# VR Portion of WIOA State Plan for the Commonwealth of Kentucky FY-2020

### Program-Specific Requirements for Vocational Rehabilitation

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or 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:  
   
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\* Sec. 102(b)(D)(iii) of WIOA

#### a. Input of State Rehabilitation Council

All agencies, except for those that are independent consumer-controlled commissions, must describe the following:

##### 1. input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council, including input and recommendations on the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, recommendations from the Council's report, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction, and other Council reports that may have been developed as part of the Council’s functions;

The agency’s State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is established under the Kentucky Revised Statutes 163.470 and meet the requirements of 34 CFR 361.29. The SRC is a valued partner with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation participating in the administration of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The SRC meets quarterly to review policies, program information, and other pertinent issues.

On October 1, 2018, Kentucky integrated into a single vocational rehabilitation program the following programs that are operated under the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.SC. Sections 720 through 7510: (1) The Vocational Rehabilitation program for individuals with visual impairments; and (2) the vocational rehabilitation program for other individuals with disabilities. The Kentucky Office for the Blind and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation abolished and consolidated their respective State Rehabilitation Councils under the combined agency. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) meets the requirements under the Kentucky Revised Statutes 163.470 and 34 CFR. 361.29. This required the agency to submit candidate recommendations to fill vacant council positions for the newly established council to the governor’s office for appointment. In August of 2019, the Governor signed the executive order establishing the newly formed Council. The executive order came later than expected and as a result the Council was only able to hold one quarterly meeting for the period of October 1, 2018 through September 31, 2019. The Council is committed to holding four quarterly meetings in 2020 in compliance with the federal regulations.

As a part of the agency’s commitment, OVR will provide funding support for the SRC to be used in reimbursement of expenses to council members, publication of the Annual Report, and conducting the Consumer Satisfaction Survey through the University of Kentucky. OVR will work with the SRC to make every effort to seek input for needed improvements and recommendations. This will occur through formal and informal communication, as well as the committee work of the members. OVR will work in partnership with the SRC in ensuring that individuals served receive the needed services and supports to gain independence through employment and increased skill acquisition.

**Summary of Input of the State Rehabilitation Council**

The newly formed Council held its first meeting on August 12-13th 2019 with a full quorum in attendance. OVR held a half day orientation for the newly formed Council on day one that included an overview of vocational rehabilitation field services, Blind Services, committee description and selection, travel reimbursement and Robert’s Rules of Orders.

On the second day the full council met. The SRC reviewed and approved the bylaws with the caveat that the amendment clauses would be discussed at a future meeting and a brief overview included in the next agenda. The SRC elected a chair and vice-chair of the council. David Allgood will serve in the capacity as Chair and Joe Cowan Vice-Chair. David Allgood, as Chair made the selection for Todd Stephens to be the Member at Large. The newly established committees of the council are as follows: 1) Executive Committee; 2) Public Awareness and Legislative; 3) Policy and Planning; 4) Consumer Services and Program Evaluation; 5) Ad Hoc bylaws; and 5) Blind Services.

The Policy and Planning committee addressed the topic of the State Plan and identified a schedule for the public hearings The newly formed committee made a selection of a chair and vice-chair. The public hearings for proving input for the State Plan were held as follows:

Louisville: 4:00 -- 6:00 p.m. (EST), November 4, Charles W. McDowell Center, 8412 Westport Road, Louisville, KY 40242

Thelma: 4:00 -- 6:00 p.m. (EST), November 6, Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center, 5659 Main Street, Thelma, KY 41260-8609

Covington: 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. (EST), November 12, Kentucky Career Center, 1324 Madison Avenue, Covington, KY 41011

Owensboro: 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. (CST), November 13, Kentucky Career Center, 3108 Fairview Drive, Owensboro, KY 42303

Hazard: 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. (EST), November 14, Kentucky Career Center, 412 Roy Campbell Drive, Hazard, KY 41701

Lexington: 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. (EST), November 19, Lexington Public Library (Beaumont Branch), 3080 Fieldstone Way, Lexington, KY 40513

Comments were accepted by mail to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, 275 E. Main St., Mail Drop 2-EK, Frankfort, KY 40621, via e-mail to ChrisJ.Sheetinger@ky.gov, via fax at 502-564-6745, or by phone at (502)782-3458 by November 30, 2019. A draft of the State Plan Attachments were posted on the OVR website for public access.

The Consumer Services and Program Evaluation committee reviewed and accepted the Consumer Satisfaction Survey report conducted by the Human Development Institute at the University of Kentucky. The committee initiated a discussion on how to proceed with revising the current satisfaction survey to cover the needs of the populations served as a result of the recent reorganization forming a combined agency. A chair and a vice-chair were chosen.

The Public Awareness and Legislative Committee met and a chair and vice-chair were chosen. The main topic for this committee was the Council annual report. The theme chosen was “Stronger Together” reinforcing the reorganization and combining of the general and blind agency.

The newly formed Blind Services committee selected a chair and vice chair. This committee discussed topics specific to specialized services for the blind and visually impaired. The main discussion surround the shortage of certified Orientation and Mobility (OM) instructors.

The Bylaws committee will focus on the revision of the bylaws given the reorganization and combining of the general and blind agencies. A chair and a vice-chair were chosen.

The council accepted the minutes of all the committee meetings. The council made the decision have another meeting on October 28, 2019

The Council held its first quarterly meeting of the fiscal federal year for 2020 on October 28. A full quorum was in attendance.

The Executive Leadership of the office gave reports to the Council regarding field services including order of selection, numbers served and the numbers currently on the waiting list (31). Each Division Director gave their respective reports. There were no recommendations from the council regarding the information shared. The Executive Director and Director of Field Services were absent from the meeting in attendance at the National Council of State VR Directors but submitted reports to the council in advance of the meeting.

Two presentations were given to the council at the first quarterly meeting. Jimmy Brown, the Kentucky Assistive Technology Network Coordinator make a presentation on the statewide program. Topics covers were the Reuse Program, which relates to durable medical equipment, hearing aids as well as the Ramp Up Program.

Katie Wolf-Whaley, Project Director at the Human Development Institute (HDI) gave a presentation of the 2018 Consumer Satisfaction Survey/Report. There were 1001 responses to the survey with an 68.9% response rate. The report looked at the satisfaction with OVR services as it relates to both field offices and the Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs). 86.9% of the respondents reported services were good or very good. Individuals closed successfully with competitive integrated employment reported services were good or very good from OVR was 93%. Overall, 90% of respondents reported they would consider received services from OVR if needed in the future.

The council requested a presentations at the next meeting from the Kentucky Blind Enterprises Program along with the Community Council of Developmental Disabilities.

The Ad Hoc Bylaws Committee continued its work on the bylaws. There were no recommendations

The Blind Services Committee re-emphasized the need for Orientation and Mobility services to be offered at the center and throughout the state. This committee made the recommendation to look at the existing Satisfaction Survey and consider how to capture information on all “opinions” for the survey. They suggested this could include former questions from the previous blind agency survey or changing the wording in the next cycle.

The Policy and Planning Committee addressed the topic of the State Plan and the public forums that will be taking place in November. The State Plan Goals and Objectives were reviewed for the combined agency. The committee covered the topic of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). The committee suggested that OVR make contact with non-Profit organizations to provide work experiences for students since to improve services.

The Public Awareness and Legislative Committee discussed the content of the annual report. They also covered the area of marketing and shared ideas about how to increase the visibility of OVR services utilizing social media outlets, such as Facebook, the KCC.gov website, and business cards for council members.

The council accepted the minutes of all the committee meetings. The second quarterly meeting will be held on January 27, 2020

##### 2. the Designated State unit's response to the Council’s input and recommendations; and

**Recommendation**: The committee made the recommendation to look at the existing Satisfaction Survey and consider how to capture information on all “opinions” for the survey. They suggested this could include former questions from the previous blind agency survey or changing the wording in the next cycle.

**Response:** OVR accepts the recommendation.

##### 3. the designated State unit’s explanations for rejecting any of the Council’s input or recommendations.

OVR did not reject any of the Council’s input or recommendations

#### b. Request for Waiver of Statewideness

When requesting a waiver of the statewideness requirement, the designated State unit must identify the types of services to be provided by the program on a non-statewide basis. The waiver request must also include written assurances that:

##### 1. a local public agency will provide the non-Federal share of costs associated with the services to be provided in accordance with the waiver request;

The agency has not requested a waiver of state wideness.

##### 2. the designated State unit will approve each proposed service before it is put into effect; and

N/A

##### 3. All State plan requirements will apply

Requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan will apply to the services approved under the waiver.

N/A

#### c. Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Development System.

Describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system with respect to:

##### 1. Federal, State, and local agencies and programs;

OVR maximizes all available resources in collaboration with all partners and agencies in assisting individuals with disabilities to achieve integrated competitive employment.

The agency will assure that the governor, in consultation with other appropriate agencies, will have in place interagency agreements or other mechanisms for interagency coordination between any appropriate public entity including the state Medicaid Program, public institutions of higher education and a component of the statewide workforce investment system. This will ensure the provision of vocational rehabilitation services described in subparagraph (A) other than those specified in paragraph (5) (D), and in paragraph (1) through (4) and (14) of Section 103 (a) of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998, that are included in the individualized plan for employment of an eligible individual, including the provision of such vocational rehabilitation services during the duration of any dispute.

Such agreements shall include the following:

A description of a method for defining the financial responsibility of a public entity for providing such services, and a provision stating the financial responsibility of such public entity for providing such services. Information specifying the conditions, terms, and procedures under which the office shall be reimbursed by other public entities for providing such services. Information specifying procedures for resolving interagency disputes under the agreement.

Information specifying policies and procedures for public entities to determine and identify the interagency coordination responsibilities of each public entity to promote the coordination and timely delivery of vocational rehabilitation services (except those services specified in paragraph (5)(D) and in paragraphs (1) through (4) and (14) of Section 103 (a) of the Act.

Responsibilities of Other Public Entities

If any public entity other than the office is obligated under Federal or State law, or assigned responsibility under State policy or under regulations set forth in the 1998 Amendments to the Act, to provide or pay for any services that are also considered to be vocational rehabilitation services (other than those specified in paragraph (5) (D) and in paragraphs (1) through (4) and (14) of Section 103 (a), such public entity shall fulfill that obligation or responsibility, either directly or by contract or other arrangement.

If a public entity other than the office fails to provide or pay for the services for an eligible individual, the office shall provide or pay for such services to the individual. The office may claim reimbursement for the services from the public entity that failed to provide or pay for such services. Such public entity shall reimburse the office pursuant to the terms of the interagency agreement or other mechanism described in the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998, according to the procedures established in such agreement or mechanism pursuant to the established conditions, terms and procedures of reimbursement.

Signed agreements between respective officials of the public entities that outline and identify the responsibilities of each public entity relating to the provision of services shall be in place.

OVR has representation on the State Interagency Council (SIAC) for services and supports to Children and Transition-age Youth (SIAC) is a group consisting of state agency representatives, a youth, a parent of a child or transition-age youth with a behavioral health need, and a member of a nonprofit family organization. SIAC conducts monthly meetings that are open to the public. Regional Interagency Councils (RIACs) operate as the locus of accountability for the system of care, providing a structure for coordination, planning and collaboration of services and supports at the local level to children, adolescents, and transition-age youth and their families, to help them function better at home, in school, in the community and throughout life. There are 18 RIACs across the commonwealth.

Kentucky’s Commission on Services and Supports for Individuals with Intellectual and Other Developmental Disabilities (also known as HB 144 Commission) advises the Governor and General Assembly about the service system that impacts the lives of people with disabilities. A sub-committee of the HB 144 commission was established to address issues impacting employment for persons with developmental disabilities. Comprised of members representing state agencies, service providers, advocacy agencies, lawmakers and people with developmental disabilities, the committee has set out to identify what must occur to create an efficient employment system that is supportive of people with developmental disabilities obtaining meaningful employment in the Commonwealth. OVR Executive Director represents the agency on the HB 144 commission.

OVR has representation on the Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (KCDHH) advisory board that provides education, advocacy, and programs to eliminate barriers for deaf and hard of hearing Kentuckians.

OVR developed collaborative relationships with several agencies and entities within and without the statewide workforce investment system both private and public agencies and programs. OVR works cooperatively with the following agencies to avoid the duplication of services and enhance the service delivery process for consumers.

Veterans Administration for the purpose of providing rehabilitation services including vocational guidance and counseling and job development and placement to veterans with disabilities. Collaboration and coordination of services occur between OVR and the Veterans Administration Rehabilitation and Employment Programs and utilized as a comparable benefit as appropriate.

173 school districts statewide consisting of 1,233 schools inclusive of 25,616 students with IEP’s and 504 Plans that are potentially eligible/

Nine special education cooperative networks across the state created to enhance educational opportunities for Kentucky’s children providing technical assistance, training; professional development, specialized services and research.

Department of Behavioral Health, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities through their 14 Regional MH/IDD Boards for supported employment. Each board has multiple locations in their covered counties.

Kentucky Drug Courts for the purpose of facilitating employment and independence goals of individuals with disabilities. Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services for the purpose of educating consumers about their medical coverage options.

Social Security Administration for the purpose of partnerships on employment incentives through the Ticket to Work and other incentive programs.

Community rehabilitation providers in the provision of employment services.

Kentucky Association of Persons in Supporting Employmentfirst whose mission is to “promote the improvement of Supported Employment services for persons with significant disabilities experiencing barriers to employment through education, advocacy, collaboration, policy change, elimination of barriers, empowerment and community participation”. OVR has a staff person serving on the State APSE board.

Department of Medicaid Services and Department of Community Based Services

Kentuckians who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance program (SNAP) benefits and are eligible for the federally funded Employment and Training (E & T) program now receive assistance from Kentucky Career Centers to meet education and employment training needs. Department of Community Based Services-Public Assistance Programs.

Local Ophthalmologists and Optometrists and their respective professional associations in accessing needed services for consumers. Staff attend state conferences, distribute marketing materials and maintain working relationships with local offices and the area ophthalmologists and optometrists (patient referral and services).

American Printing House for the Blind, the world’s largest source for adapted educational and daily living products.

Kentucky School for the Blind, K-12 public school serving Kentucky students who are blind and visually impaired; Short Course program (one to 12 weeks) of specialized instructional is also available to students throughout the school year;

Kentucky Federation of the Blind an advocacy organization that improves blind people’s lives through advocacy, education, research, technology, and programs encouraging independence and self-confidence. Kentucky American Council of the Blind strives to improve the wellbeing of all blind and visually impaired people by serving as a representative national organization of blind people. Staff are involved through representation at their state and national conventions and representation of this advocacy organization sits on the State Rehabilitation Council.

