within each area of the State in which covered programs operate: 1) Information provided by DVOP/LVER staff or customers, 2) DVET onsite visits (including DOL-VETS audits with the State Director of Veterans Employment Programs, 3) Managers Quarterly Reports.

Services are made available and provided within the WFC and through other service providers to eligible Veterans, transitioning service members, CH31 participants, other eligible persons and other such groups targeted for special consideration, including Veterans with significant barriers to employment.

MOUs have been developed with VR&E and the Jobs for Vets Program in providing referrals and priority services for Veterans.

H. INCENTIVE AWARDS PROGRAM

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The expected outcomes for Minnesota's incentive award program are:

- To acknowledge superior performance and customer service for Veterans;
- To elevate the visibility and importance of Veteran's services to WorkForce partners and staff;
- To generate a stronger sense of unity and collaboration between the Veteran's program and the state WFC system.

ENCOURAGING EXCELLENT SERVICE TO VETERANS

Offering awards provide encouragement and motivation to offer high quality services to Veterans, and offers flexible use of funds for recipients. Examples of selection criteria must show that winning nominations demonstrate a significant impact on Veterans and their job search. A wide range of exemplary employment and training services focused on Veterans will be considered.

TYPES OF AWARDS

Total funds available for the Jobs for Veteran's State Grant (JVSG) Performance Incentive Award Program are \$26,000 based on one percent of the total grant monies designated for FFY15. Minnesota will recognize individual recipients, or WFC offices or teams based on the selection criteria outlined below.

EXAMPLES OF APPROPRIATE USE OF CASH AWARDS ARE, BUT NOT LIMITED TO:

- Computer equipment including network printers, laptops, scanners or other related equipment;
- Office furniture and equipment;
- Conference Room equipment such as whiteboards, LED projectors and screens;
- Donations to U.S. Code recognized 501C(3) charities.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Selection criteria for award recipients must be based on performance or activities during the fiscal year the award is given. Both objective and subjective data are to be considered in the selection of nominees. Nominees should be considered to have demonstrated outstanding outreach and/or service provision on behalf of Veterans who have significant barriers to employment, especially disabled Veterans, homeless Veterans, and incarcerated Veterans. Attitude, motivation, program improvement, positive feedback and other indicators of outstanding performance may be given consideration above numerical data. The Minnesota Dept. of Employment & Economic Development will convene an awards committee and administer the awards.

Examples of selection criteria may be:

- Development of a program, for which the impact may not be directly measurable (e.g., a resume skills building program, special programming for targeted Veteran groups, workshops that address significant barriers to employment);
- Outstanding cooperative case management (between DVOP & WFC partners);
- Ideas that are implemented to improve the service delivery system leading to Veteran living-wage and sustainable employment, improvement in outcome performance for Veterans, reduced time or cost, or that promote collaboration that improve services to Veterans;

- Outreach/community-relations efforts, to include employers, social service entities, and/or educators etc.; or
- Exemplary efforts to assist SBE Veteran populations (homeless, undereducated or under skilled, low income, disabled veterans, or incarcerated Veterans etc.).

ELIGIBLE RECIPIENTS

Eligible recipients are defined as entities providing services to Veterans under the WIOA/Wagner-Peyser employment delivery system. The term "employment service delivery system" means a service delivery system at which or through which labor exchange services, including employment, training, and placement services, are offered in accordance with the Wagner-Peyser Act and employment delivery service programs as defined in P.L. 107-288, Section 4112 and P.L. 109-461. Examples of these entities include:

- Joint DEED/WIOA partners and WorkForce Centers
- WFC partners such as Dislocated Worker Program
- Community College Workforce Development staff

NOMINATION PROCESS AND TIMING OF AWARDS

- Nominations will be solicited through Minnesota local workforce development boards (LWDBs) and local WFC Offices.
- Nominations will reflect the accomplishments of the entity, and include sufficient detail to adequately describe to the awards committee the improvements in services to Veterans made by the entity.
- Nomination descriptions should be no more than one page in length; however, supplemental performance data, testimonials, and other related information may be included as attachments.
- Nominations must be received 2 weeks in advance of the Awards Committee meeting date each quarter.
- Nominations will be reviewed by a panel consisting of the State Veteran's Program Director, a representative of U.S. Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (USDOL-VETS), a representative from DEED HR, and a WFC Partner.
- No nomination committee member may be directly connected with any person or office being reviewed for these awards.
- Awards will be announced to the recipient(s) prior to September 30th.
- Award funds must be obligated by the end of the federal fiscal year, September 30. An annual Incentive Award report will be included in the quarterly report due in mid-November. The report will detail all incentive awards made.
- The intent of P.L. 107-288 is to recognize individuals with an award of corporate benefit not to supplant other spending on training, supplies or other expenditures ordinarily made at the state or program level (see P.L.107-288 & 109-461). Due in part to union restrictions no individual awards will be presented.

I. NARRATIVE BUDGET INFORMATION

The State accounting system provides for separate accounting codes that allow costs associated with the DVOP program and the LVER program to be tracked separately, i.e. DVOP activities, LVER activities, Incentive Awards etc. In addition, Minnesota has an approved cost allocation plan that allows for additional accounting codes to be used for tracking shared costs separately, by category in each AJC.

SENIOR COMMUNITY SERVICE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (SCSEP)

(a) Economic Projections and Impact

- 1. Discuss long-term projections for jobs in industries and occupations in the State that may provide employment opportunities for older workers. (20 CFR 641.302(d))(May alternatively be discussed in the economic analysis Section of strategic plan.)*
- 2. Discuss how the long-term job projections discussed in the economic analysis Section of strategic plan relate to the types of unsubsidized jobs for which SCSEP participants will be trained and the types of skill training to be provided. (20 CFR 641.302(d))*

The Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDA) like Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency (AEOA), under the leadership of the Workforce Board, places a strong emphasis on developing job-driven strategies that align with the demand industries and occupations in the local and regional areas. It is vital that the staff and participants have access to current labor market information that they can utilize in making informed decisions regarding skill development and job goals. This is accomplished in a variety of ways and facilitated by program staff. Staff is provided with the necessary tools and resources to remain knowledgeable of in-demand jobs and occupations. Up-to-date information on local regional high-growth, in-demand occupations is readily available, and SCSEP participants are instructed on how to access this information.

The SCSEP staff is supported in this effort through in-service trainings with the DEED's (DEED) local regional labor analyst, data sources through DEED and ISEEK, featured publications, data mining tools, job vacancy survey results, and the Minnesota Occupational Employment Statistics (OES). Staff will be exposed to the DEED Career Profile tool and will begin to utilize this in their work with participants.

Participants are assisted 1-1 in assessing their skills and abilities and in identifying potential job opportunities in the local labor market, including in-demand industries and hot jobs. The development of a participant's community service assignment is very important in establishing goals and objectives to enhance his or her employment opportunities in the local job market.

Given the current economic and demographic trends as well as the desire of many older individuals to remain in or re-enter the work force, issues relating to older workers' "trainability" as well as the economic payoffs from training influence decisions about whom and when to train as well as the participation of older individuals in training.

Most host agencies that we have utilized have been extremely pleased with the older workers that have been placed in their organizations. In fact, employers generally rate older workers highly in terms of their dependability, loyalty, and commitment.

Employers are realizing the ability of older adults to learn new things, especially as related to technological changes in the workplace. Some older workers have had the opportunity in past years, to participate in "work specific" classes to enhance their employability (MJSP Office Works and MN Department of Commerce SETT Sustainable Employment Training and Trade). In addition, all older workers are encouraged to take advantage of the computer classes that are offered through the Adult Basic Education classrooms at the local WorkForce Centers. This year, participation will be mandatory. Studies indicate that older workers can adjust to computerized word processing, but they may take longer to learn and may need more assistance while learning.

Some studies have revealed that the costs and benefits of training older workers suggests that any added costs of training older workers may be offset by savings elsewhere because older workers stay on the job longer than younger workers (3 years as compared to 1 year). Thus, the return on investment for training was actually greater than that of younger workers. Older workers have also proven to be better sales people than younger workers.

As older individuals continue to have successful experiences in both training programs and the work force, the issues of "trainability" payoff are dissipating. Hopefully the forward-looking businesses will look beyond the negative stereotypes and develop or participate in programs that will attract and retain older workers.

3. *Discuss current and projected employment opportunities in the State (such as by providing information available under §15 of the Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 491-2) by occupation), and the types of skills possessed by eligible individuals. (20 CFR 641.325(c))*

Note: Minnesota's American Job Centers established by the Minnesota DEED (DEED) are called "WorkForce Centers" (WFC). Each SCSEP subgrantee work with Labor Market Information (LMI) and their local areas to identify companies in their region that fall into local high growth industry categories and local occupations in demand that have the types of jobs that are appropriate for SCSEP participants.

The following are the *current* top 10 **high growth industries** in Minnesota: Education and Health Services, Trade, Transportation and Utilities, Professional and Business Services, Manufacturing, Leisure and Hospitality, Financial Activities, Public Administration, Construction, Other Services and Natural Resources and Mining. Other areas to take into consideration and analyze in determining job opportunities and training is the Occupations in Demand and Employment Projections which are located at these two DEED's websites: [Occupations in Demand](#) and [Employment Projections](#). The Employment Outlook tool shows which industries and occupations are expected to grow and which ones are expected to shrink over the next decade in Minnesota. This tool also provides access to short-term - one year - employment forecasts. Data are broken down by region, state and nation.

The following are the *current* top 10 [high growth occupations in demand](#) in Minnesota: Registered Nurses, Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Inc., Stock Clerks and Order Fillers, Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers, Customer Service Representatives, Office Clerks, General, Software Developers, Applications, Personal Care Aides, Cashiers and Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses.

Senior workers can be trained to enter jobs in these industries and occupations in demand. Staff work with economic development agencies and the high growth employers to fine-tune individual employer workforce and training needs. Using this information, staff can ensure participants, to the extent possible, are trained for particular jobs in specific high growth industries and occupations.

Community colleges, community education providers, WorkForce Centers, and professional retired individuals may be utilized for training resources. Key organizations that serve diverse populations assist with special needs training plans and assignments. With the increased labor shortage and skills gap, SCSEP participants may need additional training to compete in the labor market, and referrals to other supportive services, co-enrollment into (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and funding for other formal training may increase.

Also, Web-based regional labor market profiles are available on [DEED's website](#) under the heading Regional Labor Market Information to assist in the assessment of employer needs in each economic development region. Regional economic profiles also help identify short- and long-term skills needed by individuals to secure jobs in the region.

Besides those Regions that are identified in the Section in the Regional Labor Market Information website, there are other regions of the State that have key partners in their regions. For example, Duluth and northeastern Minnesota has the Northland Works (public awareness campaign), the Workforce Strategy Task Force (comprised of several leaders from these sectors: private business, education (primary, secondary and post-secondary), City Council, economic development (both municipal and private) and community based organizations. In addition the Blueprint to End Poverty – Initiated by Community Action – Duluth, this guiding coalition (steering committee) has had three community engagement sessions with low income people and community stakeholders to develop strategies to end poverty. Utilizing SCSEP can be a key component to help low income people out of poverty.