Local Chambers of Commerce - Staff represent the agency across the state on local chamber organizations

International Centers specializing in advocacy and services to the foreign born and serve refugees, asylees, and immigrants (Louisville, Lexington, Bowling Green).

Area Employers in the development of working relationships increasing the number of successful employment outcomes for consumers

University of Kentucky Human Development Institute is a University Center of Excellence established by federal legislation to promote team-based approaches to provide services for individuals with disabilities and their families.

Other community based organizations such as Health clinics, HUD, Diabetes Foundation, The Lions Club and other community resources for consumers

The Kentucky Assistive Technology Service (KATS) is a statewide network of organizations and individuals connecting to enhance the availability of assistive technology devices and services to improve the productivity and quality of life for individuals with disabilities.

Visually Impaired Preschool Services offering service to infants, toddlers, and preschoolers who are visually impaired; and to maximize each child’s developmental potential through direct services, advocacy, and community education

Kentucky Outreach and Information Network (KOIN)- Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services/Department of Public Health planning committee for communication and message distribution to special populations during a public health emergency or other disastrous event.

The Kentucky Functional Needs Collaborative (KFNC) is a project of the Kentucky Department of Public Health. Their goal is to ensure an effective public health emergency response system in Kentucky for populations with functional and access needs.

KY-SPIN is the statewide Parent Training and Information (PTI) center that provides training, information and support to people with all types of disabilities (birth through 26 years old), their parents and families, and the professionals who serve them.

Kentucky Association of Community Employment Services (KACES) for the purpose of increasing services for individuals with disabilities including most significant disabilities and enhancing partnerships with community rehabilitation programs.

Social Security Administration: Information Exchange Agreement to receive data regarding consumers’ work history.

The Office works in coordination with the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC). A member from SILC sits on the Agency State Rehabilitation Council and the Blind Services Division Independent Living Program Manager represents the Agency on the SILC. Staff work collaboratively with the Independent Living Centers across the state in the service delivery process for consumers with visual impairments.

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center cooperates with the Job Corps Center to implement a smooth referral process for the purpose of enhancing education opportunities for students with disabilities

Other federal, state, and local agencies related to the rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities such as the Department of Protection and Advocacy, Department of Probation and Parole, Department of Workers Compensation, Department of Disability Determination.

The Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB) serves as an advisory board to the Governor on workforce training and development issues. The KWIB is charged with creating a statewide vision for workforce development and adopting a plan to move Kentucky forward through workforce training and development.

Reciprocal referral services with the Career Development Office and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation: CDO and OVR have established reciprocal referral services which allow for more efficient services to individuals with disabilities.

OVR plans activities to improve services in the state for individuals with multiple impairments, including individuals with dual sensory loss. The Central Office administrative functions for these three workforce programs are centrally located in Frankfort to assure collaboration among the workforce partners. The Workforce Development Leadership team meets bimonthly to cover pertinent issues within the department. The office participates in the ten Workforce local boards throughout the state as well as serving on different committees of those boards.

For more details regarding the Workforce initiatives in Kentucky see the Strategic Elements Section of this Combined State Plan.

The office has implemented an information and referral system to ensure that individuals who have disabilities will be provided accurate vocational rehabilitation information and guidance using appropriate modes of communication, to assist in preparing for, securing, retaining, or regaining employment. The office assures the referral of these individuals to other appropriate Federal and State programs if it is unable to serve them.

Appropriate referrals made through the system shall:

Be to the Federal, State or local programs, including programs carried out by other components of the statewide workforce investment system in Kentucky that is best suited to address the specific employment needs of an individual with a disability; and include, for each of these programs, provision to the individual:

a notice of the referral by the designated State agency to the agency carrying out the program;

information identifying a specific point of contact within the agency carrying out the program; and information and advice regarding the most suitable services to assist the individual to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain competitive integrated employment.

All applicants and eligible individuals or, as appropriate, the applicants’ representatives or individuals’ representatives, will be provided information and support services to assist the applicants and individuals in exercising informed choice throughout the rehabilitation process, consistent with Section 102 (d) of the Rehabilitation Act Amendment of 1998. The Client Assistance Program is available for additional assistance and advocacy during the entire rehabilitation process.

##### 2. State programs carried out under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998;

The Kentucky Assistive Technology Services (KATS) Network (the state program carried out under Section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998) for making assistive technology (AT) information, devices and services easily obtainable for people of any age and/or disability, their families, employers and employment service providers, educators, healthcare and social service providers. The KATS network serves Kentucky residents of all ages with disabilities of all types, their families, employers and employment service providers, educators, health care and social service providers, and others seeking information about assistive technology (AT) and accessible information technology.

The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation is the lead agency for the KATS Network. The KATS Network in turn collaborates with four non—profit organizations to operate assistive technology regional centers to provide assistive technology demonstrations and device loans. The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center operates a fifth regional center in collaboration with the KATS Network. The KATS Network also collaborates with the Hear Now Foundation hearing aid program and audiologists around the state to facilitate applications for hearing aids for low—income individuals. In addition, the KATS Network collaborates with several healthcare providers and two universities to refurbish and redistribute used durable medical equipment to individuals who need it. The Kentucky Assistive Technology Service (KATS) is a statewide network of organizations and individuals connecting to enhance the availability of assistive technology devices and services to improve the productivity and quality of life for individuals with disabilities.

Another program is the Kentucky Assistive Technology Loan Corporation (KATLC) for individuals. KATLC is programs funded by both private and public money to help Kentuckians with disabilities obtain assistive technology to improve their independence or quality of life.

##### 3. Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture;

In 2018, the USDA Rural Development made available funding to rural Kentucky communities across the Commonwealth for the areas of Infrastructure, Access to E-Connectivity/Broadband, Resources for Opioid Crisis, Business, Essential Services and Access to Health Care and Education. Specifically in 2020, the USDA Rural Development made $55.3 million available funding to rural Tennessee and Kentucky communities across the Commonwealth for the area of high-speed broadband infrastructure projects. Agency staff are aware of these programs and provide information and referral to consumers for these programs to meet their individual needs. University of Kentucky AgrAbility Program for the purpose of collaboration with the county extension offices and increased services in rehabilitation technology on the rural farm setting.

##### 4. Noneducational agencies serving out-of-school youth; and

OVR serves out-of-school youth such as high school non-completers, students expelled from school or habitually truant, high school graduates and GED holders who are basic skills deficient, unemployed or underemployed, as well as those enrolled in postsecondary education. This is an area identified to increase outreach and strengthen those existing relationships in order to reach and engage on a higher level out-of-school youth.

In Kentucky the vocational rehabilitation agency is one of two workforce programs that are fully integrated into the Kentucky Career Centers. This has strengthened our relationships with the other core programs of the workforce development system. OVR works collaboratively with the following additional agencies and groups of individuals.

Juvenile and Criminal Justice Systems. Juvenile Justice is responsible for prevention programs for at-risk-youth, court intake, pre-trial detention, residential placement/treatment services, probation, community aftercare/reintegration programs and youth awaiting adult placement or court.

Faith-based Organization (i.e. churches, Jewish Family Services, health clinics).

Community organizations like Big Brothers, Big Sisters and other community based organizations.

Service Organizations (i.e. Lions, Rotary, Kiwanis, Elks)

Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services that administers foster care and the division of family support (Medicaid, Foster Care and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)

Employers

Kentucky Youth Career Center offices are located in Jefferson, Bullitt, and Shelby Counties, and are administered by KentuckianaWorks, the region’s Workforce Development Board. Overseeing and coordinating programs in the community for youth ages 16 - 21, the Youth Career Centers offer innovative education, employment and youth empowerment services. The Kentucky Youth Career Center offers resume and interview preparation assistance, GED tutoring and help with testing fees, help applying to colleges and job-training programs, and financial assistance for college and job training. Depending on the need, referrals are made to other community services such as housing, transportation, food, and physical or mental health services. The Kentucky Youth Career Center also creates engagement opportunities with employers through internship and summer job programs, and fosters connections to mentors as well as other youth, and provides an ongoing series of workshops on life-enhancing topics.

##### 5. State use contracting programs.

Under the state procurement code, administered by the Finance and Administration Cabinet, there are preferences to be given by governmental entities and political subdivisions in purchasing commodities or services from specified entities. Specifically, first preference is given to the products made by the Department of Corrections and Division of Prison Industries. Second preference shall be given either to: (1) the Kentucky Industries for the Blind or any other nonprofit corporation (2) qualified nonprofit agencies for individuals with severe disabilities i.e., Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP). This means that state and local governmental agencies are to purchase directly from Correctional Industries or an Industries contracted with by OVR and/or a CRP without having to utilize the competitive procurement processes.

#### d. Coordination with Education Officials

Describe:

##### 1. DSU's plans

**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.**

OVR works with many agencies to provide transition services and pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities. This is inclusive of the blind and visually impaired and the deaf and hard of hearing populations. All of the collaborations described below allow for transition and pre-employment transition services to be provided by either OVR or our partners.

OVR has assigned counselors to each of Kentucky’s 173 Local Education Agencies for the purpose of ensuring that all students with disabilities are served. The counselors work with referrals from special education and general education staff as well as the individual with the disability, their family, and other agencies who assist students with disabilities who are in need of transition. These counselors coordinate and authorize pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities, age 14-21, who are eligible or potentially eligible for VR services. The counselors also provide general coordination, information, and outreach activities about vocational rehabilitation services to the local education agency and student for use in transition planning.

Service coordination activities may also include resource information about vocational rehabilitation, presentations, handouts, and staff development. The counselor works in a collaborative team process along with the local education agency to develop the transition services section of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) for transitioning students. Both the IEP and IPE will include, if appropriate, a statement of interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages by which the responsibilities of other entities are satisfied.

The student should be prepared to enter the competitive integrated workforce following the provision of necessary and needed services, as reflected in the IPE. The student should have ample opportunity to participate in Pre-employment transition services before they graduate.

The OVR counselor will engage in providing services that would be most beneficial to an individual in the early stages of employment exploration, such as counseling and self—advocacy training. These services are provided to students who are eligible or who are potentially eligible for VR services.

OVR partners with the public school districts, Department of Education and the University of Kentucky Human Development Institute to provide transition services and pre-employment transition services through the Community Work Transition Program (CWTP). The CWTP is designed to provide pre-employment transition services to all students with disabilities and provide transition services to assist VR eligible students with the most significant disabilities in transitioning from high school to competitive integrated employment. Student employment coordinators, funded by the local education agency, refer students to OVR in order to provide pre—employment transition services during their final three years of school. The CWTP contracts with the individual school districts to hire employment specialists to provide students with employment exploration and experiences, community-based evaluation, work experience and job placement while in high school.

OVR has contracted with the Kentucky Community and Technical College System in the provision of pre-employment transition services that will provide opportunities for potentially eligible Kentucky students with disabilities to enhance their skills and readiness for post- secondary employment and training.

OVR has a contract with the Jobs for American’s Graduates (JAG) to provide pre-employment services to students with disabilities in the school system. JAG is a state-based national non-profit organization dedicated to preventing dropouts among young people who have serious barriers to graduation and/or employment.

Additionally, OVR has contractual agreements with each of the nine special education cooperatives in the provision of pre-employment Transition Services.

The office’s executive director and state transition coordinators work directly when needed, with the Kentucky Interagency Transition Council. These involvements help facilitate all of the partner’s understanding of the unique transition needs of students with disabilities and assists in understanding the educational process of Public Schools in the State.

The Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) serves students with visual disabilities from across the state. Students can live and attend classes at the school’s Louisville location, or receive outreach services while attending their local elementary, middle and high schools. Staff in specialized positions actively participates in the vocational planning and academic progress of all of these students through collaboration and assistance with KSB’s Community Based Instruction Program, and services such as vocational assessments, and annual Individual Education Plans. Staff collaborates on a variety of work-readiness and work-experience programs with KSB such as the Summer Work Program and The World of Work Program that provides work-based learning experiences in a competitive, integrated settings.

The Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD) provides education to deaf and hard of hearing students from elementary through high school levels. It is a residential program in Danville, KY that also provides outreach services to students in their local schools. Vocational services include opportunities to prepare for work or continued education in the high school curriculum. An OVR Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf is assigned to students on campus.

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation has staff trained to understand about the different problems people with hearing loss may have. Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf are proficient in American Sign Language and serve persons who are deaf and hard of hearing and use this type of communication. Communication Specialists are trained about devices and ways to serve individuals who are hard of hearing or late deafened with auditory/oral communication. Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf and Communication Specialists are also skilled in serving people who have vision limitations in addition to a hearing loss or deafness. Individuals who are deaf use American Sign Language are served by a Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf. There are Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf statewide to provide OVR services.

Examples of specialized services are and not limited to:

• Information and counseling about jobs

• Information and referral for other services

• Assessment about job skills

• Training programs with support services to learn job skills

• Technology (including training) - for work related technology

• Job Placement assistance

• Interpreting Services

The State Coordinator of Deaf-Blind Services (SCDB) works with, consults, and provides technical assistance to KY Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) staff including the Rehabilitation Counselors for the Blind (RCB), Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCD), and Communication Specialists. Other staff include Managers, Blind Services Division Staff, and various other administrators within OVR. The SCDB also maintains relationships for service delivery with staff from the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC), Kentucky Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (KCDHH), The Kentucky Deaf-Blind Project, KY Mental Health Services for the Deaf and Deaf-Blind, Kentucky Association of Deaf-Blind (KADB), and several other Community Resource Providers (CRP). Kentucky has one of the largest Deaf-Blind census numbers with approximately 49,000 known individuals listed as being Deaf-Blind in the state. The SCDB also coordinates, plans, and oversees training and support for staff that work with this population.

INSIGHT - Post-secondary Preparation Program for Students Who Are Blind or Significantly Visually Impaired is a collaborative project between the Kentucky Educational Development Corporation Special Education Cooperative, Kentucky School for the Blind, Kentucky School for the Blind Charitable Foundation, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, MCP Orientation and Mobility Services, and Morehead State University. INSIGHT is a unique program designed to provide college bound students an opportunity to experience some of the challenges encountered when entering a university or community college. Participants gain an increased awareness of the educational, recreational, and social opportunities and challenges of the post-secondary environment.

Staff also participates with the Kentucky Deaf-Blind Project, which helps promote cooperative transition services for youth who are deaf-blind. OVR has a DeafBlind Coordinator who is responsible for helping to facilitate pre-employment transition services, including all the previously described work readiness and summer work experience programs, for this population of students. OVR collaborates with the Kentucky Deaf-Blind Project to provide a weeklong summer camp for eight to nine students who are Deaf-Blind that addresses the five required Pre-Employment Transition Services. This program is unique to Kentucky, and other Deaf-Blind Projects across the nation are interested in replicating it in their states.

The PATH Program is a three-week Pre-employment Transition Services program held at the McDowell Center in Louisville, KY. This program is conducted in collaboration with the University of Kentucky’s Teacher Preparation Program in Visual Impairments. Through the University of Kentucky, practicum students from the teacher preparation program are able to assist with the providing the Pre-employment Transition Services to up to fifteen blind or visually impaired students from across the state. The University of Kentucky also provides staff such as Orientation and Mobility Specialists that assist the McDowell Center staff provide the five required Pre-employment Transition Services.

Workforce Development Boards: OVR counselors actively participate on their local Workforce Development Board’s Youth and One Stop committees to enhance and make accessible the programs and services for transition age consumers.

Through Project CASE, a program developed from the use of Federal grant funding through the Rehabilitation Services Administration, OVR has stronger coordination and collaboration with the Youth Career Centers and other Kentucky Career Centers. Partnering with Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program (EKCEP) and KentuckianaWorks in the hiring of Career Pathway Coordinators, and in cross-agency training of staff on career pathways for students with disabilities, Project CASE will ensure sustained partnerships.

KY AHEAD is a professional organization whose purpose is to promote communication among professionals in post-secondary education in order to improve the development and implementation of services for persons with disabilities. Campus Disability Services Centers are an essential resource for students with disabilities attending post-secondary educational institutions. VR counselors maintain relationships with disability service center staff and strongly encourage college students to utilize the services available at the centers so that they can receive individualized accommodations for their coursework. Every effort is made to arrange for a student to meet with staff at the disability center prior to entry into a post-secondary program in assuring a smooth transition for the individuals.

The Kentucky Special Education Cooperative Network consists of nine special education cooperatives located across the state. These cooperatives were formed to better meet the needs of the multiple school systems across Kentucky’s 120 counties. All 173 local school districts, and the Kentucky Schools for the Blind and Deaf are members of a special education cooperative. Each cooperative has VI teachers and an AT specialist to assist students with visual needs. The school districts employ other specialty service providers such as Orientation and Mobility Specialists, Physical Therapists, and Speech Therapists. OVR works collaboratively with each cooperative network across the state in the provision of information and referral for students of all ages.

##### 2. Information on the formal interagency agreement with the State educational agency with respect to:

###### A. consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services;

The Office partners with the Kentucky Department of Education through an interagency cooperative agreement to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services.

The Agency has agreements with all public institutions of higher learning in the state to meet the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA, signed into law on July 22, 2014, to develop agreements between the state vocational rehabilitation agencies and public institutions of higher education who serve mutual individuals with disabilities.

The Office participates with the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and 21 other state agencies on the Kentucky Interagency Transition Council. This Council’s agreement, entitled The Kentucky Interagency Agreement on Transition Services” provides for a statewide system of coordination among agencies in the delivery of transition services.

OVR has an agreement with the KDE for transition planning and services for secondary students with disabilities. This agreement is in the process of being rewritten to meet the requirements of WIOA and in keeping with the upcoming merger of the blind and general agency. These agreements are designed to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from the receipt of educational services in school, to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services.

###### B. transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs;

Under IDEA, schools are responsible for initiating transition planning at the age of 16 for each student identified with a disability. In Kentucky, as stated in Kentucky Special Education Regulation 707, KAR 1:320, Section 7:1, transition planning can start in the child’s 8th grade year or when the child turns age 14, or earlier if the ARC deems it appropriate, in alignment with the child’s Individual Learning Plan (ILP). Since school faculty and staff are academic specialists, it is very important for the VR counselor to have early influence on the student’s vocational future helping to avoid weak or unrealistic vocational training. The VR counselor acts as a vocational specialist forging the educational and future vocational needs of the child realistically together. The VR counselor is educated on the federal and state laws associated with transition and acts as an advocate for the student and parents. VR counselors attend transition related meetings as early at age 14 and act as a consultant in the student’s IEP. Early contact and intervention not only saves the VR counselor considerable time and effort, it allows the student and parents the opportunity to plan a realistic vocational path that will lead them to the vocational goal of their choice.

VR counselors attend student IEP meetings starting at age 14. The school system will continue to have the primary responsibility for accommodations and student’s educational needs. Once the student graduates OVR will become the primary agent. It is mandatory that the IPE be developed with the student 90 days after eligibility or prior to graduation, whichever comes first.

An IPE is developed for each student determined eligible and that meets the current order of selection for vocational rehabilitation services. The IPE should address the student’s pre-employment transition services needs in the areas of job exploration counseling, work based learning experiences, counseling regarding post-secondary training opportunities, workplace readiness training to assist in the development of social and independent living skills, and instruction in self-advocacy.

OVR recognizes that it is the responsibility of Kentucky schools and OVR to coordinate and provide transition planning and services for students with disabilities. The VR counselor will provide consultation and technical assistance to assist the school as well as pre-employment transition services based on the student’s needs. OVR recognizes that transition planning is an ongoing process and that a student may choose to go in a different direction requiring a change in their vocational goal. Ongoing exploration, work exposure, and vocational counseling will be provided to assist students in the decision making process.

Provisions under the cooperative agreement include:

1. Process for making student referrals to the OVR;

2. Determination of eligibility for OVR services;

3. Joint sharing and use of evaluations and assessments;

4. Planning and development of individualized programs (IEP and IPE) as a collaborative team process;

5. Role of educational personnel in transition planning;

6. Role of the OVR counselor in outreach to, identification of, and transition planning for eligible students with disabilities;

7. Use of memoranda of agreement (MOA) at the local level to facilitate and coordinate transition services for secondary students with disabilities;

8. State coordination with agencies in the provision of transition services inclusive of pre — employment transition services;

9. A comprehensive system of personnel development for qualified personnel responsible for transition services;

10. Determination of lead agencies;

11. Financial responsibilities;

12. Status of services for an individual student/consumer during a dispute;

13. Agency dispute resolution;

14. Due process for the individual student/consumer.

15. Memoranda of Agreements at the Local Level

###### C. roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;

Memoranda of agreements at the local level will be used in order to further the collaborative efforts detailed in the interagency cooperative agreement between the Kentucky Department of Education and the agency. These memoranda of agreements will define the basic tenets of the Community Work Transition Program (CWTP).

The rights and responsibilities of OVR and the local education agency for implementing and carrying out the CWTP are also detailed in these memoranda of agreements. OVR authorizes payment of services needed to determine eligibility and for any services provided that do not fall under the responsibility of the school district. OVR provides payment for pre-employment services such as career exploration, work experiences, self- advocacy training, and peer mentoring.

###### D. procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

OVR obtains a list of the number of students between the ages of 14 and 21 per county that are accessing Educational Materials as an accommodation due to their disability in high school. The list is distributed to VR Counseling staff so they can identify where students with visual disabilities are located in the counties they serve for outreach purposes. Staff is required to conduct outreach to school staff, including Teachers of the Visually Impaired, in order to strengthen partnerships and increasing awareness regarding services available defined as Pre-Employment Transition Services. Outreach and Involvement of the VR Counselor begins at age 14.

The CWTP is designed to provide pre-employment transition services to all students with disabilities and provide transition services to assist VR eligible students with the most significant disabilities in transitioning from high school to competitive integrated employment. Student employment coordinators, funded by the local education agency, refer students to OVR in order to provide pre—employment transition services during their final three years of school.

During this time, should the student need individualized transition services, counselors work with the employment coordinators to ensure that community vocational services provided lead to the completion of an individualized vocational evaluation and the development of individualized programs (IEP and IPE) to ensure successful transitioning from high school to post school activities, including employment. Upon completion of the IPE, further community—based vocational services are provided to the student in the form of training for the planned vocational goal. The desired outcome for participants in the CWTP Transition Services is a post—school outcome or competitive, integrated employment.

Outreach to students also occurs through OVR’s contractual agreements with the Kentucky Career and Technical Educational College System, Jobs for American Graduates (JAG) and the nine Special Education Cooperatives for pre-employment transition services.

Jobs for Kentucky’s Graduates (JAG KY) operates its curriculum program in conjunction with the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation to service students in their program who have disabilities and who are potentially eligible and/or eligible for the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. JAG provides a curriculum for in-school youths with disabilities who have significant barriers to success that includes academic, physical, psychological, work related, and/or environmental.  JAG KY provides a curriculum or the target population of in-school youths with disabilities between the ages of 14 and 21 and have significant barriers to success. The areas for the curriculum will includes career development, job attainment, job survival, basic skills, leadership and self-development, personal skill, life survival skills workplace and economic empowerment.JAG KY employs and certify “Specialist” who are assigned to the schools that have a JAG KY Program through Kentucky.

The Kentucky Special Education Cooperative Network consists of nine (9) Special Education Cooperatives located across the state.

1. Central Kentucky Educational Cooperative (CKEC)
2. Green River Regional Educational Cooperative (GRREC)
3. Greater Louisville Education Cooperative (GLEC)
4. Kentucky Educational Development Corporation (KEDC)
5. Kentucky Valley Educational Cooperative (KVEC)
6. Northern Kentucky Cooperative for Educational Services (NKCES)
7. Ohio Valley Educational Cooperative (OVEC)
8. Southeast/Southcentral Education Cooperative (SESC)
9. West Kentucky Educational Cooperative (WKEC)

Transition Specialists are hired by the cooperatives to provide the five core pre-employment transition services. They provide transition services focused trainings with participation for students from several school districts in their regions.  Staff coordinate with local education agencies to provide the opportunity for students to participate in a variety of summer workshops/camps/ internships and local College visit.  Staff hold comprehensive weekly group workshops to the schools in their district during the school year.

The Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) provides Pre-employment Transition Services on a Fee Schedule in groups or individual.  Proposals for CRP Pre-ETS programs are submitted to the OVR CRP Branch.  CRP programs provide the five required pre-employment services: Job exploration counseling, work based learning experiences, post-secondary counseling, workplace readiness training, and self-advocacy.  CRPs provide in-school and after-school Pre-ETS.

Section 511 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) requires the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) to perform certain actions before an employer can pay an individual, especially youth with a disability a wage that is below the standard minimum wage.  The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation has provided subminimum wage facilities within Kentucky access to a Career Counseling video that is to be shown to individuals according to the requirements set forth in WIOA.  The Career Counseling Participation Form is completed on each individual and provided to the Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) Branch of OVR as required.  The OVR offers multiple Pre-Employment Transition Services opportunities for youth with disabilities to ensure that this particular WIOA mandate is met.  The OVR ensures that all OVR staff are trained to understand that before a youth with a disability can enter in to subminimum wage employment, the youth must be determined eligible, have an approved Individualized Plan for Employment, have been working toward their vocational goal for a reasonable period of time with appropriate supports, but without success and be closed from the OVR.  The CRP Branch continues to monitor and provide technical assistance to subminimum wage facilities and OVR staff to ensure these requirements are met. We keep records on all the individuals that receive Career Counseling.  Their first year in the subminimum wage facility they receive the Career Counseling twice and then annually thereafter.  They are also given information regarding available resources in the community that will help them with services to obtain employment and support.

The Office assures that in accordance with 34 CFR 397.31 that we will not enter into an agreement

#### e. Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.8(b)(3). Describe the manner in which the designated State agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit VR service providers.

OVR maintains agreements with providers of private, non-profit vocational rehabilitation service providers to support achievement of successful competitive integrated employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. OVR works with Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) through a vendor application process to ensure quality services to agency consumers. OVR currently works with 115 CRP’s. Currently, 69 CRPs provide Employment and Retention services resulting in competitive integrated employment outcomes, and another 91 CRPs provide Supported Employment services resulting in competitive integrated employment outcomes. Of the 115 vendors, 50 provide both Employment and Retention and Supported Employment services. Other agreements with private, non-profit OVR service providers will be made as necessary.

The process for approval of a vendor as a supported employment provider is more involved and is outlined below:

* The vendor obtains an application from the Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) Branch.
* Upon completion of the application it is returned to the CRP branch.
* The CRP Branch staff reviews the application and seeks additional information when needed. Staff may meet with the provider for further technical assistance.
* The application is approved and vendor status is established.
* The CRP Branch assists the provider with training and other information.
* All vendors are required to participate in the Supported Employment Training Project provided through the University of Kentucky Human Development Institute.
* Monitoring occurs for all vendors during the year by the CRP Branch staff.
* All Community Rehabilitation Programs are audited annually and 15 hours of continuing education units (CEUs) are required annually.
* All CRP Application Agreements will be renewed every two years (current ones are good through 2021).

#### f. Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.8(b)(4). 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.

Community Rehabilitation Program providers across the Commonwealth who are providing supported employment services are verified through written applications with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. The application process includes written verification of the CRP’s funding for extended services. The Community Rehabilitation Program Branch evaluates all vendors to ensure that services are appropriately provided and funding is available for extended services.

Kentucky’s fourteen Regional Boards for Mental Health or Individuals with an Intellectual Disability are a primary source for extended services in KY. Cooperative budget planning is done between OVR and the Kentucky Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities (DBHDID) so that state funds for all phases of supported employment can be sought by each agency. A cooperative agreement is also in place.

The Division of Behavioral Health (DBH) and OVR partnered together, and in 2010, Kentucky became the 12th state to participate in the Dartmouth College, Johnson and Johnson, Supported Employment Initiative to demonstrate the effectiveness of the IPS model for supported employment (Individualized Placement and Support, an Evidence—Based Practice). The first local pilot projects were launched prior to the close of 2010. Through the Dartmouth Project, a new SE funding partner was added when the Greater Cincinnati Health Foundation provided funding for 2 of the local pilots in Northern KY. IPS Supported Employment now includes all 13 Kentucky Community Mental Health Centers. In FY 2016 the partnership with Behavioral Health continues with the addition of 5 IPS sites outside of the Community Mental Health Centers and 2 sites serving those with substance abuse.