Examples of subsidized jobs that could be developed include: Case Aide; Educational Aide; Occupational Therapy Aide; Recreation Club Manager; Recreation Leader; Health Services Aide; Kitchen Helper; Laundry Laborer; Child Care Attendant; Outreach Worker; Recreation Facility Attendant; Municipal Utilities Worker; Bus Driver; Laboratory Sample Assistant; Library Aide; Clerical Aide; File Clerk; Clerk-Typist; Forest Conservation Aide; Groundskeeper; Maintenance Carpenter; Insulation/Weatherization Worker; Road Maintenance Worker and Building Maintenance Worker.

Minnesota will continue the customized training component with the small businesses that are the primary private sector employers of SCSEP participants. Over the last decade, small businesses have generated 60 to 80 percent of net new jobs annually. In many areas, small businesses may be the only source of jobs for job seekers, particularly when those workers are low-income and elderly. Working with small business employers to provide customized training has proven to be a successful placement model; subgrantees can replicate this model in new and current SCSEP areas.

Transition into unsubsidized jobs at worksite agencies is one method of meeting the 54.3 percent Entered Employment goal. SCSEP staff encourages host agencies to hire participants when permanent positions become available. Another placement method includes the use of a job developer who obtains job openings information or referrals to local Job Service offices who make the placements of SCSEP participants.

During the development of an Individualized Employment Plan (IEP), permanent unsubsidized employment goals for each participant will be identified as well as activities and services necessary to attain their goals. The IEP describes the steps needed to place SCSEP participants into unsubsidized employment.

SCSEP job development requires finding job opportunities inside or outside the project areas which are suitable for participants. Using LMI to determine expanding industries, SCSEP subgrantees and job developers' work with area employers to develop openings which meet the needs of both participants and corporate entities. Some agencies maintain a reservoir of current listings of job opportunities, which facilitates the job match. Job developers perform highly individualized job development efforts resulting in close matches between participant job goals and unsubsidized employment placements resulting in higher motivation to stay on the job. Subgrantees require participants to do job searches, to write

sample job application and attend interviewing technique workshops that are conducted periodically throughout the service area for SCSEP participants. Strategies for organizing job search, application preparation, interviewing techniques and leads on job openings are presented. Participants may secure support services for job search and travel to job interviews.

Minnesota intends to ensure that services are widely available and that wherever possible, publicly funded services will augment, not compete with, services available in the for-profit and nonprofit market. New partnerships can extend the reach of Minnesota's workforce development system. For example, the on-going initiative is to expand the knowledge of the availability of MinnesotaWorks (Minnesota's Job Bank) through the local libraries and beyond.

Examples of sites that may be contacted by staff in the development of worksites are schools, city and county offices, senior citizen sites, nutrition and transportation programs, foster grandparent programs, senior companion programs, chore service, weatherization/energy crews, county garages, state parks, the U.S. Forest Service, state lands and forestry stations, nursing homes and a multitude of other federal, state and local public and private non-profit agencies, departments and organizations.

Positions developed by staff are related as closely as possible to the results of the individual assessment of the participant's abilities and preferences. In developing subsidized employment positions, priority is given to those jobs that directly serve other seniors. Developing positions in geographic proximity to the participant's residence is considered as long as the position provides meaningful work experience.

Worksite placement followed by meetings with the counselor provide further information regarding suitability and desirability of a continued placement, as well as new directions which might be pursued for alternative placements, other employment and training opportunities and unsubsidized job placements. Participant's positions are developed on the basis of an assessment of the individual's needs and aptitudes.

Development of community service assignments is an ongoing process. It requires that staff be aware of local community needs, agencies/organizations that can act as host agencies, and the quality of services that can be provided by the host agency to the participant. Although development is ongoing, selection of an assignment is based primarily on the participants' interests, abilities, goals and other needs as described in the IEP. Subgrantees therefore do not designate specific "priority areas" or types of assignments, because each assignment is based on the IEP.

Program staff uses the assessment and IEP as the basis for community service assignment and training. If we do not have a suitable assignment on file, staff will contact a current or prospective agency to see if a suitable position can be developed for the new participant. In smaller communities, there may be only one eligible agency. If the participant is unable to drive a distance, we may have to develop an assignment which is not a perfect match.

Participants placed in subsidized jobs receive the majority of their training at the worksite (on-the-job training). The teaching of job skills through demonstration, practice and instruction sharpens and upgrades skills not recently used. Worksite supervisors and other regular work station personnel familiar with the various tools, equipment, duties, procedures for task accomplishment and requirements of the site provide the necessary training to participants at no cost to the program. Worksites send participants to workshops and seminars benefiting participant performance which in turn increases employability, and facilitating transition into unsubsidized employment at the site with another employer. Community

education programs and community colleges are also utilized to provide training to improve skill levels, or enhance existing skills.

Extra vocational training may be offered, including time management, effective communication, learning job-seeking skills, interviewing techniques and job application procedures. Workshops may be provided by Career Development Specialists, where available, or taught individually by counselors. The training needs of participants are assessed at least two times per year.

A limited amount of funds will be utilized for auxiliary training which cannot be secured cost-free to the program. Charges for materials and tuition fees will be reimbursed to participants or will be paid directly upon billing on their behalf.

One of the strategies will be to increase the focus on job placement through job development. This may include conducting a thorough assessment of skills, an assessment of community needs relative to employment, and networking within the community to locate and/or develop suitable unsubsidized employment for participants. Additionally, On-the-Job Experience (OJE's) will be utilized to help the participants' transition to other employment as well. At each WorkForce Center site in Rural Minnesota CEP, the teams recruit employers to attend Job Clubs and feature an "Employer of the Week." Employers discuss job openings, job requirements and qualifications. SCSEP participants will be included in these sessions. The job search component is planned become more formalized. Enrollees will need to meet with the SCSEP Employment Coordinator on a weekly basis to review postings through the WorkForce Center.

NEW INITIATIVE FOR SCSEP

Minnesota applied and received the Limited Competition Grant. This was for the ***improving unsubsidized job placements through increased employer engagement*** category of funding. As a result of working with both the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) participants and universal customers, it has become apparent that a Job Developer is a valuable solution to engaging SCSEP participants with potential employers. The Job Developers will assist participants in finding employment in the private sector; concurrent with their employment at SCSEP supervised transitional work sites. Leveraging work experience gained at the SCSEP work sites, Job Developers will identify and create job opportunities for participants, and match qualified participants with these employment opportunities. Job Developers will be responsible for building relationships with employers, successfully placing participants into jobs, and providing on going retention and support services to employers and participants, thereby fulfilling traditional coaching and navigational functions, in addition to job development.

The Job Developer position will be key to the SCSEP program achieving its annual placement outcomes. The Job Developer will have two overarching responsibilities: 1) establishing new employer relationships while maintaining pre-existing relationships with employers to secure valid and unsubsidized employment opportunities for SCSEP participants, and 2) effectively matching SCSEP participants with unsubsidized employment. Increasing job opportunities and employment for SCSEP eligible individuals will positively impact the outcomes of SCSEP performance measures and goals.

To continue the efforts further, participants need to increase not only the job search component for job leads, but recruitment of business contacts by the participant will need to increase in terms of

placement activities for the individuals who have reached their 48 month durational limit because they will be coming off the program because they will not meet the waiver factors or criteria.

In rural Minnesota, since the majority of placements (participants) are hired from current host agencies, those rural subgrantees concentrate on providing the skills needed by these agencies so that the enrollee can transition into unsubsidized employment through their current worksite. This is due to the lack of any sizeable employers in the six rural county areas.

We have been fortunate in the past with the reputation the program holds through solid, dependable workers that we have provided to local employers. Many employers have indicated they are very pleased as they see the older population is a very dependable one. Continuing to be visible and making the connections with employers through various community functions is essential to the success of the program.

The SE MN Workforce Development Board has placed a renewed focus on job placement to help meet the needs of both employers and participants. Placement staff coordinates a quarterly employer-focused newsletter to highlight services offered through the WorkForce Centers, including information on the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) assessments. Upcoming newsletters will highlight recently recognized "Best Places to Work" as identified through a detailed survey process sponsored by the SE MN WIB.

Minnesota Subgrantee staff possesses a great deal of experience in developing public and private non-profit worksites to be used as possible placement locations for appropriate SCSEP participants. Community Service assignments are based on review of the participant's IEP which outlines their own goals, needs, skill sets, etc. Priority will be given to host sites that will be able to provide unsubsidized employment to the participants within the time frame permitted by the reduced funding. For community services sites that will not be able to provide employment to participants, SCSEP staff will start job searching activities in advance of the program end dates to ensure participants will obtain employment before funding ends.

In Minnesota, subgrantees continue to survey their existing host agencies and seek new host agencies to determine how the SCSEP can support activities that will be limited by the reduction of SCSEP funds.

All available contacts associated with the disadvantaged older worker population will be utilized to recruit participants. Recruitment resources will include social services, senior citizen nutrition centers, the area agency on aging, and senior citizen social centers. In order to recruit applicants eligible under the guidelines, SCSEP providers will also recruit through other SCSEP operators, reservations, the United Way, low rent housing agencies, social services, senior fairs, the Social Security Administration, county veteran service offices and community action programs. Radio call-in shows and newspaper articles will also be utilized. In addition, SCSEP staff notify WorkForce Center partners including Job Service, RS and SSB about SCSEP vacancies. Participants in other programs such as MFIP, FSET, WIOA and State Dislocated Worker may also be recruited for SCSEP. SCSEP activities will be provided Statewide through WorkForce Centers. SCSEP staff in these centers are aware of the most effective recruitment techniques in each community.

MelissaData is a website tool that all Minnesota subgrantees use to recruit New Host Agencies and keep the current ones that show great performance in training abilities. In addition, simply making a lot of

phone calls is key to the success of this program. Maintaining a good relationship with the current Host Agencies is equally important for future placements.

The SCSEP program is operated by DEED's local WorkForce Centers. All WFC services are available to SCSEP participants including workshops, resource area activities and co-enrollment into appropriate programs such as WIOA adult and the Dislocated Worker program. We also partner with several community agencies to provide services to seniors. Partner agencies include: Divisions of Rehabilitation Services, Community Volunteer Services, Housing Redevelopment Authority (HRA), and Washington County Community Services for food and medical assistance. The Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDA's) have developed a data base management tool that allows the staff to document their contacts, the host agency name and their interest in serving as a host agency. This coordinated effort allows for staff to centralize their outreach and avoid duplicative contacts to the worksites.

Southwestern Minnesota Workforce Development, Inc. employs Community Connectors to meet the needs of area residents with limited English skills and to provide outreach, information and assistance to recruit households whose primary languages are Spanish, Lao, Vietnamese and Arabic. We publish openings in local free newspapers and MinnesotaWorks, Minnesota's no-fee online labor exchange. On a continuous basis, SCSEP subgrantees distribute posters in all counties in the subgrantees service areas.