United Way monies have been utilized in minimal amounts for supported employment services by 16 Supported Employment programs in Kentucky. Ongoing follow-up services are provided through these United Way monies. These dollars are generally not “disability specific” and could assist in expansion of services to groups other than those served by the 14 community mental health centers.

Vendor status in the OVR Supported Employment Outcome-based Reimbursement program requires written verification of the provider’s funding for extended services. Monitoring and technical assistance is provided by the OVR’s Community Rehabilitation Program Branch to assure that services are provided and funded appropriately. CRP agreements are developed bi-annually and reviewed annually in 2019, the OVR implemented four Memorandums of Understanding to increase capacity for Customized Supported Employment services in high need areas throughout Kentucky. Four CRP providers were awarded these contracts after submission of Request for Proposals (RFP). RFP’s were sent to non-profit agencies throughout the Kentucky that resulted in a total of eight submitting their proposal for review.

The CRP Branch works closely with Kentucky APSE (Association of People Supporting Employment First) and its committees, and the 874K Coalition (a statewide Disability Advocacy Group) in a unified effort to secure additional state dollars for supported employment extended services.

The CRP Branch has been active in the development/improvement of Kentucky’s Medicaid Waivers to create workable systems for coordinating supported employment services for eligible participants. Expansion of the supports for Community Living Waiver (Kentucky’s Medicaid Waivers for individuals with Developmental Disabilities) and the Michelle P Waiver has resulted in increased referrals to OVR for supported employment services for mutually eligible participants. The self—determination and Participant Directed Services within Medicaid hold much promise for supported employment funding for extended services. A new Medicaid Waiver containing better service definitions and fee structures to support and fund supported employment services rolled out in 2014.

The CRP Branch works cooperatively with the Arc of Kentucky, among other groups, such as the Kentucky Association of Supporting Employment First (KYAPSE), the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities (BHDDID), the Kentucky Rehabilitation Association (KRA), UK Human Development Institute, EKU Center of Excellence, most of the Comprehensive Care Centers in the state, and many Supported Employment providers, to educate families about supported employment and enlist their assistance in impacting additional funds for supported employment.

OVR continues to advocate for expanded/improved Supported Living services, which are utilized by many supported employment participants to meet their needs for as independent a lifestyle as possible. The Hart Supported Living Program in KY offers very flexible state dollars available for all phases of independent living. However, statewide dollars are very limited.

OVR continues to work collaboratively with the Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities, the Kentucky Council on Developmental Disabilities, Human Development Institute (HDI) (University of Kentucky), and the Arc of Kentucky to provide quality training on fundamentals of supported employment through the Supported Employment Training Project (SETP). This training is valuable in assuring that personnel who provide supported employment services have the necessary skills, values, and tools to deliver effective services. The Leadership Series program developed through HDI at the University of Kentucky, provides advanced training in systematic instruction, Discovery, Job Developing, and Social Role Valorization, and is designed to assist job seekers in acquiring customized employment.

The CRP Branch staff collaborates with Special Education planning units throughout the commonwealth to develop supported employment services for students exiting schools. Again, additional dollars will be needed for extended services in order to adequately serve the students. A pilot project began in 2010 to demonstrate the effectiveness of Community Rehabilitation Programs agencies working together with Post-Secondary Education programs to include people with developmental disabilities in classes and other college campus activities.

The CRP Branch continues efforts to utilize Social Security Work Incentives, including PASS (Plan for Achieving Self-Support) and IRWE (Impairment Related Work Expenses), for extended services when appropriate. Training opportunities are offered through the University of Kentucky Human Development Institute to provide technical assistance for supported employment personnel to learn more about these work incentive programs. In summary, the following potential funding sources for supported employment have been identified:

* Local and county government
* Kentucky Commonwealth Council on Developmental Disabilities (grant opportunities only)
* United Way
* Social Security Work Incentives Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS) and Impairment Related Work Expenses (IRWE)
* Natural Supports
* Division of Behavioral Health
* Division of Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities
* Hart Supported Living Funds
* Private pay agreements
* Supports for Community Living Waiver, Michelle P, and Brain Injury Medicaid Waivers.

Information regarding these potential funding sources is updated and shared by the Supported Employment Branch on a statewide basis to encourage increased funding for all phases of supported employment. 12. The OVR CRP Branch continues to explore innovative strategies with partnering state agencies to leverage funding to expand evidenced-based supported employment models (IPS) throughout Kentucky. Additionally, exploration continues to be conducted to identify underserved areas for those individuals with the most significant disabling conditions that may not be best suited for a labor market position, but would be better equipped to gain success and independence in a customized employment position, therefore leading to potential opportunities for CRP’s to provide Customized Supported Employment which requires a unique and specialized skill set.

#### g. Coordination with Employers

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.8(b)(5). Describe how the designated State unit will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of:

##### 1. VR services; and

The Department of Workforce Investment (DWI) in partnership with local and state workforce organizations is dedicated to providing proactive business services and industry skills development. Through local Kentucky Career Center Business Service networks, this partnership has laid a foundation for coordinated business services that leverage the assets of the Office of Employer and Apprenticeship Services (OEAS).

Kentucky Career Center Business Services offer a streamlined approach to assisting businesses with recruiting talent, training new and existing employees, and developing tomorrow’s workforce. At its core, the Business Service strategy consists of five primary organizations who provide direct resources and services to businesses:

• Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB)

• Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet (EWDC)

• Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development (CED)

• The Kentucky Chamber’s Workforce Center (Workforce Center)

• Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS)

These partnering agencies strive to provide unified, efficient, quality and seamless workforce services and resources to new, existing and expanding companies within the Commonwealth.

The Kentucky Career Center Business Service strategy has four primary components:

• Identify a single point of contact for business development within each WIOA region

• Streamline workforce resource delivery

• Unify and coordinate outreach and information

• Leverage multiagency data sharing systems

Core programs and partners gained access to a business customer relationship management system based on a Salesforce platform. Phase 1 allowed shared access to employer contacts and business needs, and Phase 2 gave the partnership the ability to add and assess employer programs and resources. This platform allows the tracking of business engagement and reporting for the aligned goal of furthering business services, and is the tool that encompasses the Kentucky Integrated Business Engagement System (KIBES).The OVR Employer Services Branch is dedicated to employer outreach and consumer job placement services allowing for a consistent approach to services across the state. This enables the agency to focus on more intensive employer outreach, including increased emphasis on corporate employers and partnership, and expand direct employer interaction statewide.

OVR employs fourteen job placement specialists across the state. These specialists are responsible for developing relationships with local employers to facilitate the placement of OVR consumers into competitive integrated employment. Employer engagement activities may include: 1) technical assistance to employers on hiring individuals with disabilities; 2) disability awareness training 3) ongoing and regular contact with employers 4) attending meetings of local Chambers of Commerce, Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM), and other business related groups; and 5) no cost accessibility surveys to employers.

OVR employs a statewide Employer Services Branch Manager who is responsible for the supervision and oversight of staff and statewide employment activities. This is inclusive of providing training and technical assistance to the Job Placement Specialists, developing agency-wide relationships with large employers, and acts as the agency contact for the National NET and TAP programs managed by CSAVR.

OVR recognizes that it has two customers the job seeker and the employer and works collaboratively with partner organizations in providing quality services on all levels. OVR is in a position to provide valuable services to 503 Federal Contractors with utilization goals of 7% of their workforce, employees with disabilities. DWI shares with OVR the list of federal contractors it maintains and staff are assigned to contact those employers individually making them aware of vocational rehabilitation services available to them.

In October 2015, the Kentucky Office for the Blind/Kentucky Career Center was awarded the Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities Model Demonstration Program Grant (CFDA 84.235N). This federal grant was provided through the Rehabilitation Services Administration (Department of Education) to create a program that would result in greater participation of VR-eligible individuals, including youth with disabilities, to acquire marketable skills and recognized postsecondary credentials necessary to secure competitive integrated employment in high-demand, high-quality occupations. Under this project employer engagement is a goal area. For all five years of the grant staff have conducted employer engagement activities.

The Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation (SCVR), Kentucky’s State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), includes several employers and a representative of the Workforce Investment Board who provide important input on agency policy and activities related to employment. OVR, in conjunction with SCVR, conducts a Job Placement Month annually in October which includes many events around the state that promote collaboration with employers. Regional Employer Recognition Awards are given out during the month to employers who have hired OVR consumers. OVR will also continue to partner with local initiatives like Project SEARCH in Northern Kentucky and the Coalition for Workforce Diversity in Louisville, Lexington, Ashland, and Mayfield to identify and educate employers willing to develop new programs specifically designed to focus on hiring and training individuals with disabilities.

OVR, University of Kentucky’s Human Development Institute (HDI) and the Commonwealth Council of Development are partnering with the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce to present an Inclusive Workforce Summit in spring 2020. This will be a day long summit to educate and engage employers to hire individuals with disabilities and to work with OVR and other partners to assist and support this process. This is the first summit that the Chamber has sponsored concerning this initiative and it is hoped to be an annual event.

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

OVR currently has in place innovative programs that provide high school students with a variety of work-based learning, financial literacy, self-advocacy training, job exploration, career counseling, and workplace readiness training opportunities that exist in the community with employers, in our rehabilitation center, and in post-secondary institutions.

Kentucky’s project is titled Creating Access to Successful Employment (Project CASE). Project CASE activities are consistent with section 101(d) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), with focus on improved alignment of Federal programs to strengthen the capacity of State workforce systems to meet emerging employers’ needs with appropriately skilled and credentialed individuals. Project CASE provides a solid strategy for providing individuals with disabilities who face barriers to employment, with workforce investment activities, education, and supportive services to enter and retain employment.

Career Pathway initiatives in Kentucky over the past decade have created partnerships between industry and education at the secondary and postsecondary levels, and forged important links to strengthen local economies. Project CASE will help ensure that individuals with disabilities, even at the secondary school level, are not left out of participating in these existing initiatives, and can prepare for and obtain jobs in high-wage and high-demand occupations.

A variety of partnerships are needed in order to market the benefits of a variety of earn and learn opportunities, including registered apprenticeships to Kentucky business for individuals with disabilities including youth and students with disabilities. OVR will work with its existing partnerships among workforce, economic development, education and business entities in fostering work based learning opportunities.

OVR has contractual agreements with each of the nine special education cooperatives and Jobs for American Graduates.in the provision of pre-employment Transition Services. As well, OVR has contracted with the Kentucky Career and Technical College System in the provision of pre-employment transition services that will provide opportunities for potentially eligible Kentucky students with disabilities to enhance their skills and readiness for postsecondary employment and training.

In 2018, the Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet (KEWDC) announced the transition of the Division of Apprenticeship from the Kentucky Labor Cabinet to KEWDC’s Office of Employer and Apprenticeship Services in the Department for Workforce Investment. This service, in cooperation with the U.S. Office of Apprenticeship and Training, oversees the Commonwealth’s registered apprenticeship program.

Kentucky’s registered apprenticeship program continues to be a national model in preparing individuals for successful entry into the workforce. This administrative move builds upon momentum by harnessing KEWDC’s existing statewide network to connect employers with potential employees and to provide increased apprenticeship opportunities for Kentuckians. There are over 4,000 apprentices in Kentucky in 300+ different programs currently representing 147 unique occupations.

The Registered Apprenticeship model is a flexible, employer-driven approach that provides high-quality job training and produces skilled, competent employees for Kentucky employers. The division is responsible for registering apprenticeship programs that meet federal standards, issuing nationally recognized and portable Certificates of Completion to apprentices, and promoting the development of new programs through marketing and technical assistance. The

CWTP is designed to provide pre-employment transition services to all students with disabilities and provide transition services to assist VR eligible students with the most significant disabilities in transitioning from high school to competitive integrated employment. There will be a Supported Employment Consulting fee available with the Community Work Transition program for seamless transition into competitive integrated employment. There are specific programs in place with specialized services for the blind and visually impaired.

The PATH Program focuses on job exploration, workplace readiness training, and self-advocacy and is an intensive three week program based on the work of Dr. Karen Wolffe that introduces employability skills to students with disabilities. The curriculum is specific to individuals that are blind or visually impaired. The Summer Work Experience Program is in collaboration with Community Rehabilitation Providers. CRPs are paid to find work experiences in competitive integrated settings for transition aged individuals. The goals of the work experience are to provide community based career exploration and the opportunity to practice work readiness skills. It is also hoped that by participating in the work experience program, employers will be open to providing more opportunities for individuals who are blind or visually impaired in their communities.

The Summer Work Program is in collaboration with the Kentucky School for the Blind, Kentucky Kingdom, the American Printing House for the Blind, and the Louisville Zoo. The World of Work Program is another program in which the OVR and KSB provide work based learning experiences to students. The program provides competitive integrated work experiences to students that attend the Kentucky School for the Blind. The INSIGHT Post-Secondary Preparation Program is held each summer at Morehead State University. Students are able to participate in college classes, live in the dorm, and participate in social activities both on and off campus during this eight day program. They receive counseling on post-secondary opportunities and are taught the self-advocacy skills necessary to succeed in a post-secondary environment along with workplace readiness skills.

#### h. Interagency Cooperation

Describe how the designated State unit will collaborate with the State agency responsible for administering each of the following programs to develop opportunities for competitive integrated employment, to the greatest extent practicable:

##### 1. the State Medicaid plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act;

In Kentucky, The Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) is home to most of the state’s human services and health care programs, including Medicaid, the Department for Community Based Services and the Department for Public Health. Medicaid Services purchases quality healthcare and related services that produce positive outcomes for persons eligible for programs administered by the department.

OVR has worked with the Department of Medicaid Services to attempt to expand the Medicaid Works, Kentucky’s Medicaid Buy-In program, to maximize the opportunities for OVR consumers to get employed in competitive, integrated employment. Eligibility requirements remain restrictive and very few individuals have qualified for Medicaid Works. OVR still feels a revised buy-in would help more individuals with disabilities become successfully employed. As detailed below in (2), Medicaid Waiver funding is utilized to provide long term supports for supported employment consumers, increasing the numbers of individuals who can benefit from supported employment services. OVR serves on numerous councils that also have representation from the Department for Medicaid Services. The agency will work to insure the provision of vocational rehabilitation services and if appropriate, accommodations or auxiliary aides and services.

##### 2. the State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities; and

The Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities is the agency that provides quality information, services and support for individuals with needs related to mental illness, intellectual disability or other developmental disability and their families.

OVR is an active member of the Commonwealth Council for Developmental Disabilities participating in their strategic plan development and collaborating on projects to promote independence and employment for the specific population.

OVR works with the Division of Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities (DIDD) to improve quality Supported Employment Services and provide a smooth transition from VR Supported employment services to Long Term Support Services through the Supports for Community Living (SCL) and Michelle P. Medicaid waivers. KYOVR and DIDD jointly fund the Supported Employment Training Program at the University of Kentucky’s Human Development Institute to train all Supported Employment Specialists in the state.

OVR serves on numerous councils, boards, and planning committees, such as, the Commonwealth Council for Developmental Disabilities, as well as the Kentucky Advisory Council on Autism and the HB144 Commission relating to persons with developmental disabilities.

##### 3. the State agency responsible for providing mental health services.

The Division of Behavioral Health (DBH) is responsible for the administration of state and federally funded mental health and substance abuse treatment services throughout the commonwealth. Publicly-funded community services are provided for Kentuckians who have problems with mental health, developmental and intellectual disabilities, or substance abuse, through Kentucky’s 14 regional Boards for Mental Health or Individuals with an Intellectual Disability (Regional MHID Boards). Regional MHID Boards are private, nonprofit organizations established by KRS Chapter 210 which serve residents of a designated multi-county region. Regional MHID Boards are private, nonprofit organizations established by KRS Chapter 210 (see Related Links) which serve residents of a designated multi-county region.

Beginning in 2010, OVR has partnered with the Division of Behavioral Health (DBH) to implement the Individual Placement Service (IPS) Model, an evidenced based practice in Supported Employment for consumers with severe mental illness. Currently, there are 18 IPS programs throughout Kentucky. In 2019, OVR participated in meetings with the Cabinet for Health and Family Services to initiate efforts to expand IPS Supported Employment services to individuals with opiate use conditions. OVR will continue to collaborate with other state partners to expand IPS and provide services to underserved populations. OVR serves on numerous councils that also have representation from the DBH.

#### i. Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.10)). Describe the designated State agency's procedures and activities to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professional and paraprofessional personnel for the designated State unit, including the following:

##### 1. Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

###### A. Qualified Personnel Needs.

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

i. the number of personnel who are employed by the State agency in the provision of VR services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;

(i)The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation maintains a system to collect and analyze, on an annual basis, data on qualified personnel needs and personnel development. The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) reviews this information as well as the State Rehabilitation Council. This ensures that the provision of quality services is consistent throughout the Commonwealth. In addition, the number of personnel, category, and qualifications of personnel needed by OVR, and a projection of the numbers of personnel that will be needed in five years are calculated. These calculations are based on projections of the number of individuals to be served. Personnel training files are maintained electronically through a state provided learning management system and contains records of each individual’s training activities. Training accomplishments are reviewed at a 6 month interim review and annually in the Employee Performance Evaluation.

OVR has developed and maintains a Case Management System for review of all staff assignments, based on demographic data such as population, geographic area, caseload sizes and labor market analysis. In addition, the office solicits input to identify areas of understaffing, or of specific needs.

On October 1, 2018 the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Kentucky Office for the Blind merged into one agency with Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation as the official name. This merge also involved a reorganization of the agency and this report reflects the most current data based on the new organizational design. The organizational design includes the Executive Director’s Office and 4 divisions. There are currently 368 classified and unclassified positions, 3 Federally Funded Time Limited (FFTL) positions and 65 contracted positions for a total of 436 positions.

The **Office of the Executive Director** includes an Executive Director (1) that supervises executive leadership functions such as Deputy Executive Director (1), Division Directors (4), Program Policy and Support Branch Manager (vacant), Program Administrators (2 with one fulltime and 1 part-time), an assistant dedicated to personnel processes (1), Assistant (1) and an Executive Secretary (1) for a total of 11 employees. In the next 5 years there will be 6 of 11 employees eligible for retirement. In the absence of a Program Policy and Support (PPS) Branch Manager the Executive Director is also directly supervising that branch. There are 9 staff in PPS branch with Program Administrators (3), Program Coordinator (1), Resource Management Analyst (3) and Assistants (2). Of that number 2 are eligible for retirement in the next 5 years. According to the current personnel run there are 6 vacancies in the Executive Director and Program Policy and Support areas: Program Policy and Support Branch Manager, Executive Assistant, Voc Rehab Administrator I, Resource Management Analyst 1 (2) and an Administrative Assistant (1).

The **Division of Field Services** supervises all functions that occur within field offices including specialized counseling services for the deaf and hard of hearing and blind and visual disabilities. In addition, this division houses the ancillary supports for services. There are 282 classified, unclassified and FFTL employees in this division. This includes the Assistant Director (1), Regional Managers (5), Branch Managers (22), Counselors (124), Interpreters (5 and of that 3 are contract), Receptionists (2 contracted) Assistants (90 and 22 are contract). Ancillary staff includes the Employer Services Branch (14), Community Rehab Program Branch (3), Assistive Technology Branch (12 with 7 of the rehab techs on contract). Three vocational Rehabilitation Administrators providing support for Pre-Employment Transition Services (1), Community Work Transition Services (1) and Social Security Reimbursement (1) with contracted assistant (1). Over the next 5 years it is anticipated that 25 will be eligible to retire based on service time with OVR calculating the retirement at 27 years. Of that 25 there are Assistants (6), Rehab Tech (1), Branch Managers (4), Counselors (12) and Employment Specialists (2). We find that many are leaving through resignation and not retirement. According to the current personnel run there are 21 positions vacant. Administrative Specialists (7), Interpreter (1), Counselors (12) and Voc Rehab Program Specialist (1).

The **Division of Blind Services** supervises independent living services, older individuals who are blind, deaf/blind, orientation and mobility, bioptic driving, employment/AT services and other services provided through the Charles McDowell Center. There are 38 classified, unclassified and contracted staff in this division. This includes IL/OIB (9), Deaf/Blind Coordinator (1), Bioptic Driving (2), Orientation & Mobility Instructors (2) and Facility Administrator (1) and an Assistant (2 contracted). The Facility Administrator supervises staff at the McDowell Center including: Administrator (1), Assistants (3), Community Resource Specialist (1), Consumer Services Coordinator (1), Instructor (4), Nurse (1), Patient Aide (1), Psychologist (1), Receptionist (1) a Work Experience Counselor (1), Tech Support (2), Dorm Residential Aide (3 and all are contracted) and 1 maintenance person (contracted). Based on years of services there are 8 within this division that could retire in 5 years. According to the personnel run there are 3 vacancies within this division. They are Voc Rehab Program Specialist II, Voc Rehab Specialist Certified and Voc Rehab Administrator II.

The **Division of Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center** is a residential facility that provides educational opportunities both away from home and coordinators services as needed with consumers in the area that do not need residential services. There are 94 employees in this division in classified, Federal Funded Time Limited (FFTL), unclassified or contracted. The Division Director is assisted by Administrators (4), Assistants (11), Branch Managers (3), Childcare Staff (2), Cooks (9), Counselors (3), Data Entry Specialist (1), Dorm Counselor (3), Drivers (2), Facility Security (6), Fiscal (2), Instructors (15), Janitors (3), Maintenance (6), Mental Health Counselor (1), Nurses (6), Occupational Therapy Staff (4), Patient Aide (2), Program Instructor (1), Psychologist (1), Physical Therapist (1), Recreation Staff (1), Speech Therapist (2), Staff Assistant (3) and Vocational Evaluator (2). Based on 27 years of service for predicted retirement there will be 5 employees who are currently working full-time as a merit employee who will be able to retire in 5 years or less. Current personnel runs indicate the following vacancies: Assistant Director (1), LPN (2), Disabilities Assistance/Driver (1), Security Officer (1), Administrator (1), Counselor (1), Instructors (2) and Specialists (3).

The **Kentucky Blind Enterprise Division** supervises the vendor program. They currently have 2 employees: Division Director (1) and Program Coordinator (1). Based on dates of employment an anticipated 27 years for retirement there are none eligible within the next 5 years. This division does have assistance from two temporary staff for clerical support and vending machine repair with positions open for Assistant Director (1) and Program Coordinator (1).

**Counselor Information**: Of the 124 counselors in the Division of Field Services there are 61 or 49% who are Certified Rehabilitation Counselors. Data since the merge on 10/01/2018 provides the following snapshot of current counselor experience within the agency. Those with 30 years of service or more were 2%. Those with 20 – 29 years of service were 8%. Those with 10 – 19 years of service were 29%. Those with 5 – 9 years of service were 27%. Those with less than 5 years of service were 34%.

**Personnel Departures:** There were a total of 30 classified employees that left the agency during this reporting period and 13 contractors. Of the classified employees 6 retired, 23 resigned and 1 was terminated. Eleven of these positions were counselors and 3 of them were certified rehabilitation counselors. The alarming trend for counselors is that there was 1 retirement, 1 termination and the remainder resigned for other positions. All counselors met the Kentucky standards for a qualified rehabilitation counselor. All 13 contractors resigned their positions.

**Personnel Hires:** There were 25 classified, 1 FFTL and 22 contract employees hired for a total of 48. Thirteen of the new hires were counselors and 3 have their CRC. The FFTL employee is an assistant and the contracted employees hold various support positions within the agency. Positions titles hired include: Assistants, Counselors, Consumer Service Coordinators, Cooks, Facility Administrator, Dorm Counselors, Employment Specialists, Instructors, Maintenance, Nurses, Receptions, Recreational Staff, Repair Technician, Security, and Work Experience Counselor. Some of the large quantity of new hires is a result of hiring contractors rather than merit employees. Contracted employees often have a higher turnover due to finding better employment or not being engaged in the work of the agency.

**Consumer Information:** There were 43,645 individuals served with the average cases served by caseload at 285 and the average potentially eligible cases served by caseload was 108. There were 2,903 individuals that exited the program successfully. The increase in caseload size is due to counselor vacancies. Case coverage was absorbed by other counselors and branch managers due to difficulty in filling vacant positions. The average caseload size for counselors located at CDPVTC was 54. As of this report the agency is serving categories 1 and 2.

###### B. Personnel Development

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

i. a list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program;

The University Of Kentucky (UK) is the only institution in the state that offers a Master’s of Rehabilitation Counseling (MRC) program. This is a comprehensive accredited graduate program in rehabilitation counseling. The online Accelerated Distance Learning Master’s program can be completed in sixteen months without on-campus attendance and at in-state tuition rates. Participants in the program are eligible to test for rehabilitation counselor certification after completing 75% of their course work in their final semester.

OVR collaborates with the University of Kentucky. Staff attend advisory board meetings to encourage communication between the agencies. OVR counselors that do not have their MRC are encouraged to apply for scholarships when offered by the university. Information about scholarships and grants from UK and other universities with MRC programs are shared with staff through electronic announcements. The state agency no longer provides assistance for tuition or related costs of attending school due to the loss of the in-service training grant. The agency does allow participants who apply and are approved for an out-of-state MRC program to request approval to attend required on-campus sessions without taking personal leave. If approved by the cabinet the individual can travel to the locations without using annual leave, but the agency does not pay for travel expenses. Approval for out-of-state travel for these programs is not guaranteed and final approval is with the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet.

(ii) OVR obtains information from UK annually regarding the number of students enrolled and the number graduating from the MRC program with certification or licensure and /or with credentials to qualify for certification or licensure. According to the information provided by the university, there were 85 students enrolled in fall 2018 with 15 graduates. In the spring 2019 there were 77 students enrolled in the MRC program. Of that spring number there were 31 that took the certification examination for rehabilitation counselors (CRC) and 22 passed or 71%. All of those who graduated achieved eligibility for licensure.

(iii)

OVR has one staff person in the completion process for the MRC program at the University of Kentucky. The agency covers the cost of the CRC examination fee and continues to provide the renewal fee costs for all employees that maintain their CRC. In addition, the agency provides for the exam fees and renewal costs of other applicable certifications required for professionals to perform the functions of their job.

##### 2. Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel

Describe the development and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated State unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

OVR aggressively recruits, equips, trains and works to retain qualified professionals through coordination with institutions of higher education, professional and paraprofessional associations including personnel from minority backgrounds and individuals with disabilities. Kentucky Personnel Cabinet utilizes a web-based system for hiring of personnel. The system uses online application submission and through a rigorous personnel process the applicants are vetted to ensure that they meet the required qualifications for the classification they are applying for.

In 2019 the agency hired and retained 13 VR Counselors in the Division of Field Services and those 13 individuals had achieved the following education levels: Master’s degree (8) and Bachelor’s Degree (5). All meet the classification requirements for a VR Counselor position within the state personnel system. This includes 2 years of required experience for those hired with BA only. The master’s degree subject areas were: Rehabilitation Counseling (4), Psychology (1), Sociology (1) and Social Work (2). BA degrees were: Psychology (3), Human Services (1) and Social Work (1). There were 3 certified rehabilitation counselors.

OVR strives to achieve a more diverse workforce by recruiting and hiring individuals from protected classes. Recruitment of individuals with disabilities and those from minority backgrounds enables the agency to have highly competent individuals from all segments of society to accomplish its mission. The University of Kentucky’s Graduate Program in Rehabilitation Counseling has partnered with Kentucky State University (KSU - a historically black liberal studies public institution) and the two state rehabilitation agencies to create an endorsement curriculum at KSU to recruit students into the field of rehabilitation counseling. UK has a “University Scholars Program” with Kentucky State University (KSU). There were no students from KSU in 2019 that expressed an interest in participating in an internship with the OVR. Potential applicants are identified through recruitment, posting, and advertising according to the cultural diversity initiative and the agency’s Affirmative Action goals. OVR works to leverage its successful performance in recruiting individuals who are minorities or with disabilities in the following ways:

 Work closely with consumer groups, attending local chapter meetings, national meetings.

 Hires the most qualified individual realizing that as an agency OVR strives to promote cultural diversity in recruiting disabled or minority candidates inclusive of bilingual candidates.

 Encourage existing minority staff to play an active role in policy and program development, service delivery and program monitoring activities.

 Ensure that programs are accessible to minorities.

 Follow EEO guidelines and Affirmative Action Procedures.

 Utilize Division of Consumer Services demographic and population data to determine the number of minorities and individuals with disabilities in regions, and develop strategies to increase recruitment from these regions.

 Encourage minorities and individuals with disabilities to play an active role in the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation State Rehabilitation Council, participate in forums and provide input into policy and procedures.