(A NEW DEED Career Pathways Grants Expand Opportunity) - Minnesota DEED has awarded \$1,475,000 to 17 adult career pathways projects in the state under the [Minnesota FastTRAC Adult Career Pathways](#) initiative to help train and place 1,000 workers statewide which includes other programs, including SCSEP.

Minnesota FastTRAC's approach integrates basic skills and career training in high-demand fields, meeting business needs and ensuring that students find jobs with a pathway to future employment. The collaborative effort seeks to make Minnesota more competitive by helping low-skill and low-income adults succeed in the workplace.

"Minnesota FastTRAC is an innovative program that teaches the skills needed for careers in demand," said DEED Commissioner Katie Clark Sieben. "This program is putting Minnesotans back to work and helping businesses fill jobs in growing fields like health care and manufacturing."

The [Minnesota FastTRAC partnership](#) includes the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System; Minnesota Department of Education; Minnesota Department of Corrections; DEED; Minnesota Department of Human Services; local employers, workforce development agencies, human services and community-based organizations; Minnesota Office of Higher Education; Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry; and the Governor's Workforce Development Board. DEED is the state's principal economic development agency, promoting business recruitment, expansion and retention, workforce development, international trade and community development. Minnesota FastTRAC partners also form a professional learning community, building the capacity of educators and workforce development providers across the state to align service and deliver effective programming for high barrier populations.

The annual Senior Expo conferences are held in key spots throughout Minnesota that provide additional exposure to attract many potential participants. This Senior Expo also gives exposure to potential businesses that do outreach to this senior population.

Recruitment practices for SCSEP utilize posters, current participants – word of mouth, news articles and Board members. Some agencies have access to the Energy Assistance database that allows them to mail a flyer to identified individuals. This resource has been very successful for agencies with access.

Recruitment strategies are ongoing and changing along with the condition of the older worker population. The recruitment strategies listed above will help to ensure equitable participation of minority groups, those with the greatest economic need and individuals who have poor employment prospects. In addition, meeting with financial aid and social workers at the local county social services, mailings and referrals from energy assistance providers, assistance from community leaders who are members of the ethnic or cultural group - such as minorities or limited-English speaking individuals, and collaboration with key neighborhood organizations and religious institutions will support attaining the goals by reaching out to a high number of minorities.

These host sites are currently and will continue to be developed once we have identified eligible participants. Participants are matched with host agencies based upon their current skills and employment goals matching the host agency's job description. The goal is to develop these host agencies in not only the growth industries of healthcare, education, child care and energy efficiency, but also in some manufacturing and service industries, health-related occupations (such as certified nursing assistants) or jobs requiring computer skills. We will use current partnerships with local WFC/business service representative to help with the development of host agencies in the targeted industries.

There are continuous working relationships with local community colleges and school district Adult Basic Education programs to offer participants training in basic skills, GED preparation, English as a Second Language, computer literacy, and other vocational skills. School districts make their ESL programs available to school district residents at no charge. When space is available after all tuition-paying students have been accommodated, a person 62 years of age or older who is a Minnesota resident is entitled to attend or audit any courses offered for credit in any state supported institution of higher education in Minnesota.

Minnesota builds collaborations between SCSEP, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) WorkForce Centers, and other community partners to leverage support for the costs associated with short-term classroom training, credentialing, certification, and other support services appropriate for participants, including services available at local libraries.

Direct contact with specific professionals and programs is made in order to focus on individuals 60 years of age or older or those who have disabilities or other circumstances resulting in poor or no employment prospect. The state Vocational Rehabilitation counselor contacts are also made aware of the program and its possible benefits to eligible clients on their caseload. Free or low-cost medical clinics (SHERIDAN WOMEN & CHILDREN CLINIC, EAST SIDE FAMILY CLINIC, and FAMILY SERVICES CENTER) are also provided information and outreach.

The following are strategies that Minnesota has in place for assisting mature workers' with computer and software application needs. In each WorkForce Center a computer is set up with special software like Jaws, UBI DUO, Zoom Text, pocket talker – assistive amplification device, and hand held screen enlargers. Experience Works (a national provider) is currently working with Teknimedia. Teknimedia's Virtual Learning Center provides an integrated management system for all Teknimedia Computer Literacy courses. The WorkForce Centers also offer workshops that are specifically designed for mature

workers. All enrollees are required to enroll in computer literacy classes through subgrantees Adult Basic Education classes. In addition, most of the subgrantees have recently moved to online applications, so the Senior Employment Coordinator will also work individually with each enrollee training them on the websites that provide job opportunities. We are seeing more participants who have internet access. In some cases, they have already accessed job openings on MinnesotaWorks before applying for the SCSEP. In cases where a participant needs advanced classes such as in Excel or Word to increase their employability, the SCSEP may provide available funds. The National Provider, Experience Works utilized the "JobReady Career Development" system to open doors to new career options and to find new job opportunities for not only SCSEP participants but also the mature worker population.

AEOA is one of eleven SCSEP providers who continue to have a positive reputation with local entities through SCSEP, which offers solid, dependable workers to local employers. Many employers have indicated they are very pleased as they see the older population is a very dependable one. The difficulty arises when there are limited opportunities in a large geographic rural area. When entities and businesses experience layoffs, it closes the door for worksite opportunities, both on the training side and unsubsidized placements. Continuing to be visible and making the connections with employers through various community functions is essential to the success of the program. The SCSEP Director is currently a Laurentian Area Chamber Ambassador. Attending Breakfast Connections, Business after Hours, Luncheon Series and other Chamber driven events supports close connection to what is happening in the local communities.

Transitioning into unsubsidized jobs at worksite agencies are seen as one method of meeting the 54.3 percent placement goal. Program staff will encourage host agencies to hire enrollees when permanent positions become available with the agency. Other methods may include use of a job developer who would devote time to the acquisition of unsubsidized openings at locations other than at the participant's worksite. Job placement activities will be coordinated with other placement partners in the WorkForce Center System. Additionally, nine of the eleven SCSEP subgrantees also administer and operate other programs under WIOA.

As stated previously, individual needs of older workers vary. Because of this, an individual employment plan will be developed with each individual to enable the project to meet individual needs. At that time, permanent unsubsidized employment goals of each enrollee will be identified as well as activities and services necessary to attain the goal.

Job development involves finding job opportunities inside or outside the project areas which are suitable for the enrollees. Subgrantees will attempt to develop jobs and effectively describe the requirements of the positions. Data from MinnesotaWorks (Minnesota's job bank) and DEED's LMI are assessed and utilized on a periodic basis in order to update knowledge of the local labor force and labor market conditions. A highly individualized job development effort should result in a close match between job goals and employment, resulting in higher enrollee motivation to stay on the job. Job development will be carried out by specialists who are familiar with the customers they serve. Subgrantees may invite participants to participate in job search, application and interview workshops conducted at WorkForce Centers. At these workshops, strategies for organizing job search, application preparation, interviewing techniques and leads on job openings are presented. Participants needing supportive services in job search and travel to job interviews will be provided the information needed to obtain assistance from the program.

Follow-up for enrollees placed into unsubsidized employment will be conducted at the 90 day and 180-day (six-month) follow-up and additional follow-ups within three-months of termination from the program. If any problems are identified at this time, appropriate action will be taken to assist the former enrollee to alleviate the problem. If a former enrollee is found to be unemployed during follow-up, the individual will receive priority for re-enrollment into the program. Other successful types of terminations, such as entry into other workforce development activities, are expected. Staff will inform participants, where applicable, of other programs, activities and projects in the area from which they might derive benefit. Some enrollees are expected to enter these other programs and subsequently obtain an unsubsidized job placement.

All subgrantees have a 54.3 percent unsubsidized placement goal. Those subgrantees not attaining a 54.3 percent placement goal will be required to submit a plan of action for addressing the goal in the forthcoming year.

(b) Service Delivery and Coordination

- 1. A description of actions to coordinate SCSEP with other programs. This may alternatively be discussed in the State strategies Section of the strategic plan, but regardless of placement in document, must include:*
 - A. Planned actions to coordinate activities of SCSEP grantees with WIOA title I programs, including plans for using the WIOA one-stop delivery system and its partners to serve individuals aged 55 and older. (20 CFR 641.302(g), 641.325(e))*

Strong partnerships with other agencies and organizations that serve the older worker population will or have been established with the Department of Health and Human Services, State Board on Aging, LWDBs, social service organizations providing services to older individuals such as Mature Worker program, VRS, Job Service, and other organizations including businesses and labor.

Minnesota's SCSEP providers are being offered the opportunity to collaborate with the WorkForce Center System to further the resources available to the older worker by accessing the core, or universal, services of the system. Coordination also increases the availability of SCSEP to appropriate WorkForce Center customers. Through the WorkForce Center System, DEED will bring together those involved in the older worker community through meetings, development of materials (including web resources, publications, and promotional material) and forums (meetings and roundtables) encouraging collaboration and seeking to eliminate service gaps. Easy accessibility, partnering and seamless services will be greater components of SCSEP for providers and their customers.

Local WorkForce Center plans have resulted in partnerships that include a variety of community-based organizations, local collaborations and local referral sources to assist customers in accessing services including transportation, housing, health and other workforce development services.

Minnesota's Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) providers are being offered the opportunity to collaborate with the WorkForce Center System to further the resources available to older workers by accessing the core or universal services of the system. Coordination also increases the availability of SCSEP to appropriate WorkForce Center customers. Through the WorkForce Center System, DEED will bring together those involved in the older worker community through meetings, development of materials (including web resources, publications and promotional material) and forums (meetings and roundtables) encouraging collaboration and seeking to eliminate service gaps. DEED takes on a proactive approach to resources for older workers. One of the many projects is the [Reception and Resource Area Forum \(RRAF\)](#). This is a website providing current information, best practices and new

projects to be viewed and shared by every WorkForce Center. This site is also dedicated to the collaboration, communication, innovation, resources, training and projects related to RRAF and is an extension of the Minnesota DEED (DEED) that serves the interests of the customers visiting the Minnesota WorkForce Centers.

The state encourages co-enrollment, as appropriate, of older workers in the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) and WIOA Title I programs in order for them to receive comprehensive training supports and employment services.

The state provides information and referrals to potentially eligible individuals on other federally supported programs (e.g., Community Development Block Grant programs, Social Security Title XX programs, Energy Assistance programs, etc.) so individuals receive assistance in meeting social service and training needs.

(B) Planned actions to coordinate activities of SCSEP grantees with the activities being carried out in the State under the other titles of the Older Americans Act (OAA). (20 CFR 641.302(h))

DEED is one of three national Title V Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) sponsors operating in Minnesota. At the state level, cooperative relationships have been developed with all Title V SCSEP national sponsors operating in Minnesota. These include Experience Works, National Indian Council on Aging, and National Senior Service America, Inc.

The WorkForce Center System has joined with other providers of workforce development services to create a one-stop delivery system. The partnership brings together State, county, and private nonprofit workforce development services under one roof, providing a seamless and comprehensive system to job seekers and employers. As part of the SCSEP State Plan, DEED promotes further coordination and collaboration between SCSEP service providers and the one-stop system.