The Office of Diversity, Equality and Training (ODET) has a Minority Management Trainee Program (GMMTP). This is a recruitment and development tool to increase the representation of minority managers in state government. This program offers an experience that enables participants to cultivate the skills needed to serve Kentucky’s citizens in an effective and responsive manner. Participants receive in-depth, practical training through classroom instruction, on-the-job experience and special projects. Individuals must meet the following criteria to be eligible for the program: 1) be an ethnic minority, 2) Have one (1) year of state government service, 3) qualify for a grade 10 or higher job classification and 4) Aspire to be a manager and demonstrate exceptional management potential.

OVR recognizes our staff as our greatest resource and is committed to training state personnel to ensure the provision of quality services to individuals for positive employment outcomes. OVR will remain current on rehabilitation trends and best practices and disseminate the information through internal training and by securing external training opportunities for its personnel. This includes utilizing online training resources that provide quality information in a cost effective manner and partnering with other agencies to share training and resources that is mutually beneficial.

OVR has a personnel classification system in place, but it lacks salary competitiveness with other states and often other state agencies. States surrounding the northern and western borders of Kentucky offer higher entry-level salaries based on state demographics and wage studies. The current system does allow for higher entry-level wages for new hires based on their education, certification and experience levels, but hiring at the minimum salary level puts the agency at a competitive disadvantage. The agency is pursuing updates to the personnel classification series for counselors to more closely align to the outlined priorities in the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act to recognize the experience that individuals have in working within the field of rehabilitation. On June 1, 2019 the Kentucky Personnel Cabinet updated the mid-range salary schedule for state employees. The agency is exploring how the mid-range increase may be used to create a more competitive salary to encourage employee retention. In addition, the agency is also exploring special entry rates for counselors and other measures allowable within the state government system that will generate salary increases for VR personnel.

The agency encourages the use of university grants for those employees interested in obtaining their Master of Rehabilitation Counseling degree, but the agency does not offer monetary assistance to them in their pursuit of a degree. OVR works with the University of Kentucky in providing students of the MRC program opportunities to complete their practicum and internship hours with the agency. This is a benefit to the student by giving them an opportunity for hands on field experience as well as a recruitment tool for OVR

##### 3. Personnel Standards

Describe the State agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards consistent with section 101(a)(7)(B) and 34 CFR 361.18(c) to ensure that designated State unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:

###### 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

Based on the new WIOA regulations the agency has modified the “Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor” definition. The agency now defines a qualified rehabilitation counselor as one who meets the following criteria:

1. A Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) is preferred.
2. Master’s degree from an accredited university in master’s degree in rehabilitation, rehabilitation teaching or therapy, guidance and/or counseling, psychology, sociology, orientation and mobility, social work, special education with emphasis in vocational counseling or a related; OR
3. Meets the Kentucky Personnel Cabinet standard to be certified as for the starting position of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Grade 13. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Grade 13 position requires a master’s degree in rehabilitation, rehabilitation teaching or therapy, guidance and/or counseling, psychology, sociology, orientation and mobility, social work, special education with emphasis in vocational counseling or a related field. In the absence of a master’ degree a bachelor’s degree in one of the above areas plus two years of professional experience in vocational rehabilitation, vocational assessment, employer relations or rehabilitation technology is required.

Based on the above criteria of Vocational Rehab Counselor, all employed vocational rehabilitation counselors meet or exceed the criteria.

The following professional/para-professional certifications are considered primary within the agency. Staff qualifying for certification within the job classifications are assisted with maintenance fees. Those new qualifiers may receive assistance with examination fees based on one time pass or fail. Managers of VR Counselors are also required to meet the minimum qualified standards for their classification and are encouraged to obtain their CRC.

Primary certifications currently utilized within OVR are as follows:

* Certified Rehabilitation Counseling (CRCC/CRC)
* Assistive Technology Professional (ATP/RESNA),
* Certified Interpreters (RID)
* Certified Driver Rehabilitation Specialist (CDRS)

In addition to the above referenced professional positions employed by OVR, the agency also has need of professionals to fulfill medical and specialized services provided at CDPVTC and the Charles McDowell Center. To fulfill those needs there are additional licensed or certified personnel such:

* Driver and Traffic Safety Training Certification - for those that provide on-the-road driver instructions to students
* Certified Daycare Director - for the childcare program
* Orientation and Mobility (COMS)
* Kentucky Professional Teaching - for the vocational instructors
* Certified Speech Pathologists
* Certified Public Account
* Certified Maintenance Employees and Drivers– plumbing, electric and CDL

Some critical services in the residential facilities must be contracted to provide specialized counseling services and those include;

* Licensed Clinical Social Worker
* Licensed Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselor
* Licensed Psychologist.

###### B. the establishment and maintenance of education and experience requirements, in accordance with section 101(a)(7)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act, to ensure that the personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.

OVR utilizes best practices promoting retention among direct support professionals. At the end of 2019 there were 124 counselors in the Division of Field Services and 3 additional located at the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center Division (CDPVTC). Of those from Field Services there were 61 or 49% who were Certified Rehabilitation Counselors (CRC) and of the 3 at CDPVTC there are 2 CRC’s. Of the new hires for 2019 there are 4 that will not meet the required standard of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor until they complete their probation period. Their probation ends as follows: October (1), December (2) and January 2020 (1). There are 97% of Vocational Rehabilitation Employees in the field that meet the required standard for the agency. All 4 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (3) located at the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center meet the required personnel standard.

The VR Counselors in the field have the following educational backgrounds:

20 with Bachelor’s degree only: Rehabilitation Counseling (1), Psychology (9), Social Work (6), Human Services (2) and Sociology (2). The remaining 105 have a master’s degree in Special Education (3), Sociology (3), Social Work (13), Rehabilitation Counseling (64), Psychology (3), Public Administration (1), Mental Health (1), Human Services (2), Human Development (1), Family Counseling (1), Education (1), Deaf Education (2), Criminal Justice (1), Human Development and Leadership (1), Counseling (6), and Clinical Psychology (2).

Of the managers supervising the VR Counselors, there are 19 total and of that number all meet the qualifying standard for their classification. In addition, 17 are Certified Rehabilitation Counselors and the remaining 2 have their master’s degree in rehabilitation counseling.

In addition to the above referenced counselors and managers, the agency also has 30 other employees that maintain their CRC and supports them in the maintenance of this certification. This includes: Administrators (9), Assistant Director (1), Program Branch Managers (2), Community Resource Specialist (1), Deputy Executive Director (1), Division Directors (2), Employment Specialists (4), Instructor (1), Psychologist (1), Regional Managers (5), Rehabilitation Technologists (2) and work Experience counselor (1).

The agency Rehabilitation Technology Branch provides assistive technology services to the field for consumers as well as to employees as needed. There are 13 employees in this branch including the manager. The branch manager is certified as an Assistive Technology Professional (ATP). Upon merging with the Kentucky Office for the Blind all assistive technology providers, merit employees (6) and contracted employees (7) were combined in one branch. Certified staff within the branch include: ATP, Certified Driver Rehabilitation Specialist and Durable Medical Equipment Specialist. The agency hosts an annual AT Summit to provide specialized training to staff in this branch and opens the training to other staff within the agency. In addition, staff in this branch provide training to new employees on the ADA, processes within the agency for AT requests and general AT training reviews.

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center (CDPVTC) has unique staffing needs based on the services they provide to consumers and their residential structure. In 2019, CDPVTC employed 94 personnel to provide services in the residential facility. There are 3 VR Counselors on site and all meet CSPD standards for the agency and 2 are CRC. The supervisor of these counselors is also a CRC. The counselors do not determine eligibility, but do help with planning and monitoring of vocational goal progress. Other personnel staffing classifications for CDPVTC include; vocational evaluators, dorm staff, maintenance personnel, security officers, financial specialists, instructors, certified drivers and medical personnel to meet the diverse needs of the students served in this residential setting.

The Charles McDowell Center provides services unique to individuals with visual disabilities. The Facility Administrator supervises staff at the McDowell Center including: Administrator (1), Assistants (3), Community Resource Specialist (1), Consumer Services Coordinator (1), Instructor (4), Nurse (1), Patient Aide (1), Psychologist (1), Receptionist (1) a Work Experience Counselor (1), Tech Support (2), Dorm Residential Aide (3 and all are contracted) and 1 maintenance person (contracted).

With the merging of the agencies, the two facilities are exploring new opportunities to share expertise and services for all consumers. Staff are trained on services provided by each facility and how to access these for their consumers. This includes tours of the facilities for a better understanding of the unique services provided at each location.

##### 4. Staff Development.

Describe the State agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that, consistent with section101(a)(7)(C) of the Rehabilitation Act, all personnel employed by the designated State unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:

###### A. System of staff development

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

The agency believes that a well-trained professional staff is essential in providing quality services to individuals with disabilities and achieving positive employment outcomes for agency consumers. Training plans are based on: federal laws, RSA monitoring findings, agency goals and directions, continuous improvement initiatives, training needs assessment, staff and consumer input.

In October 2019 the agency hosted a statewide training to address the merger of the Kentucky Office for the Blind and the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. Agency leadership guided the development of the training agenda that included: Understanding the Merge/What it Means to Me?, Dual Cases, Order of Selection and Eligibility, Order of Selection and Individualized Plan for Employment, Approval Processes and Service Fee Memorandums. In July 2019 the agency provided a follow-up training to address specific training questions for the Rehab Counselor for the Blind as it related to providing services for dual cases including an update of disabilities other than those vision related. These trainings are required to be completed within the first 30 days of employment.

The state of Kentucky and OVR are utilizing technology to expand training opportunities and create more on-demand programs for timely training. Upon hiring, the agency participates in online training required by the state and the Education Workforce Development Cabinet. These include: Anti-Harassment, Workplace Violence Prevention, State Government Ethics, Security Awareness for Technology, Performance Evaluation Orientation and Accurate Time Reporting. New employees are also required to take an online training on the Client Assistance Program (CAP) developed by the coordinator of that service. The training provides an overview of the services provided to consumers and processes for consumers to enlist the services of CAP if needed.

The agency utilizes webinar trainings to deliver training to new employees when it is an appropriate method for the topic. In 2019 the online training programs includes: Assistive Technology, Driver Tech Processes, Case Management, Case Management System, Kentucky Business Enterprise Vendor Program Training, Introduction to Eligibility and Introduction to IPE. Plans are in place to expand these trainings to online/on demand formats.

Managers are encouraged to arrange for new counselors to visit the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center and the Charles McDowell Center for an in-person opportunity to review their programs and the facilities so that they can accurately relay this information to consumers on programs appropriate for the achievement of their vocational goals.

In addition to the above named online training programs, all CDPVTC employees are required to take training programs online to fulfill the requirements for their Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities. These trainings include: Identification of Critical Incidents, Promoting Wellness of Consumers, Reporting Abuse & Neglect of Vulnerable Adults and Consumer rights.

The agency uses online training and webinars developed by other state entities. Kentucky Employee Assistance Program and Kentucky Department of Library and Archives regularly distribute training opportunities that are shared with our employees. They explore topics such as depression awareness, anxiety disorders and mental health awareness, budgeting and dealing with angry customers.

New counselors are mandated to attend a face-to-face training. They receive an overview of the agency mission, philosophy, values, federal and state laws, appropriations, budget, eligibility, assessment, vocational goal development, plan development, pre-employment transition services, community based work transition services, confidentiality and ethics, supported employment, rehabilitation technology, diversity, disability awareness, Social Security Administration (SSA), Ticket to Work, Workforce Investment Opportunities Act (WIOA) specific disabilities. Training programs for all staff emphasize informed consumer choice and maximizing consumer direction of individualized rehabilitation plans. Information regarding to current research is disseminated to all staff via email and formal training opportunities. This training occurs at least 2 times during the calendar year and more if needed based on hiring of new staff.

The agency also encourages staff to utilize the training offered through other entities within and outside of state government. The information for registration and participation is disseminated via email to all staff. One partner in this endeavor is the Human Development Institute (HDI) from the University of Kentucky. In addition to our work with HDI on the Supported Employment Training Project the employees also utilize the webinar series topics offered by them during a spring, summer and fall training program. Topics of 2019 included: Universal Design, Employment for Youth with Disabilities, Service Animals and the ADA and Disabilities and the Arts. The agency worked with HDI on their first Annual Assistive Technology Summit in March 2019. A multi-agency collaborative training took place in April 2019 titled “Nothing About Us Without Us” hosted by the University of Kentucky, HDI, Kentucky Autism Training Center, the Office on Autism and OVR. In addition, information is disseminated to all staff for 4th Thursday ADA topics provided through HDI that include such topics as: AT as a Reasonable Accommodation, ADA & Employment, ADA & Public Accommodations, A Snapshot of the ADA: The Legislations and History of the Disability Movement.

The rehabilitation counselor mentor program was implemented in June 2002 with pilot programs in six districts. There are currently 22 counselors that have successfully applied to participate and completed the orientation for the program. With the merge of the agencies the Rehabilitation Counselors for the Blind are now included in the mentoring program and 1 has officially applied, been accepted and is now serving on the team that oversees the program. She is an experienced counselor and was formerly with the Kentucky Office for the Blind. In the absence of certified mentors the branch manager serves as the mentor or delegates the duties to one of the senior counselors. There are 13 out of 19 districts represented. Certified mentors receive no additional pay for their services and are required to undergo additional training to maintain their mentor credentials. The development of the skills and knowledge required to perform this specific role provides an opportunity to build their resume’ and prepares them to assume other leadership roles within the agency.

College and university level classes are highly encouraged for staff though the agency does not provide educational assistance at this time. Obtaining an education degree may result in a reclassification if the reclassification is a result of additional material duties assumed by the employee. The agency shares information with staff regarding formal educational training such as the MRC. Included in the information are details about scholarships and grants that may be available to assist with educational expenses. The agency maintains a library of MRC books that have been donated by previous participants and makes these available to staff as needed.

The agency continues to see the retirement of agency leaders and is cognizant of the need for leadership succession. The agency has utilized various opportunities to achieve this goal.

The Office of Diversity Equality and Training located in the Kentucky Personnel Cabinet is currently working to release a more robust leadership training program after discontinuing the Certified Supervisory Essentials training that has been in place since 2014. Agency staff are encouraged to attend the Leadership and Diversity Training Conference offered by the Kentucky Personnel Cabinet.

Agency staff were encouraged to participate in the Leadership and Diversity Conference hosted by the Kentucky Personnel Cabinet Office of Diversity Equality and Training. The training took place in September 2019 and had a greater focus on disability than in past years. Topics included: Creating Accessible Documents, Using the Job Accommodation Network, The Role of the ADA Coordinator and the keynote address was given by an athlete with a hearing disability.