(C) Planned actions to coordinate SCSEP with other private and public entities and programs that provide services to older Americans, such as community and faith-based organizations, transportation programs, and programs for those with special needs or disabilities. (20 CFR 641.302(i))

(D) Planned actions to coordinate SCSEP with other labor market and job training initiatives. (20 CFR 641.302(j))

(E) Actions to ensure that SCSEP is an active partner in the one-stop delivery system and the steps the State will take to encourage and improve coordination with the one-stop delivery system. (20 CFR 641.335)

(F) Efforts to work with local economic development offices in rural locations.

DEED has consistently worked to develop strong partnerships with agencies and organizations serving the older worker population and rural areas. Every effort is in place to work with the local economic development offices in the rural areas.

2. *The State's long-term strategy for engaging employers to develop and promote opportunities for the placement of SCSEP participants in unsubsidized employment. (20 CFR 641.302(e)) (May alternatively be discussed in the State strategies Section of strategic plan.)*
3. *The State's long-term strategy for serving minority older individuals under SCSEP. (20 CFR 641.302(c))*

DEED subcontracts with 11 agencies, including three national SCSEP sponsors and WIOA program providers, to ensure equitable program coverage statewide. Because of the range of providers, local programs may vary in design while adhering to program requirements.

SCSEP subgrantees provide priority and special consideration is extended to individuals with incomes below the poverty level, those with greatest social and/or economic need, eligible minorities, limited English speakers, Native Americans and Veterans, at least in proportion to their numbers in the state and taking into consideration their rates of poverty and unemployment. SCSEP subgrantees are monitored at least annually to ensure program participation by those individuals with priority needs.

Minnesota ensures that SCSEP opportunities are spread across cultural, racial, gender and geographic boundaries. Minnesota seeks enrollees with ethnic diversity and limited English proficiency by working with the Community Connectors who provide these populations with translation services and program information to meet their economic needs. Some provide program information by supplying brochures in Spanish, Somali, Hmong, Vietnamese, Lao, Arabic, Russian and English to the WorkForce Centers, the Veteran's Office and each county Family Services Office.

Minnesotans' have access to the [language line](#) and a contract with qualified interpreters services. We provide SCSEP information in diverse forms such as palm cards, and brochures in languages other than English. We also take referrals from other departments within their own agencies (subgrantees). We display SCSEP posters or brochures at food shelves, senior apartment complexes, senior dining centers and grocery stores. We include this information on agencies resources listings and brochures.

All current subgrantees employ outreach staff who assist in locating individuals most-in-need of services available through SCSEP and in identifying minority participants eligible for the program. In addition, referrals are expected to introduce many prospective participants to the program. Referral sources, which may include County Social Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, Job Service/State Employment Service, Senior Citizens Centers/Groups, Area Agencies on Aging, WIOA programs, community-based organizations, and Minnesota's WorkForce Centers, have been developed and will be continued through staff contact.

Periodic dissemination of information to prospective SCSEP participants through newsletters and public gatherings encourages self-referrals. Also, county financial workers, public health workers, clergy, rural neighborhood workers, other subgrantee staff, community members involved in senior citizens activities and Job Service staff provide information concerning an applicant's need and circumstances and the referral itself.

The SCSEP program will continue to recruit minority populations resulting from the response to the continuing public awareness efforts, which will also be expanded. The phone responses and walk-ins we are receiving indicate a continued need. In addition, although we do a great job of enrolling minorities, we seek to recruit more people of color and to always improve efforts in this area.

The following are a sampling of the type of recruitment resources that are utilized: WorkForce Centers; Community Action Programs; Public service announcements in newspapers, radio, radio call-in; TV; help wanted ads; postings on [MinnesotaWorks](#) (Minnesota's job bank); Subgrantee agencies and host agency newsletters; asking participants for referrals; Senior Nutrition Program newsletters; Public Access Community Television; listings with the Community Resource Guide for Older Adults; Veterans services offices; Department of Rehabilitation Services; Reservation business committees; Reservation

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs; Minnesota Migrant Council; Native American Reservation Social Service Organizations; posters; Church bulletin inserts; grocery bag flyers and on the back of grocery receipts in selected zip code areas; direct mailings to possible age and income eligible households; inserts in local utility bills; flyers included in Food Shelf packaging; Job Developers, and Business Representatives.

Recruitment strategies are always ongoing and changing along with the climate and condition of the older worker population. The recruitment strategies listed above will help to assure equitable participation of minority groups, those with the greatest economic need and those with poor employment prospects. In addition, meeting with financial aid and social workers at county social services; mailings and referrals from energy assistance providers; assistance from community leaders who are members of the ethnic or cultural group, such as minorities or limited-English speaking individuals, and collaboration with key neighborhood organizations and religious institutions will be included in the mix of recruitment resources.

In reviewing the SPARQ Quarterly Progress Report and the current Minority Report it is noted that the number of those individuals under the minority category can or could be potentially underserved, but Minnesota is right on target with the goals that are set and no disparities have been identified. Recruitment of minority participants takes place on all Indian reservations located within the boundaries of subgrantee's service areas. The same types of contacts are used for recruitment at community action programs, nutrition centers, and community centers. WorkForce Center staff refers individuals to SCSEP.

Special efforts are made to impact minority communities to ensure the equitable participation of eligible minorities. These efforts include advertising with local and culturally specific media that have a high percentage of minority readers (Insight News, Minnesota Spokesman Recorder, The Circle, Latino Midwest News, Asian American Press, etc.) and listeners (JMOJ, etc.) as well as partnering with other agencies that primarily serve minority populations like Experience Works, Inc.

In order to ensure equitable participation of minorities, subgrantees such as the Experience Works, Inc., National Indian Council on Aging and the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe work in the geographic areas with the highest percentage of minority populations in the state. These subgrantees have considerable experience in recruiting and providing services to low-income groups, and their participation ensures inclusion of both cultural communities. For those individuals found ineligible, applicants are directed to other alternative employment and training services through Minnesota WorkForce Centers.

Enrollment priority is given to individuals age 65 and older or those who meet one of the following criteria:

- Have a disability
- Have limited English proficiency or low literacy skills, minority, and American Indian
- Reside in a rural area
- Veterans and qualified spouses who meet the special consideration criteria
- Have low employment prospects and economic need
- Have failed to find employment after receiving services under Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
- Are homeless or at risk of homelessness

Recent success stories about participants in the White Earth tribal newspaper, the Anishinaaberg, and on the radio prompted an outpouring of calls from unemployed minority older workers, including a large number who were recently laid off. In placing stories, Minnesota has used materials and information developed regionally and throughout the national organization's 2013 public relations awareness campaign to increase knowledge of the challenges minority older workers face and the solutions the SCSEP offers.

SCSEP subgrantees continue to seek out assistance from community leaders who are members of ethnic or cultural groups, such as minorities or limited-English speaking individuals, and collaborate with key neighborhood organizations and religious institutions.

- (4) *List of community services that are needed and the places where these services are most needed. Specifically, the plan must address the needs and location of those individuals most in need of community services and the groups working to meet their needs. (20 CFR 641.330)*
- (5) *The State's long-term strategy to improve SCSEP services, including planned long-term changes to the design of the program within the State, and planned changes in the use of SCSEP grantees and program operators to better achieve the goals of the program. This may include recommendations to the Department as appropriate. (20 CFR 641.302(k))*
- (6) *strategy for continuous improvement in the level of performance for SCSEP participants' entry into unsubsidized employment, and to achieve, at a minimum, the levels specified in OAA Section 513(a)(2)(E)(ii). (20 CFR 641.302(f))*

(c) *Location and Population Served, including Equitable Distribution*

- (1) *A description of the localities and populations for which projects of the type authorized by title V are most needed. (20 CFR 641.325 (d))*
- (2) *List the cities and counties where the project will be conducted. Include the number of SCSEP authorized positions and indicate where the positions changed from the prior year.*
- (3) *Describe current slot imbalances and proposed steps to correct inequities to achieve equitable distribution.*

The geographical areas to be served and the authorized positions indicated in the table below.

County	State	Experience Works	NICOA	Senior Service America	Totals
Aitkin County, MN	0			7	7
Anoka County, MN	13			25	38
Becker County, MN	3	8	2		13
Beltrami County, MN	1	11	5		17
Benton County, MN	0	6		0	6
Big Stone County, MN	0	2			2
Blue Earth County, MN	11				11
Brown County, MN	8				8
Carlton County, MN	1			7	8
Carver County, MN	8				8
Cass County, MN	1	9	2		12

County	State	Experience Works	NICOA	Senior Service America	Totals
<i>Chippewa County, MN</i>	0	4			4
<i>Chisago County, MN</i>	0			7	7
<i>Clay County, MN</i>	2	8			10
<i>Clearwater County, MN</i>	1	3	2		6
<i>Cook County, MN</i>	0			1	1
<i>Cottonwood County, MN</i>	4				4
<i>Crow Wing County, MN</i>	1	19			20
<i>Dakota County, MN</i>	16	24			40
<i>Dodge County, MN</i>	0	4			4
<i>Douglas County, MN</i>	0	11			11
<i>Faribault County, MN</i>	6				6
<i>Fillmore County, MN</i>	0	7			7
<i>Freeborn County, MN</i>	0	10			10
<i>Goodhue County, MN</i>	2	9			11
<i>Grant County, MN</i>	1	2			3
<i>Hennepin County, MN</i>	19		11	170	200
<i>Houston County, MN</i>	0	7			7
<i>Hubbard County, MN</i>	1	6			7
<i>Isanti County, MN</i>	0			6	6
<i>Itasca County, MN</i>	2			11	13
<i>Jackson County, MN</i>	4				4
<i>Kanabec County, MN</i>	0			5	5
<i>Kandiyohi County, MN</i>	0	9			9
<i>Kittson County, MN</i>	0	2			2
<i>Koochiching County, MN</i>	3			3	6
<i>Lac qui Parle County, MN</i>	0	2			2
<i>Lake County, MN</i>	1			2	3
<i>Lake of the Woods County, MN</i>	1				1
<i>Le Sueur County, MN</i>	0	6			6
<i>Lincoln County, MN</i>	0	3			3

County	State	Experience Works	NICOA	Senior Service America	Totals
<i>Lyon County, MN</i>	0	7			7
<i>McLeod County, MN</i>	0			7	7
<i>Mahnomen County, MN</i>	1	1	2		4
<i>Marshall County, MN</i>	0	3			3
<i>Martin County, MN</i>	8				8
<i>Meeker County, MN</i>	0	0		5	5
<i>Mille Lacs County, MN</i>	2			6	8
<i>Morrison County, MN</i>	1	11			12
<i>Mower County, MN</i>	0	12			12
<i>Murray County, MN</i>	4				4
<i>Nicollet County, MN</i>	6				6
<i>Nobles County, MN</i>	8				8
<i>Norman County, MN</i>	0	3			3
<i>Olmsted County, MN</i>	11	9			20
<i>Otter Tail County, MN</i>	2	20			22
<i>Pennington County, MN</i>	2	3			5
<i>Pine County, MN</i>	0			9	9
<i>Pipestone County, MN</i>	4				4
<i>Polk County, MN</i>	1	8			9
<i>Pope County, MN</i>	1	3			4
<i>Ramsey County, MN</i>	0	97	4		101
<i>Red Lake County, MN</i>	1	0			1
<i>Redwood County, MN</i>	0	6			6
<i>Renville County, MN</i>	0	5			5
<i>Rice County, MN</i>	2	7			9
<i>Rock County, MN</i>	3				3
<i>Roseau County, MN</i>	1	2			3
<i>St. Louis County, MN</i>	10		6	41	57
<i>Scott County, MN</i>	11				11
<i>Sherburne County, MN</i>	0			11	11

<i>County</i>	State	Experience Works	NICOA	Senior Service America	Totals
<i>Sibley County, MN</i>	0	5			5
<i>Stearns County, MN</i>	0	30			30
<i>Steele County, MN</i>	0	9			9
<i>Stevens County, MN</i>	1	1			2
<i>Swift County, MN</i>	0	4			4
<i>Todd County, MN</i>	1	9			10
<i>Traverse County, MN</i>	1	1			2
<i>Wabasha County, MN</i>	2	4			6
<i>Wadena County, MN</i>	0	8			8
<i>Waseca County, MN</i>	0	3			3
<i>Washington County, MN</i>	11	16			27
<i>Watonwan County, MN</i>	3				3
<i>Wilkin County, MN</i>	0	2			2
<i>Winona County, MN</i>	3	8			11
<i>Wright County, MN</i>	0			15	15
<i>Yellow Medicine County, MN</i>	0	2			2
TOTALS:	211	471	34	338	1054

SCSEP agencies that administer the SCSEP Program are located on DEED's website under [Find a Provider](#).

The state continues to develop cooperative and coordinative relationships among state-administered SCSEP and program operators, and national sponsors. The state and national sponsors have made every effort to correct any equitable distribution slot imbalances. At the state level, cooperative relationships have been developed with all Title V national sponsors operating in Minnesota. This includes Experience Works, Senior Service of America and the National Indian Council on Aging.

Regular meetings and telephone conversations are held to discuss mutual concerns, develop an equitable distribution plan and take into consideration all factors that may impede the equitable distribution of slots. Activities are also coordinated with the State Board on Aging, Job Service and WIOA administrators. In all cases, additional slots will be allocated to underserved counties of the state. By the same token, any slot reductions will come from over-served counties of the state.

Minnesota does not have an imbalance of slots at this time. If an imbalance does occur, the state will negotiate with counties impacted by the imbalance and transfer slots from one to another to ensure the Equitable Distribution Table remains accurate.

- (4) *The State's long-term strategy for achieving an equitable distribution of SCSEP positions within the State that:*
 - (A) *Moves positions from over-served to underserved locations within the State in compliance with 20 CFR 641.365.*
 - (B) *Equitably serves rural and urban areas.*
 - (C) *Serves individuals afforded priority for service under 20 CFR 641.520. (20 CFR 641.302(a), 641.365, 641.520)*
 - (5) *The ratio of eligible individuals in each service area to the total eligible population in the State. (20 CFR 641.325(a))*
 - (6) *The relative distribution of eligible individuals who:*
 - (A) *Reside in urban and rural areas within the State*
 - (B) *Have the greatest economic need*
 - (C) *Are minorities*
 - (D) *Are limited English proficient.*
 - (E) *Have the greatest social need. (20 CFR 641.325(b))*
 - (7) *A description of the steps taken to avoid disruptions to the greatest extent possible, when positions are redistributed, as provided in 20 CFR 641.365; when new Census or other reliable data become available; or when there is over-enrollment for any other reason. (20 CFR 641.325(i), 641.302(b))*
- (d) *SCSEP Operations*
- (1) *Administrative: describe the organizational structure of the project and how subprojects will be managed, including:*
 - (A) *identification of the key staff, including the primary responsibilities and the amount of time assigned to the SCSEP grant;*
 - (B) *Include an organization chart depicting any subgrantees or local affiliates implementing the grant. Include a table with authorized positions for each subgrantee or affiliate, if applicable;*
 - (C) *describe training that will be provided to local staff;*
 - (D) *describe how projects will be monitored for program and financial compliance, including audit plans; and*
 - (E) *describe how the State will manage its providers and how it will transfer participants if new providers are selected to serve in the State.*

Since DEED is subgranting program operations, the organizational structure of each project will be discussed individually with lines of authority following the organizational structure explanation of DEED, the grantor. Program management will be handled by the Workforce Development Division (WDD) of DEED. The WDD is responsible for:

- Recommending statewide employment and training policy
- Coordinating state and local employment and training programs
- Providing staff support to the GWDB
- Administering WIOA monies and other employment and training programs available to the Governor of Minnesota
- Initiating fund disbursement process including RFPs
- Making grant award recommendations
- Negotiating contracts
- Conducting program monitoring, assessment, and evaluation
- Interpreting policies

The director has overall responsibility for all activities within WDD. The responsibility for management and administration of SCSEP will be assigned to one Section within WDD. The following information describes the function of each Section, specific staff assigned to the program, percentage of time each staff position is assigned to the program, and a description of staff responsibilities and qualifications:

- WIOA programs, responsible for planning and program development for all WIOA grants
- (which includes SCSEP and WIOA) and for providing staff support to the GWDB
- WDD and Fiscal Services, responsible for preparing all grant applications and all
- sub-grants entered into by processing all subgrantee invoices and coordinating audits
- Program specialist, responsible for coordinating all SCSEP program activities and ensuring that all WDD staff assigned to the program receives appropriate training in SCSEP program operations, rules, and regulations

SUBPROJECT MANAGEMENT

As previously indicated, all current subgrantees' programs will be continued. The rationale for continuing all current subgrantees is based upon subgrantee performance and conformance with the equitable distribution plan. The subprojects to be utilized under this contract are as follows:

- Anoka County (governmental unit)
- Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency (private, nonprofit corporation)
- Duluth, City of (a municipal corporation, unit of government)
- Experience Works (private, nonprofit corporation)
- Inter County Community Council (nonprofit corporation)
- Minnesota Chippewa Tribe (Tribal unit of government)
- Minnesota Valley Action Council, Inc. (nonprofit corporation)
- Rural Minnesota CEP, Inc. (nonprofit corporation)
- Scott County (governmental unit)
- Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council, Inc. (private, nonprofit corporation)
- Washington County (governmental unit)

Each of these organizations has a proven record for providing both employment and training services and the needed fiscal and management accountability.

TRAINING OF SUBPROJECT (LOCAL) STAFF

The following methods will be used to provide training for subgrantee staff and will be the responsibility of the program specialist:

- At least once each year, the program specialist or field representative may meet with all subgrantees to review Title V program operations, highlight effective elements of the various programs, discuss common concerns, and answer programmatic questions. Subgrantees will have input in developing the agenda for these meetings.
- As a part of regular monitoring visits, the program monitor will identify individual training and technical assistance needs and communicate these needs to the program specialist who will be responsible for assuring that appropriate training and technical assistance needs are met. For example, if a subgrantee has a new staff person working on the Title V program, the program specialist would provide that person with individual training regarding eligibility determination, program operations and related topics.
- During the course of the year, many training opportunities and seminars are offered by various organizations that are relevant for SCSEP subgrantees. For example, the WDD provides staff training in employment and training-related activities such as outreach and recruitment, job development techniques, counseling, and disadvantaged and financial management. While these are primarily for WIOA staff, SCSEP program operators are invited to attend. Another

example is the various training opportunities sponsored by the State Board on Aging and other Title V national sponsors.

As these training opportunities become available, subgrantees are notified and encouraged to attend.

PROJECT MONITORING

Monitoring and evaluation involves the following procedures and will be the responsibility of staff indicated below:

- **Desk Monitoring/Technical Assistance:** Technical assistance regarding delays, problems and adversities which may materially affect the sub-grant project directors in obtaining their proposed goals will be provided via telephone, particularly during the start-up phase. Phone calls will continue periodically throughout the grant year to ensure the projects are progressing smoothly; invoices indicate balanced expenditures; and required regulations are met, as well as to answer any program-related questions which may develop.
- **Onsite Monitoring:** A monitoring review guide has been designed to assist WDD monitors in its planned onsite visits. General subcontractors and/or host agency areas to be monitored include program operations worksites and worksite records to ensure required on-the-job supervision is in fact being provided, application operations, complaints, orientation operations, and other proposed and necessary operations.

Upon completion of onsite visits, a monitoring report is written addressing all program operations with a corrective action Section if applicable. This Section will list all program discrepancies which must be alleviated, the time period by which corrections must be made, and a directive requesting the affected program sponsors to submit to WDD, in writing, the means they intend to employ in amending the cited problems. If any corrective action is required and noted in a monitoring report, a 30-day onsite follow-up with the program operator may be conducted to determine what steps have been taken to alleviate the problem. All monitoring reports, corrective action requests and follow-up will be made in writing and will be included in the permanent file for each subgrantee.

FINANCIAL MONITORING

- **Desk Monitoring:** Subgrantees are required to submit invoices at least monthly which identify both actual expenditures and accrual estimates for the invoicing period. The program specialist, field representative and contracts officer receive a copy of the monthly invoices for review. In addition to reviewing the invoices for accuracy, the actual rate of expenditures will be compared with planned expenditures for each subgrantee. If a subgrantee is found to be over expended or under expended by more than 15 percent, the program specialist will follow-up with the subgrantee to determine the reason for the variance and to recommend corrective action, if necessary.
- **Onsite Monitoring:** As a part of regular monitoring visits by the program monitor, each subgrantee's financial management system, including the system for internal controls, will be reviewed. A fiscal monitoring review guide is used as a basis for monitoring subgrantee financial management systems. Financial monitoring will include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - Trace amounts claimed on monthly invoices back to books of original entry and source of documentation to ensure that there is an adequate audit trail
 - Ensure that sources of documentation are complete and accurate

- Ensure that costs are being assigned to proper cost categories, allowable, and accrued properly
- Ensure that adequate internal controls have been established

If any problems are disclosed as a result of monitoring subgrantee financial management systems, corrective action will be cited in the monitoring report that will include a description of discrepancies that must be alleviated, the time period by which corrections must be made and the requirement that the subgrantee submit to WDD, in writing, the way in which the problems will be resolved. Both Minnesota's Office of the Legislative Auditor and DEED have staff available to more closely investigate financial management systems and provide technical assistance to subgrantees to correct problems. When necessary, onsite follow-up will be conducted to ensure that financial problems have been resolved.

If a SCSEP provider desires additional state slots, new state slots, or to renegotiate the number of state slots, a Request for Proposal (RFP) process may need to happen to judge the process fairly.

(2) Recruitment: describe how grantee will recruit and select of participants will be achieved. The eligibility of participants is described under 20 CFR 641.500 and 641.525.

DEED subcontracts with 11 agencies, including three national SCSEP sponsors and WIOA program deliverers, to ensure equitable program coverage statewide. Because of the range of providers, local programs may vary in design while adhering to program requirements.