###### B. Acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge

Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to designated State unit professionals and paraprofessionals.

Resources on research and national training/communication on trends and updates in the field of rehabilitation are shared with all staff via email. The agency subscribes to emails distribution lists that provide frequent updates on rehabilitation research to share with staff.

OVR makes every effort to have representation at and participate in national and regional and state training events. In 2019 OVR staff represented the agency at the following: National Rehabilitation Association Annual Conference, Southeast Region National Rehabilitation Association Conference, Kentucky Rehabilitation Association Annual Conference, Kentucky Association of Persons for Supported Employment Conference, Kentucky AHEAD and Southeast Rehabilitation Institute on Deafness (SERID).

##### 5. Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs

Describe how the designated State unit has personnel or obtains the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in appropriate modes of communication with or in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability.

The agency has designated counselors to work with our consumers who are deaf, blind and deaf/blind. The Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCD) have sign language skills and the Rehabilitation Counselors for the Blind are trained on the unique communication needs of their consumers. In addition, both groups are trained to coordinate services for deaf/blind. The agency also employees an administrator dedicated to service provision for deaf/blind consumers. All counselors work with the consumers to meet their communication needs to successfully participate in their rehabilitation plan. In addition, there are rehabilitation counselors who also serve as communication specialists because they have received specific training to meet the needs of consumers who are hard of hearing. At the end of 2019 there were 59 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors trained and designated as Communication Specialists. The manager of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Branch works to insure that all employees have adequate American Sign Language skills resources to communicate with consumers who are deaf through the use of staff interpreters or those engaged by contract. Certified sign-language interpreters are available to consumers and employees to ensure full participation in the rehabilitation programs.

Foreign Language Interpreters are contracted as necessary to ensure that individuals who are from diverse cultural backgrounds in need of interpreters to access services will be able to communicate in their native languages. Language access lines are available to staff to utilize for interpreting needs.

Voice Description and captioning is provided for any videos and classroom teaching techniques. All materials utilized and distributed by the OVR are available in an accessible format, including large print, electronic format, audio recordings, Spanish or Braille with respect to the individual's informed choice. In an effort to assist staff with communication in a foreign language with consumers as needed Language Line is available as a resource.

##### 6. Coordination of Personnel Development Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

As appropriate, describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated State unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

OVR shall coordinate its CSPD plans within the Kentucky Personnel System, to match the standards and qualifications of our personnel with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the standards under the Rehabilitation Act, as amended.

The Kentucky Interagency Transition Council meets on a quarterly basis to address continued fulfillment of the Kentucky Interagency Agreement on Transition Services for Youth with Disabilities. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Department of Education are two of the eleven state agencies that are parties to the agreement. One of the provisions of this agreement is cooperative training and staff development concerning transition issues. OVR staff attend Community Work Transition training offered by the University of Kentucky‘s Human Development Institute (HDI). In addition, staff attends the Kentucky AHEAD Conference (professionals in post-secondary education providing services to persons with disabilities) each year receiving valuable training and resources.

Rehabilitation counselors work collaboratively with the special education cooperatives, high school education teachers, local directors of special education, and job coaches for students transitioning from high school into employment. OVR Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors attend IEP and ARC meetings working with the team in establishing a vocational goal. This assures the development of the students IPE in conjunction with the vocational rehabilitation IEP. OVR provides support to teaching instructors, school staff and job coaches regarding rehabilitation issues and other areas of expertise such as Assistive Technology to ensure successful placements. Often rural schools do not have the needed resources; therefore OVR staff offer their expertise based on the individual needs of the student working closely with all staff involved with IDEA.

#### j. Statewide Assessment

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.11(a)).

##### 1. Provide an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State, particularly the VR services needs of those:

###### A. with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;

This report provides a summary and the findings of the activities of the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (KYOVR) and the Office for the Blind (OFB) in an effort to comprehensively assess the various vocational rehabilitation (VR) needs in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. This assessment was conducted for strategic planning purposes and to meet the comprehensive needs assessment requirement of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) as defined in 34 CFR 361.29. This federal regulation requires the agency to assess the following areas related to VR: 1. Services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services; 2. Services to individuals who are minorities or in unserved or underserved populations. 3. Services provided to individuals with disabilities through various components of the workforce development system 4. Youth and students with disabilities, including their need for transition services; 5. The need to establish, develop or improve community rehabilitation programs KYOVR and KYOFB previously conducted a comprehensive needs assessment in 2015. This assessment was conducted jointly taking into account that effective October 1, 2018 the blind and general agencies in Kentucky would be combined. Federal regulation requires the needs of individuals with disabilities in the state be assessed every three years. The current study is also intended to identify and provide recommendations for trends in the service needs, disability populations and any environmental factors possibly impacting Kentuckians with disabilities. Information from the current survey is intended to allow a more informed strategic planning process, seeking to address the identified trends and prioritize them based on data identified in the needs assessment. The current comprehensive needs assessment was conducted with guidance provided by the Kentucky Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation (KYSCVR), and the Kentucky Office for the Blind State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) as required by 34 CFR 361.17(h)(3). KYSCVR and the SRC offered input into the methodology and data analysis of the assessment, assuring the research would adequately reach the target population, would return valid and reliable data, and would produce recommendations that would guide the strategic planning and budget development process.

This comprehensive needs assessment identified the following service needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities in the state:

Support services such as transportation, etc.;

Supported employment services;

Benefits planning assistance Transition services Services after employment;

Mental health treatment and counseling.

The assessment identified the following as very significant barriers to employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities:

State budget restrictions;

Employer attitudinal barriers;

The lack of long-term support;

The lack of information regarding disability resources;

and The slow job market;

The assessment identified the following issues related to services for individuals from unserved or underserved populations:

Post-employment services;

Mental health treatment;

and Supported employment services

It further identified a continued need for vocational rehabilitation services in Appalachian Eastern Kentucky, a traditionally underserved area of the state. It also identified individuals with mental illness and transition students as growing populations of individuals requiring vocational rehabilitation services. The assessment found the following issues related to services provided to individuals with disabilities through various components of the workforce investment system: Communication issues; Knowledge of visual disabilities; Availability and staffing issues; Understanding and support of persons with disabilities.

The assessment identified the following issues related to services to individuals with disabilities provided by Community Rehabilitation Programs: More agencies needed to serve consumers (specifically supported employment); More services or enhanced (customized) services needed; More training to provide quality services; Transportation for consumers; More funding for agencies; Employer attitudinal barriers. The findings of this survey will be used by Kentucky OVR and OFB to conduct strategic planning for agency priorities, activities and services for the next three years as a combined agency. A Snapshot of Kentucky’s Population with A Disability According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 29.9% of adults in Kentucky experience a disability as compared to 22.5% in the United States. They state that “despite progress, adults with disabilities in Kentucky and across the country continue to experience significant differences in health characteristics and behaviors compared to adults without disabilities.” Furthermore “Disability costs in healthcare expenditures are $5.8 billion per year in Kentucky.” Also, of those who reported having a limitation 25.9% of them reported an annual household income below $15,000 as compared to 10.7% of those without a limitation. According to the 2017 Disability Compendium (which utilizes American Community 2016 Survey data) working age Kentuckians with a disability experience poverty at the highest state rate in the country at 34.0%. In the U.S. overall the poverty rate for working age civilians with disabilities is 26.7%. The Kentucky and U.S. poverty rates for working age civilians without disabilities are 14.7% and 11.6% respectively. Therefore, the poverty gap for working age civilians between Kentuckians with a disability and those without is 19.3% - making it the third highest rate of any state in the U.S., second to Rhode Island and Maine. Furthermore, in the same report figures show that Kentucky has only 30.5% of working age civilians with disabilities who are employed, with the U.S. rate being 35.9%. When looking at civilians of working age without disabilities those rates are 75.4% for Kentucky and 76.8% nationwide. When comparing the employment rate of residents without disabilities to those with disabilities Kentucky has the third highest employment gap of 44.9 points. These figures give credence to the fact that Kentucky has a great need for vocational rehabilitation services. The 2018 Scorecard released by Prosperity Now reports state-level data: 26.7% of all Kentucky households with a member with a disability live below the federal poverty threshold; and 52.8% of all Kentucky households with adults with disabilities live in liquid asset poverty, meaning that more than half of households with adults with disabilities do not have enough money to weather a significant emergency. Kentucky continues to have one of the highest prevalence rates of disability in the nation. According to the Annual Disability Statistics Compendium 2017 produced by Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Statistics and Demographics, using data from the 2016 American Community Survey, Kentucky’s rate of disability (17.9%) was the second highest among all states, trailing only West Virginia (20.1%). In summary, Kentucky still has a higher rate of disability of the country as a whole and it is also higher than most states. The state’s disabled population faces inordinate and disproportionate additional challenges because of the generally poor health and poor economic condition of the state. Methodology To keep costs to a minimum, the primary means used to collect data for this comprehensive needs assessment were surveys conducted of specific groups. The surveys were primarily conducted on-line through surveymonkey.com, although anyone could request accommodations through email or via telephone. The vast majority of responses, however, were obtained on-line. Kentucky is a diverse state, with large regional variations in population and socio-economic levels and this data collection process attempted to address these regional differences by ensuring statewide participation. To accomplish the goals of a comprehensive needs assessment as specified by the federal law, separate surveys were developed for the following groups: The general public, including individuals with disabilities and current and past consumers of KYOVR and KYOFB services; KYOVR and OFB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors; Other KYOVR and OFB staff not engaged in direct counseling services; Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs); Kentucky Career Center staff; Employers; Transition students; Disability Coordinators; Vision Itinerant teachers; and Eye Physicians The surveys were designed specifically for each group and are described in more detail below. Because the research was focused on the vocational rehabilitation service needs of individuals with disabilities, the input of service providers related to the needs of VR consumers was important, as they work on a daily basis with individuals with disabilities. KYOVR and OFB also sought input informally from various agency stakeholder groups, providing insight into the strengths, challenges and needs of the public VR program.

A. with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services; OVR General Public Survey

The survey used for the general public was posted as a link on the KYOVR public website. The link was publicized on the OVR website along with instruction on how to request accommodations. The general public survey was sent to 10,550 consumers who had provided us with their email and permission to communicate in that manner. These were current consumers or closed in the last 2 years. The link was distributed through the KYOVR Facebook profile and to past and present consumers who had granted KYOVR permission to use email. The link was distributed electronically to the following groups: Kentucky Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation (KYSCVR); Community Rehabilitation Programs; The Kentucky Development Disabilities Council and the agencies, organizations and groups with representation on the Council; Other disability-related email address lists. The electronic solicitation materials provided a brief explanation of the purpose of the survey and directed the individual to the survey link on the agency’s public website. This link directed them to the online survey site, which again provided a brief explanation of the purpose of the survey, along with an explanation the information provided would be confidential and no identifying information would be requested. The survey was available between January 22, 2018 and March 16, 2018. The survey had various demographic items related to gender, age, county of residence and ethnic/racial background. The survey also had several items related to determining the number of individuals with disabilities participating, whether the individuals were consumers of KYOVR services, and their specific disability or the disability they represented. Respondents were then asked to indicate whether they were currently employed. In the next section, a list of VR services was presented, and respondents were asked to assess the current need for these services in the state. The respondents could choose whether they felt the need for the service was met, somewhat met, or unmet. They were then asked to rate potential barriers to employment on a scale of one to five, with five indicating a very significant barrier and one signifying the area was not a barrier to employment. Lastly, the respondents were asked to provide comments to assist KYOVR in addressing future VR service needs for individuals with disabilities. The last question on the survey gave respondents a chance to provide an open-ended comment response. An overwhelming 196 respondents provided actual comments. (Twenty-nine respondents listed their comment as “none” so they were eliminated from the calculation.) Almost one-third (32%) of responses were positive comments in the form of compliments for their counselor or praise for the agency. Twenty-nine percent said they needed more resources, transportation, or training. Twenty four percent had complaints about their counselor or frustration with communication difficulties. Eleven percent wish that OVR and OFB had more funding or a larger budget. Six hundred four (604) individuals started the General Public Survey and 511 (84.6%) completed it in its entirety. Of those that responded, 57.8% (349) identified themselves as having a disability and 71.7% (429) indicated they were a current or former consumer of VR services. Almost two-thirds (65.9%) of respondents were female. When asked if they were employed, 70.3% (418) stated they either work in a full or part-time capacity. Representation from all counties was proportional to the population distribution of the state. 91% (550) reported their ethnic/cultural affiliation as Caucasian and 6% (39) reported they were African-American. All other cultural groups had less than a 4% representation in the survey. Respondents were allowed to choose more than one race. According to the 2016 U.S. Census, racial demographics for Kentucky are 89% white (Caucasian), 9% black or African-American, 3% Hispanic, and 2% all other. It appears that response was representative of the racial diversity in Kentucky. The most prevalent age range of the Consumer Survey respondents was 46-55 years of age (24.8%). Almost one-half (47%) were between 46-65 years of age. Public Survey for the Blind and Visually Impaired There were twenty-eight respondents for the public survey with sixty-eight percent of them being blind or having a vision impairment with the other thirty — two percent being an individual family member or parent with seventy-three percent stated they were buying or owned their own home. Seventy-six percent indicate they are happy with their living arrangements. Sixty-four percent of the respondents were female and twenty six percent male. Predominately the respondents were white (82%). The majority (57%) resided with a spouse/partner and children in the household. Forty percent of the respondents could read large print. Seventy-five percent of the respondents listed a diagnosis other than cataracts, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy or macular degeneration with forty percent reporting their vision was progressive or likely to deteriorate. The majority of the respondents (39%) were high school graduates and twenty-five percent indicated they held a bachelor or graduate degree. Seventy-three percent held Social Security Disability Income benefits (SSDI). Fifty percent of the individuals reported they were working. The highest incomes reported were $50,000 - $75,000 (32%) and lower incomes reported were less than $14,000 (24%). Over seventy percent reported the need for assistive technology over the past year and sixty-two present indicated they were knowledgeable regarding needed devices. Cost was listed as the most prohibitive barrier to receiving needed equipment. Thirty-one percent indicated they needed services or supports within the past year for employment. The top three challenges in finding employment were loss of benefits, individual job skills and available jobs (which may directly correlate with the individual skills level). Sixty — two percent of the respondents indicated that on the job training, job search assistance and on the job supports would be most helpful to them in finding employment however; eighty-seven percent said that assistive technology would be the most helpful. Fifty-five percent indicated they used public transportation within the past year and forty-five percent said they had not (however it could be they live in areas where public transportation is not available. Again, as in years past the most utilized form of transportation was friend or relative with cost being a prohibitive barrier to transportation. Around fifty-nine percent of individuals indicated there were adequate programs, services and supports for independent living in the home and community. When asked about services they could most benefit from in meeting their needs the top three were Bioptic Driving, Money Management and Mental health Services. Eighty percent indicated that the public school system was accommodating to them. For those indicating the system had not been accommodating they indicted they were not sensitive to issues, did not have enough skilled staff or they did not provide appropriate technology or orientation and mobility training. OVR/OFB Counselor Survey VR counselors are a valuable source of information when assessing VR service needs. VR counselors, by definition of their role, assess the needs of the person with a disability and develop a plan to utilize available services to assist VR consumers find suitable employment. Of the related professionals, they are best suited to identify gaps in service or trends in disabilities served; making their input a critical facet of the comprehensive needs assessment. To gather data related to the opinion of KYOVR and OFB counselors, the agency conducted an online survey between January 22, 2018 and March 16, 2018. The survey link was distributed by email, providing the basic purpose and goals of the survey in relation to the comprehensive needs assessment. The email also provided assurances that participation was voluntary and all responses would be confidential. For informational purposes, the counselor survey asked questions related to caseload size, educational training, most common impairments served, KYOVR/OFB district and number of years of service with KYOVR/OFB. They were then asked to review various population/diagnosis groups and indicate whether they had observed an increase, decrease, or no change in the number of individuals from this group on their caseload. Counselors were then presented with a list of VR services and asked to identify whether they had observed an increase, decrease, or no change in demand for those services. They were also asked questions related to the need for additional or enhanced Supported Employment services in their area, barriers to employment, and satisfaction with the local Kentucky Career Centers. The next section of the survey asked counselors to provide information related to their utilization and satisfaction with services from local CRPs. Lastly, the counselors discussed potential needs and possible programs for the Perkins residential center. At the time of the OVR Counselor Survey there were 135 VR counselors employed by KYOVR and KYOFB with 91 (67%) starting the survey and 75 (56%) completing it in its entirety. Of the respondents, 53.8% (49) had worked 10 years or less with KYOVR or KYOFB and 88.9% (90) held a Master’s degree. There was a wide variance in reported caseload size, with 49% (45) reporting a caseload size between 100 and 200 cases. Only 6% (5) of the sample stated their caseload had more than 300 active cases. OVR Staff Survey While input from the VR counselor is critical to any comprehensive needs assessment, it is important to note that many other KYOVR and professionals have valuable experience to be tapped to assist in the information gathering process. Job placement staff, assistants, administrators, and other professionals in the agency interact during many facets of the VR process and can provide information related to VR service needs and trends, which can then be compared to comments from other groups. The agency surveyed the non-counselor positions in a similar method as previous groups. Staff was surveyed utilizing an online process and email informing staff of the survey and, as in previous surveys, included an explanation of the survey, notification that participation was not mandatory and that results would be confidential. The email also clearly specified those whose primary job duties were related to counseling were not to respond to the survey. To gather data related to the opinion of other KYOVR staff, the agency conducted an online survey between January 22, 2018 and March 16, 2018. The VR staff survey was shorter in length than the counselor survey, but addressed similar issues. The survey requested the staff person indicate their district office and number of years working for KYOVR. As in the public survey, a list of VR services was provided and the participant was asked to indicate whether the need for each service was met, somewhat met or unmet. The survey also asked the respondent to indicate the services which were most in demand by KYOVR consumers. Lastly, the survey asked questions related to barriers to employment and satisfaction with the local Kentucky Career Centers.