All current subgrantees employ outreach staff who assist in locating individuals most-in-need of services available through SCSEP and in identifying minority participants eligible for the program. In addition, referrals are expected to introduce many prospective participants to the program. Referral sources, which may include county welfare departments, WorkForce Centers, senior citizen centers and groups, area agencies on aging, and other community-based organizations, have been developed and will be continued through staff contact. Recruitment efforts include those of Hennepin County under the direction of Experience Works, Inc. and the Minnesota Band of Chippewa, both of whom are program subgrantees who work in areas having the highest percentage of American Indians and African Americans. They have considerable experience in recruiting and providing services to low-income individuals, and their participation ensures inclusion of both cultural communities. Priorities for selection will be:

- Veterans and qualified spouses who meet the special consideration criteria
- Individuals with the greatest economic need
- Individuals who are 60-years of age or older
- Individuals who are limited English-speaking, minority, and American Indian
- Individuals who seek re-enrollment following termination of employment because of illness, or engaging in unsubsidized employment, providing that re-enrollment is sought within one-year of termination

Within all enrollment priorities, those with poor employment prospects will be given preference. All subgrant program operators will be instructed to ensure program services for eligible individuals with the greatest economic need and those with poor employment prospects. Program operators will be monitored to ensure participation by individuals identified as having poor employment prospects and the greatest economic need.

3. *Income Eligibility: describe how participant income will be recertified each year, including where eligibility records will be maintained.*

All enrollees will be recertified annually to determine income and place of residence. Subgrantees have the discretion of recertifying eligibility either at the beginning of each program year or on the enrollee's anniversary date. Subgrantees are required to indicate which method will be used in their annual sub-grant application. Recertification forms will be signed by the enrollee and examined by the subgrantee staff as well as randomly sampled by the state to verify accuracy and eligibility.

When an enrollee is found to be ineligible for continued participation, an immediate written notice explaining the reason for termination will be provided and the enrollee will be given 30 days to terminate from the program. Efforts will be made to assist dis-enrolled participants in obtaining other employment prior to their termination from the program. All participant documentation will be maintained at the subgrantee agency.

4. *Orientation: describe the orientation procedures for:*
(A) *Participants*
(B) *Host Agencies*

Because of the number and diversity of subgrantee program operators and customer needs, the state allows a variety of individual and group orientations. Regardless of whether the orientation approach is individual or group, subgrantees use these sessions to convey much needed work and customer-related information to participants. Work-related information includes available opportunities, work assignments and information on the many training programs available. Work-related information is provided to the host agency as well as the enrollee.

The orientation also includes information on the responsibilities, rights, and privileges of enrollees and worksites; i.e., job duties, work rules, safety rules, payroll procedures, rates of pay, hours of work, fringe benefits, grievance procedures, nonfederal status of enrollees, and permissible political activities. In addition to the work-related and program-specific topics, orientation sessions may provide information on nutrition, education, health and welfare program assistance, shopping assistance, renting, transportation, and budgeting.

[Experience Works Host Agency Orientation Record](#)

5. *Duration Limits: describe any policy for maximum duration of enrollment or maximum time in community service and provide a copy of the current Duration Limit policy.*

MAXIMUM DURATION OF PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

Each and ALL participants at orientation are informed of their assignment limitations frequently through the grant year, during orientation, at quarterly meetings, and during host agency monitoring and is informed of the history and purpose of the program, given updated policies and procedures, informed of their roles and expectations and develop their IEP. Every participant is informed that their assignment is not considered a permanent job, but that they are in training to achieve their goals outlined in their IEP and that the training will follow their IEP and enrollment will be reviewed continuously. Since a participant legally can be on the program for up to 48 month, they will be informed of their options. As stated before, In reviewing budgets, slot reductions, discussions with the majority of SCSEP subgrantees, and other situations that has arisen in term so the 48 month waiver, a decisions has been made that

Minnesota has reconsidered the 48 month durational limit and has chosen to "NOT APPROVE" a participant beyond the 48 month durational limit, and has chosen not to allow waivers beyond the 48 months starting July 1, 2011.

In the event an enrollee is unable to transition into unsubsidized employment before the durational limit, the Subgrantee and Host Agency will take steps such as, an 'enrollee action plan' to identify barriers and overall employability. This plan will aid in determining the enrollees potential and likelihood of obtaining unsubsidized employment. It will also aid in the decision to either end enrollment due to un-employability or if a waiver can be signed until unsubsidized employment is achieved. DEED opts to follow the 48 month maximum duration on enrollment that the Department of Labor has set as the National Durational Limit to 48 months lifetime durational limit.

6. *Assessments: describe the procedures for assessing job aptitudes, job readiness, and job preferences of participants and their potential to transition into unsubsidized employment. Also describe how the assessment will be used to develop the participant's Individual Employment Plan (IEP).*

Assessment of support service needs, job aptitudes, job readiness and job preference of the enrollee is made by the subgrantee following initial eligibility determination. This assessment is done through interviews, review of the enrollee's work history, work skills and talents, training, physical examination results, and administration of special testing when appropriate. The assessment is reviewed and signed by the applicant and the project staff member who conducted the assessment.

Assessments focus on the stated needs and preferences of the participant. Subgrantees attempt to use a customer-centered approach to providing services; the participant is viewed as the most appropriate source of information helping the participant help himself. Worksite placement and follow-up meetings with counselors provide insight to the suitability and desirability of the placement, as well as possible alternatives, training opportunities, and unsubsidized job placements.

Subgrantees are required to complete individual employment plans (IEP) for each enrollee upon initial enrollment into the program. Subgrantees will update and record this assessment information and evaluate the participant's potential for transition into private unsubsidized employment at least annually.

The IEP is based on the initial assessment and subsequent reassessments. The goals developed include employment, training needs, community service assignments and quality of life and participant aspirations. The IEP is developed in partnership with the enrollee and contains the signatures of both the enrollee and counselor. Action steps towards achieving program goals are identified along with the approximate timeframe for undertaking and completing the action steps. The IEP must reflect the enrollee's support service needs as identified in the assessment. The reassessment should be a continuous process; however, it must be completed at least twice within 12-months. It may be prepared when the eligibility recertification is done and should include consideration of previous assessment findings.

7. *Community Service Assignments: describe how the participant will be assigned to community service including:*
 - (A) *the types of community service activity that will be emphasized and how they were chosen; methods used to match participants with community service training;*
 - (B) *the extent to which participants will be placed in the administration of the project itself;*
 - (C) *the types of host agencies used and the procedures and criteria for selecting the assignments;*
 - (D) *the average number of hours in a participant's training week;*
 - (E) *the fringe benefits offered (if any); and*

(F) procedures for ensuring adequate supervision.

Subgrantee staff possess a great deal of experience in developing public and private nonprofit worksites which could be seen as possible placement locations for SCSEP participants. Positions developed by staff will be related as closely as possible to the results of the individual assessment of the participants' abilities and preferences. In developing subsidized employment positions, priority will be given to those jobs that directly serve other seniors. Concern will be given to developing positions in geographic proximity to the participants' residence which can provide a meaningful and worthwhile experience. Staff will be mindful that adequate supervision and safe and healthful conditions exist at the site before participants are placed there. Subgrantees are required to visit each worksite on a regular basis. One of the purposes of these regular visits is to ensure that enrollees are receiving adequate supervision. Additional monitoring will be done by DEED to make certain that proper and adequate worksite supervision is being provided, particularly where it is an in-kind match.

Examples of places that may be contacted by staff in the development of worksites are schools, city and village offices, senior citizen sites, nutrition and transportation programs, foster grandparents, senior companions, chore service, weatherization/energy crews, county garages, state parks, the U.S. Forest Service, state and federal lands and forestry stations, nursing homes and a multitude of other federal, state, and local public and private nonprofit agencies and organizations.

Examples of subsidized job positions which could be developed at these locations are as follows: case aide; educational aide; occupational therapy aide; recreation club manager; recreation leader; health services aide; kitchen helper; laundry laborer; child care attendant; outreach worker; recreation facility attendant; municipal utilities worker; bus driver; laboratory sample assistant; library aide; clerical aide; file clerk; clerk-typist; forest conservation aide; groundskeeper; maintenance carpenter; insulation/weatherization worker; road maintenance worker; and building maintenance worker.

A number of program operators utilize enrollees in the administration of the SCSEP. Examples from past program years include: clerical aids, bookkeepers, counseling assistants and administrative positions in SCSEP programs. If eligible applicants with adequate background or interest can be found and trained, they will be used to fill administrative positions within the program. These administrative positions are used as worksites only when applicants indicate an interest in the type of work, since the subgrantees are required to develop slots which provide employment in relation with enrollees' work experience and personal interest.

Enrollees will work an average of 20 hours per week and will receive at least the current minimum wage. All subgrantees will use the enrollee's anniversary date on the program as the annual time period when tabulating the total hours an enrollee works. All enrollees will be covered by workers' compensation (WC), FICA, and general liability insurance. In addition, some subgrantees will provide limited fringe benefits to enrollees based upon established personnel policies of the subgrantee agency. These fringe benefits may include: annual leave, sick leave, holidays, health insurance, and when required by law, retirement benefits. The fringe benefits will be available to all enrollees within a subproject but required to be zeroed out at the end of each program year. Enrollees will not be covered by UI because Minnesota unemployment compensation laws exclude from coverage persons participating in any "...work training program financed in whole or in part by any federal agency..."

8. *Training: describe the training that will be provided during community service assignments and any other types of training provided, including linkages with local one-stop centers, and Registered Apprenticeship.*

Enrollees placed in subsidized jobs will receive the majority of their training at the worksite. The teaching of job skills through demonstration, practice and instruction will seek to sharpen skills not recently used and to upgrade these skills. The acquisition of new skills will also differentially take place at worksites. Work supervisors and other regular workstation personnel familiar with tools, equipment, duties, procedures for task accomplishment, and requirements of the site will be prevailed upon to provide the necessary training to participants at no cost to the program through the cooperation of the worksite supervisor.

Auxiliary training outside of the worksite may be sought from available community resources when needed. Worksites often send participants to workshops and seminars offered to other agency personnel which could benefit them in the performance of their duties and increase their employability and transition into unsubsidized employment at the site or to unsubsidized employment with another employer. Community education programs and community colleges may also be utilized as appropriate to provide the needed training which can improve their skill levels, enhance existing skills or offer new skills. For example, training of an extra-vocational nature may be offered, including time management, effective communication, learning job seeking skills, interviewing techniques and job application procedures. Some of these may be offered through workshops provided by career development specialists, where available, and some may be taught individually by the counselors to specific enrollees as the need is assessed. The training may be a continuing process enabling the enrollee to obtain new employment possibilities. As stated previously, the training needs of enrollees will be assessed twice in twelve months.

Enrollees will be paid at their established wage rate to participate in training for the purpose of acquiring or improving skills to be used in a job assignment. Paid training does not have restrictions on training hours for an individual enrollee during a project year, and will be developed in conjunction with the participants' assessment and IEP. SCSEP maximizes services by co-enrolling in WIOA programs, dislocated worker programs, and apprenticeship programs if a person needs services beyond what the older worker program can offer.

9. *Supportive Services: describe the supportive services that will be offered to help participants obtain and retain an unsubsidized job, including transportation assistance (if applicable).*

Regular supportive services will include at a minimum: information and referral services; job-related and personal counseling; and referral assistance when specific concerns are identified, such as to RS, SSB, SSA benefits, welfare benefits, and insurance. Career and psychological testing and interpretation services may be accessed through the WorkForce Centers, county social services department, area mental health agencies, and other local counseling services. Workshops in resume writing, interview techniques, assertiveness training and budget management may be coordinated with outreach staff, area colleges, technical colleges, YWCA, YMCA and adult community education programs in local school districts.

Where fees are necessary for participation by enrollees, the project may absorb the cost. The support services will be provided according to the individual's assessed needs and will be established by the counselor and participant during their regular meetings. Other services supportive of the participant will be provided on a purchase or reimbursement basis from local providers. Such things as work clothes, uniforms, shoes, boots, safety and protective apparel, and eyeglasses will be provided if they are not available from the worksite or from other resources in the area. Supportive services may also include

assistance under the headings of food, housing, legal, clothing and health and medical emergency assistance, when it is not available elsewhere at no-cost to the program.

10. *Termination: describe procedures for terminating a participant, including IEP terminations. Please provide a copy of the current termination procedures.*

If a program provider determines that a participant is no longer eligible for SCSEP, the provider must give the participant written notice of termination within 30 days. A participant may be terminated for refusal to accept a reasonable number of job referrals or job offers of unsubsidized employment. The job referrals and/or job offers should be consistent with the IEP. Individuals found ineligible or terminated must be referred to the WorkForce Center for job seeking assistance and provided with a notice of right to appeal the decision. The [termination policy for SCSEP](#) is located on DEED's website.

11. *Complaints & Grievances: describe the procedures for addressing and resolving participant complaints and grievances related to program termination. Please provide a copy of the current complaint/grievance policies.*

All SCSEP participants will be given a written statement as to their rights and responsibilities on the project. The written statement will be explained to the customers in easily understood terms during the orientation session. The statement will include an explanation of customer attendance requirements, etc., and the right to file a grievance following the subgrantees' normal grievance procedures. At intake, applicants, whether eligible or ineligible, may be provided a copy of a complaint process procedure. They are made aware of what the form means and are encouraged to use it if they feel they have been discriminated against or treated unfairly through any action of the program-affiliated staff. The [complaint policy for SCSEP](#) is located on DEED's website.

12. *Maximizing enrollment: describe procedures for fully enrolling all available slots, including over enrolling participants, and how over-enrollments will be balanced with equitable distribution requirements.*

Temporary enrollees will be utilized when it is determined that funds are available. The same procedures and priorities that are used with permanent enrollees will be used to select temporary enrollees. At the time of enrollment, applicants will be notified in writing of their temporary status, and their enrollment records will indicate they are temporary enrollees. A copy of the written notification will also be placed in the enrollee's file. If a permanent enrollment position becomes available, the temporary enrollee with the most seniority will then be given permanent status and notified of this action. As stated in the federal regulations, the number of temporary enrollees will not exceed 20 percent of authorized enrollment positions without a written waiver from DOL. If temporary enrollees must be terminated, every effort will be made to assist these individuals in obtaining other employment.

13. *Performance: include a proposed level for each performance measure for each of the program years covered by the plan. While the plan is under review, the State will negotiate with the Employment and Training Administration to set the appropriate levels for the next year. The State may also negotiate performance levels in a subsequent modification. At a minimum, States must identify the performance indicators required under the SCSEP Final Rule published on September 1, 2010, and, for each indicator, the State must develop an objective and quantifiable performance goal for the next year. The performance measures include:*
- (A) *entered employment,*
 - (B) *employment retention,*
 - (C) *average earnings,*
 - (D) *service level,*
 - (E) *service to most-in-need, and*
 - (F) *community service*

Performance Measures have been negotiated for the upcoming program year. The following is a list of the levels for PY15-16:

Community Service:	75 percent
Service Level:	157.6 percent
Entered Employment:	54.3 percent
Retention Rate:	70.7 percent
Most-in-Need:	2.67 percent
Average Earnings:	\$7,317

Negotiations for performance levels for PY16/17 will take place during June or July 2017. The measures below reflect "proposed" performance measures PY15/16.

MINNESOTA SCSEP PERFORMANCE MEASURES FOR PY15-16

For PY15, Minnesota will be held accountable for collecting information on seven performance measures mandated by the Older Americans Act (OAA) Amendments and the implementing regulations. These are:

- Entered Employment
- Service Level
- Service to Most-in-Need
- Community Service Provided
- Employment Retention
- Average Earnings
- Customer Satisfaction for Employers, Participants, and Host Agencies

PLACEMENT RATE

The placement rate will be calculated by dividing the number of SCSEP participants placed in unsubsidized employment by the number of each grantee's authorized community service positions. Consistent with the OAA amendments, placement may be in either full or part-time employment. A placement requires 30 days of employment, not necessarily continuous, with one or more employers within the first 90 days of exit. Each day that a participant is on the payroll of an employer counts towards the 30-day requirement, regardless of whether the participant actually performs services on that day. Thus a participant who exits SCSEP for unsubsidized employment on September 1 and remains employed with the same employer through September 30 has achieved a placement. Beginning in PY04, Section 513(a)(2)(C) of the OAA requires the ETA to establish a formal performance measure of *not less than 20 percent* placement. Minnesota has an unsubsidized placement goal of 54.3 percent. (State is at 54.3 percent and national is at 45.0 percent).

SERVICE LEVEL

The service level is defined as the number of a grantee's participants divided by the number of the grantee's authorized positions. Minnesota will maintain the current program requirement for state and national grantees to serve a total number of eligible individuals that is at least 140 percent of the number of authorized community service positions this is comparable to the Government Performance and Results Act goal for the program.

The Minnesota goal is 157.6 percent.

SERVICE TO MOST-IN-NEED

Persons who are "most-in-need" are defined in OAA Section 641.710 as those who:

- Have an income level at or below the poverty line (OAA sec. 101(27))
- Have physical and mental disabilities; language barriers; and cultural, social, or geographical isolation, including isolation caused by racial or ethnic status that restricts the ability of the individual to perform normal daily tasks, or threatens the capacity of the individual to live independently (OAA sec. 101(28))
- Have poor employment history or prospects
- Are over the age of 60

The service to most-in-need will reflect the percentage of total participants who are at least 60-years old and who meet at least one additional criterion from the following: an income at or below the poverty level; physical or mental disabilities; language barriers (LEP or literacy); cultural, social, or geographical isolation; poor employment history or prospects (for example, displaced homemakers); or other social barriers.

For PY15-16, the Minnesota target for serving those most-in-need is 2.67 percent of all new participants as of July 1, 2015.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

In addition to the goal of placement in unsubsidized employment, an equally important goal of the Title V program is to benefit communities through community service assignments. The community service measure provides a tracking method with respect to accomplishments in meeting the community benefit goal. The goal is defined as the total number of community service hours worked by all participants compared to the grantee's community service goal expressed in hours.

For PY15, the Minnesota target for community service hours is 156,123. (Approximately, 740 hours per authorized position. There are 211 authorized positions.)

RETENTION RATE

Section 513(b)(3) of the OAA Amendments requires performance indicators to include "placement into and retention in unsubsidized public or private employment." The OAA Amendments define "retention in public or private unsubsidized employment" in Section 513(c)(2)(B) as: "full- or part-time paid employment in the public or private sector by an enrollee under this title for 6 months after the starting date of placement into unsubsidized employment without the use of funds under this title or any other federal or state employment subsidy program." The goal is to measure retention at six months by determining which participants who have been placed into unsubsidized employment are employed by any employer on the 180th day after first starting unsubsidized employment with any employer.

The Minnesota goal for retention is 70.7 percent of the qualified placements will be employed at 180 days.

Average Earnings: Of those participants who are employed in the first, second, and third quarters after the quarter of program exit, total earnings in the second and third quarters after the exit quarter, divided by the number of exiters during the period.

The Minnesota goal for average earnings is \$7,317 percent of the qualified placements will be employed at 180 days and have increased earnings.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION FOR EMPLOYERS, PARTICIPANTS AND HOST AGENCIES

Section 513(b)(4) of the OAA Amendments states that indicators of SCSEP performance must include satisfaction of the participants, employers, and host agencies with their experience with SCSEP. For the employer customer satisfaction survey, the goal is to have subgrantees deliver a survey form to every employer at a mandatory follow-up interview within 90 days after a placement. Subgrantees will be responsible for distributing written survey instruments.

Beginning in PY04, customer satisfaction for all three groups will be surveyed using the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI). The ACSI will allow SCSEP to look at its own performance and also to benchmark its performance against other entities within and outside of the employment and training system. The ACSI is useful in tracking change over time, making it an ideal way to gauge progress in continuously improving performance, one of the essential tenets of the OAA Amendments. The survey uses a set of three required questions. The responses to these questions are then used to form a customer satisfaction index. The questions are:

- Using a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 means Very Dissatisfied and 10 means Very Satisfied what is your overall satisfaction with the services provided by (staff insert response here)?
- Considering all of the expectations you may have had about the services, to what extent have the services met your expectations? 1 now means Falls Short of Your Expectations and 10 means Exceeds Your Expectations.
- Now think of the ideal program for people in your circumstances. How well do you think the services you received compare with the ideal set of services? 1 now means Not Very Close to the Ideal and 10 means Very Close to the Ideal.

The ACSI score is obtained by combining scores from these three specific questions that address different dimensions of customers' experiences. In order for the ACSI survey to yield meaningful results under the prescribed methodology, the survey questions cannot be modified in any significant way. Only the ACSI score will be used to determine a grantee's performance on this measure.

Minnesota will be expected to have a combined rating of 87 percent satisfaction with the SCSEP services provided to participants, employers and host agencies.

SETTING PERFORMANCE LEVELS AND MAKING ADJUSTMENTS

Performance levels (or standards) for the first six performance measures will be set on July 1, 2017, for every state grantee and national grantee organization. DEED's plan is to base the performance levels for each of these indicators on data to be collected by the SCSEP Performance and Results QPR system (SPARQ) in PY15/16.

14. Administrative Costs: describe any request for an increase in administrative costs consistent with Section 502(c)(3) of the Older Americans Act.

There have been no requests for an increase in administrative costs consistent with Section 502(c)(3).

ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:

- 1. Where SCSEP is included in the Combined Workforce Plan, the State established a written policy and procedure to obtain advice and recommendations on the State Plan from representatives of the State and area agencies on aging; State and local boards under WIOA; public and private nonprofit agencies and organizations providing employment services, including each grantee operating a SCSEP project within the State, except as provided under Section 506(a)(3) of OAA and 20 CFR 641.320(b); Social service organizations providing services to older individuals; Grantees under Title III of OAA, Affected Communities, Unemployed older individuals, Community-based organizations serving older individuals; business organizations; and labor organizations.*

PROGRAMMATIC ASSURANCES FOR PY15 FUNDS

You must certify that you will conform to these assurances throughout the period of the grant by checking each of the assurances below. These assurances apply fully to any sub-recipient, local project, or grantee staff involved in the delivery of services.

You agree to:

Recruitment and Selection of Participants

- Develop and implement methods to recruit and select eligible participants to assure maximum participation in the program.
- Use income definitions and income inclusions and exclusions for SCSEP eligibility, as described in [TEGL No. 12-06](#), to determine and document participant eligibility.
- Develop and implement methods to recruit minority populations to ensure at least proportional representation in your assigned service area.
- Develop and implement strategies to recruit applicants who have priority of service as defined in OAA Section 518(b) (1)-(2) and by the Jobs for Veterans Act (JVA). Individuals with priority include those who:
 - Are covered persons in accordance with the JVA (covered persons who are SCSEP-eligible must receive services instead of or before non-covered persons);
 - Are 65 years or older;
 - Have a disability;
 - Have limited English proficiency;
 - Have low literacy skills;
 - Reside in a rural area;
 - Have low employment prospects;
 - Have failed to find employment after utilizing services provided through the one-stop Delivery System;
 - Are homeless or are at risk for homelessness.

Assessment

- Assess participants at least twice per 12-month period.
- Use assessment information to determine the most appropriate community service assignments (CSAs) for participants.

Individual Employment Plan (IEP)

- Establish an initial goal of unsubsidized employment for all participants.
- Update the IEP at least as frequently as assessments occur (twice per 12-month period).

- Modify the IEP as necessary to reflect other approaches to self-sufficiency, if it becomes clear that unsubsidized employment is not feasible.
- For participants who will reach the individual durational limit or would not otherwise achieve unsubsidized employment, include a provision in the IEP to transition to other services.
- Rotate participants to a new host agency (or a different assignment within the host agency) based on a rotation policy approved by DOL in the grant agreement and only when an individualized determination determines that the rotation is in the best interest of the participant. Such rotation must further the acquisition of skills listed in the IEP.

Community Service Assignment (CSA)

- Base the initial CSA on the assessment done at enrollment.
- Select only designated 501(c)(3) organizations or public agencies as host agencies.
- Put in place procedures to ensure adequate supervision of participants at host agencies.
- Ensure safe and healthy working conditions at CSA through annual monitoring.

Recertification of Participants

- Recertify the income eligibility of each participant at least once every 12 months, or more frequently if circumstances warrant.

Physical Examinations

- Offer physical examinations to participants upon program entry, and each year thereafter, as a benefit of enrollment.
- Obtain a written waiver from each participant who declines a physical examination.
- Not obtain a copy or use the results of the physical examination to establish eligibility or for any other purpose.

Host Agencies

- Develop and implement methods for recruiting new host agencies to provide a variety of training options that enable participants to increase their skill level and transition to unsubsidized employment.
- Maintenance of Effort*: Ensure that CSAs do not reduce the number of employment opportunities or vacancies that would otherwise be available to individuals who are not SCSEP participants. You must specifically ensure that CSAs do not:
 - Displace currently-employed workers (including partial displacement, such as a reduction in non-overtime work, wages, or employment benefits).
 - Impair existing contracts or result in the substitution of Federal funds for other funds in connection with work that would otherwise be performed.
 - Assign or continue to assign a participant to perform the same work, or substantially the same work, as that performed by an individual who is on layoff.

Orientation

- Provide orientations for its participants and host agencies, including information on:
 - Project goals and objectives
 - Participant rights and responsibilities
 - CSAs
 - Training opportunities
 - Available supportive services

- Availability of free physical examinations
- Host agencies

Local staff must address the topics listed above and provide sufficient orientation to applicants and participants on:

- SCSEP goals and objectives
- Grantee and local project roles, policies, and procedures
- Documentation requirements
- Holiday and sick leave
- Assessment process
- Development and implementation of IEPs
- Evaluation of participant progress
- Health and safety issues related to each participant's assignment
- Role of supervisors and host agencies
- Maximum individual duration policy, including the possibility of a waiver, if applicable
- Termination policy
- Grievance procedure

Wages

Provide participants with the highest applicable required wage (highest of Federal, state, or local minimum wage) for time spent in orientation, training, and community service assignments.

Participant Benefits

- Provide workers' compensation and other benefits required by state or Federal law (such as unemployment insurance), and the costs of physical examinations.
- Establish written policies relating to compensation for scheduled work hours during which the participant's host agency is closed for Federal holidays.
- Establish written policies relating to approved breaks in participation and any necessary sick leave that is not part of an accumulated sick leave program.
- Not use grant funds to pay the cost of pension benefits, annual leave, accumulated sick leave, or bonuses.

Procedures for Payroll and Workers' Compensation

- Make all required payments for participant payroll and pay workers' compensation premiums on a timely basis.
- Ensure that host agencies do not pay workers' compensation costs for participants.

Durational Limits

Maximum Average Project Duration – 27 Months

Maintain average project duration of 27 months or less, unless ETA approves an extension to 36 months.

Maximum Individual Participant Duration – 48 Months

Allow participants to participate in the program no longer than 48 months (whether or not consecutively), unless your approved policy allows for an extension and the participant meets extension criteria.

- Notify participants of your policy pertaining to the maximum duration requirement, including the possibility of an extension if applicable, at the time of enrollment and each year thereafter, and whenever ETA has approved a change of policy.
- Provide 30-day written notice to participants prior to durational limit exit from the program.

Transition Services

- Develop a system to transition participants to unsubsidized employment or other assistance before each participant's maximum enrollment duration has expired.

Termination Policies

- Provide a 30-day written notice for all terminations that states the reason for termination and informs the participants of grievance procedures and right to appeal.
- Maintain written termination policies in effect and provide to participants at enrollment for:
 - Provision of false eligibility information by the participant
 - Incorrect initial eligibility determination at enrollment
 - Income ineligibility determined at recertification
 - Participant has reached individual durational limit
 - Participant has become employed while enrolled
 - IEP-related termination
 - Cause (must be approved by the ETA prior to implementation)

Equitable Distribution

- Comply with the equitable distribution (ED) plan for each state in which grantee operates and only make changes in the location of authorized positions within a state in accordance with the state ED plan and with prior ETA approval.
- Comply with the authorized position allocations/ED listed on the [SCSEPED website](#).
- Collaborate with all grantees authorized to serve in your state to achieve compliance with authorized positions while minimizing disruption to the participants.

Over-Enrollment

- Manage over-enrollment to minimize impact on participants and avoid layoffs.

Administrative Systems

- Ensure representation at all ETA-sponsored required grantee meetings.
- Communicate grant policy, data collection, and performance developments and directives to staff, sub-recipients, and local project operators on a regular basis.
- Develop a written monitoring tool that lists items you will review during monitoring visits, and provides this tool to sub-recipients and local project operators.
- Develop an annual monitoring schedule, unless the FPO approves a different standard; notify sub-recipients and local project operators of monitoring plans; and monitor sub-recipients and local project operators on a regular basis.
- Develop and provide training to increase sub-recipients' and local project operators' skills, knowledge, and abilities.
- When appropriate, prescribe corrective action and follow-up procedures for sub-recipients and local project operators to ensure that identified problems are remedied.
- Monitor the financial systems and expenditures, including sub-recipients and local project operators on a regular basis to ensure compliance with cost allocations as specified in the regulations.

- Ensure that sub-recipients and local project operators receive adequate resources to effectively operate local projects.
- Train sub-recipients and local project operators on SCSEP financial requirements to help them effectively manage their own expenditures, and provide general financial training as needed.
- Ensure that all financial reports are accurate and submit them in a timely manner, as required.
- Ensure full implementation and monitoring of requirements for customer satisfaction surveys, including participant, host agency and employer surveys.
- Develop a written plan for both disaster response and recovery so that SCSEP may continue to operate and provide services under emergency circumstances.

Collaboration and Leveraged Resources

- Collaborate with other organizations to maximize opportunities for participants to obtain workforce development, education, and supportive services to help them move into unsubsidized employment. These organizations may include but are not limited to: workforce development boards, American Job Centers (WorkForce Centers), vocational rehabilitation providers, disability networks, basic education and literacy providers, and community colleges.

Supportive Services

- Provide supportive services, as needed, to help participants participate in their community service assignment and to obtain and retain unsubsidized employment.
- Establish criteria to assess the need for supportive services and to determine when participants will receive supportive services, including after obtaining unsubsidized employment.

Sub-Recipient Selection (If Applicable)

- In selecting sub-recipients in areas with a substantial population of individuals with barriers to employment, national grantees should give special consideration to organizations with demonstrated expertise in serving individuals with barriers to employment (including former recipients of national grants), as defined in the statute.

Complaint Resolution

- Establish and use written grievance procedures for complaint resolution for applicants, employees, sub-recipients, and participants.
- Provide applicants, employees, sub-recipients, and participants with a copy of the grievance policy and procedures.

Maintenance of Files and Privacy Information

- Maintain participant files for three program years after the program year in which the participant received his/her final follow-up activity.
- Ensure that all participant records are securely stored by grantee or sub-recipient and access is limited to appropriate staff in order to safeguard personal identifying information.
- Ensure that all participant medical records are securely stored separately by grantee or sub-recipient from all other participant records and access is limited to authorized staff for authorized purposes.
- Establish safeguards to preclude tampering with electronic media, *e.g.*, personal identification numbers (PINs) and SPARQ logins.
- Ensure that the ETA/SCSEP national office is immediately notified by grantee in the event of any potential security breach of personal identifying information, whether electronic files, paper files, or equipment are involved.

- Comply with and ensure that authorized users under its grant comply with all SPARQ access and security rules.

Documentation

- Maintain documentation of waivers of physical examinations by participant.
- Maintain documentation of the provision of complaint procedures to participants.
- Maintain documentation of eligibility determinations and recertifications.
- Maintain documentations of terminations and reasons for termination.
- Maintain records of grievances and outcomes.
- Maintain records required for data validation.
- Maintain documentation of monitoring reports for sub-recipients and host agencies.

Data Collection and Reporting

- Ensure the collection and reporting of all SCSEP required data according to specified time schedules.
- Ensure the use of the OMB-approved SCSEP data collection forms and the SCSEP Internet data collection and evaluation system, SPARQ.
- Ensure at the grantee or sub-recipient level that those capturing and recording data are familiar with the latest instructions for data collection, including ETA administrative issuances, e.g., TEGLs, Data Collection and Data Validation Handbooks, and the Older Worker Community of Practice.
- Ensure data are entered directly into the WDCS/SPARQ.
- Legally obligate sub-recipients to turn over complete data files in the specified electronic format, as well as hard copy case files, to the grantee when sub-recipients cease to administer SCSEP.
- Legally obligate new sub-recipients to enter complete data related to any participants whom they acquire upon becoming sub-recipients, including any participants who are still in the follow-up period.

If any box is not checked, the grantee must provide information on a separate attachment indicating what specific steps the grantee is taking to conform to those standard grant requirement(s).

By checking the boxes above, I certify that my organization will comply with each of the listed requirements and will remain in compliance for the program year for which we are submitting this application.

Signature of Authorized Representative

Date