Ninety four (94) staff started the OVR Other Staff Survey with 66 staff completing it. Currently there are 235 other staff at KYOVR so 40% started the survey and 28% completed it. For confidentiality reasons staff were not asked for their job duty or position title, as it could potentially reveal their identity. There was proportional participation in the survey throughout all areas of the state. A variety of employees responded as evidenced by the variance of years employed by the agency. The greatest numbers were in the ranges of 1-5 years (31%) and 11-15 years (22%) employed in Vocational Rehabilitation. Ironically, 3 years ago each of those ranges were only 18% of responses with the highest category at 6-10 years (25%). OFB Staff Survey Twenty (20) staff completed the OFB staff survey. Staff were asked to rate services requested by frequency and the top three services were mental health, Bioptic Driving and Benefits planning. When asked from their experience what populations they see as underserved, mental health, substance abuse and individuals with criminal backgrounds were the top three populations. Overall 40 percent of staff reported that relationships and collaboration within the workforce agencies was improved. Eighty percent of staff reported that consumers served would recommend our services to others. Staff reported the following top three challenges prevented individuals from obtaining and maintaining employment: 1) loss of benefits; 2) loss of medical coverage; 3) lack of assistive technologies and 4) a fear of losing other subsidies. The number one area that staff identified in supporting each other in meeting the overall needs of individuals who are blind and visually impaired is increased communications.

Employer Survey In an effort to assess the needs of the other customer — the employer, an online survey of employers was conducted. Each job placement specialist through KYOVR was asked to forward the survey email to employers which they have utilized in the past year or so. KYOVR surveyed these employers via the email distributed through the job placement specialists. The email provided information related to the specific purpose of the survey, steps to ensure confidentiality and voluntariness, and instructions to access and complete the survey. The survey was available between January 22, 2018 and March 16, 2018. The employers were asked in the survey about their familiarity with KYOVR and KYOFB as well as their understanding of the agencies’ services. The respondents were also asked if they have worked with or received services from either agency, as well as what their hiring needs are at this time. Next they were given a list of employee traits and asked to indicate the importance of each attribute. Also they were asked what barriers they encounter when hiring a person with a disability as well as the resources they need to help reduce those barriers. Lastly, they were asked to share how they have benefited from hiring an employee with a disability. The Job Placement Staff sent the Employer survey to their contact list and received 10 responses. Every time we attempt this needs assessment it is a struggle to get employers to respond. Therefore, we surveyed the employers along with the CRPs at the coalition meetings in Louisville and Eastern Kentucky. The general public CRPs and the OVR other staff (not counselors) saw support services, such as transportation and rental assistance, as their highest ‘unmet need’. Individuals with disabilities and VR counselors also considered “support services” an ‘unmet need’ in the top 5 unmet needs. To explain and support this unmet need it is helpful to address the barriers. The CRPs, OVR counselors, and other OVR staff agreed that one of the highest barriers is transportation with other barriers being “agency/state budget restrictions” and “employer attitudinal barriers”. The results of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment survey in 2018 still indicated an ‘unmet need’ of post-employment services, similar to the previous surveys. In 2011 only 40.5% of individuals completing the public survey indicated the need was unmet and gave post-employment services a rating average of only 1.62 (with 1 indicating need was unmet, 2 indicating somewhat met, and 3 indicating need was met). In 2018, similarly, 36.6% completing the public survey indicated the need was unmet his gave post-employment services a rating average of only 2.08. The rating average was still similar when separating those respondents with disabilities (34.7% and a rating of 1.92). However, this sentiment was not expressed by the surveys for the OVR counselors or other staff. Similarly, CRP’s indicated post-employment as a significant need with 30% indicating it was an unmet need and a rating of 1.74. Less than twenty percent of respondents on each of those surveys (OVR counselor, other OVR staff) saw post-employment services as an ‘unmet need’. Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP’s) and other OVR staff both saw mental health counseling and treatment as one of the greatest unmet needs of consumers. Furthermore CRP’s increased the greatest in demand in the last 3 years to come from those with a diagnosis of Mental Illness (58.0% of respondents). Other OVR staff respondents indicated that psychological restoration was one of the services in greatest demand (35%). The identified need for mental health counseling and treatment has not been listed as the greatest need in the last few Comprehensive Needs Assessments. However, disability coordinators did indicate that mental health issues were a significant barrier for transition age youth as they exit the post-secondary educational setting. One of the barriers indicated on the Comprehensive Needs Assessment survey also reinforces the unmet need of post-employment services. According to the general public, as well as individuals with disabilities, there is a fairly significant barrier of the lack of long-term support. With the rating of 1 being a very significant barrier and 5 indicating no barrier, the lack of long-term support received a rating average of 2.42 according to individuals with disabilities and a 2.79 according to the general public. This indicated a significant barrier of long-term support when asked on the general public survey. This rating was concurred by CRPs who indicated a significant barrier (with a rating of 2.94). This information lends itself to support the need for both post-employment and long-term support services. Supported employment services were identified as a need across almost all groups surveyed. On the public survey, 34.7% of individuals with disabilities identified supported employment services as an ‘unmet need’, the highest needed service. Other staff rated supported employment as the third most needed. More than one-third (35.2%) of vocational rehabilitation counselors who responded to the survey saw a need for additional or enhanced supported employment services. There are various pieces of demographic data about the state that reinforce the continuing need for supported employment services. Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) often benefit from supported employment services. These individuals are not faring as well in Kentucky as they do nationally as demonstrated by the data compiled from State Data 2016: Only 20% of IDD individuals are served in integrated employment 368 individuals are on a waiting list for day and employment services Only 4% of total funding for all IDD agencies is used for integrated employment OVR continues to serve 10% of all consumers being individuals with Intellectual Disability (ID). And 8% of successful closures are individuals with ID. The percent of employment closures for all OVR consumers was 34% but for Individuals with ID it was 28%.

###### B. who are minorities;

Ethnically, Kentucky remains a surprisingly homogenous state. Whereas the United States population is now 76.0% Caucasian (2016 American Community Survey), Kentucky is 89.4% Caucasian. African-Americans compose 9.2% of the population in Kentucky compared to the national average of 13.8%. Although growing, in 2010 the Hispanic population in the state was still estimated at only 3.3% while the percentage in the entire country was 17.3%. No other ethnic minorities in Kentucky composed more than 1.3% (Asian) of the population. Kentucky remains a fairly homogeneous state, with 89% of the population identifying themselves as Caucasian, nine percent African-American and two percent other minorities. Thirty-nine (6.6%) African Americans participated in the surveys and twenty-four (4.0%) respondents identified themselves as belonging to all other minority groups. The needs and barriers of these groups were similar to those identified by all respondents to the public survey with small differences. The top needs identified by all minorities were Benefits Planning services (a rating of 2.22 with a rating of 3.0 indicating the need was unmet and 48.6% of respondents indicating an ‘unmet need’), and post-employment services (2.21 and 47.1%). Both benefits planning and post-employment services were rated as greater needs by respondents from minority backgrounds than by all respondents. Interestingly, when filtered for minority groups only 36% said they were employed full-time as compared to 52% of all respondents. The primary barriers to employment and independent living identified by all respondents with minorities were state budget restrictions (3.16 rating out of 5.0 with 5.0 being ‘very significant barrier,’ 32.7% rating it as a ‘very significant barrier’), disability benefits (3.00, 24.5%) and lack of long-term support (2.98, 24.0%).

###### C. who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;

Appalachian Eastern Kentucky remains an underserved region of the state. The Appalachian area was determined by counties listed by the federal Appalachian Regional Commission (arc.gov). Its rural nature and persistent economic distress often result in an uneven and inadequate delivery of services. Of the 84 counties in Appalachia considered to be “distressed” (worst 10% in the nation) 37 of them lie in Kentucky (the other 47 are spread among the 9 other states.

Furthermore there are 11 additional counties with “distressed areas”. When filtering the public survey for individuals in those 54 counties, the greatest needs were support services (45.7% with a rating of 2.20) followed by job placement (41.2% and 2.18) and post-employment services (41.0% and 2.18). The primary barriers to employment and independent living identified by all respondents from Appalachia were slow job market (3.1 rating out of 5.0 with 5.0 being ‘very significant barrier,’ 25.0% rating it as a ‘very significant barrier’), state budget restrictions (2.9, 19.6%) and employer attitudes (2.9, 19.5%).

This is reflective of the poor job market in the Appalachian area as compared to the other filtered surveys. In fiscal year 2017, only 4.1% of expenditures KYOVR made to community rehabilitation programs were spent in the agency’s three Eastern Kentucky districts, largely because the service providers just do not exist in the area. 12.9% of supported employment expenditures occurred in those three districts but that shows a great improvement — up from 5.5% in 2011.

Complicating service delivery in Eastern Kentucky, particularly related to employment services, is the persistent economic distress of the region. Jobs, particularly good jobs, are difficult to find and keep. The following table came from data on the website of the Appalachian Research Commission. More than one out of four Eastern Kentuckians lives in poverty and one in eleven seeking work is unemployed.

In our survey of KYOVR counselors, they were asked to identify groups of consumers they felt were coming to them in increasing numbers. The most often identified group was individuals with mental illness (as it was in 2008). More than three of four (75.6%) of counselors reported that they were seeing more of these individuals coming to the agency for services.

The respondents to the Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) survey also identified individuals with mental illness as a growing population needing their services. When asked what populations have increased over the last three years, 18 programs (58.1%) identified individuals with mental illness, the most responses for any one group. With current initiatives (KY HEALTH and Work Matters) in the state, this population is expected to continue to grow among KYOVR’s clientele. Benefits Planning Services was rated highly as an ‘unmet need’ in the last 3 Comprehensive Needs Assessments.

In this context, benefits planning is meant as assisting individuals with disabilities and their families with information about federal and state benefits (especially Social Security), employment, and taxes and their unique circumstances and opportunities in relation to them.

KYOVR made significant efforts to make such services more available across the state since the needs assessment in 2008.

KYOVR used ARRA funds to finance for one year the Benefits Information Network that trained staff from community rehabilitation programs in the rudimentary aspects of benefits planning.

KYOVR also developed a fee for service for the initial review of the effect of employment and wages on benefits for individuals with disabilities interested in going to work. This training and fee for service was designed to give vocational rehabilitation counselors an additional tool to use with their consumers.

Then in 2015 the capacity was expanded by hiring Work Incentive Coordinators to work for OVR. Finally, in 2017 an online tool, DB101, was purchased and is provided free for anyone to use. These efforts to expand benefits planning services apparently did improve the rating of benefits planning in the 2018 needs assessment, at least among individuals with disabilities. In 2008, 44.0% of individuals with disabilities responding to the survey indicated there was an ‘unmet need’ for benefits planning services.

In 2018, the percentage was 32.5%. The percentage of individuals with disabilities identifying disability benefits as a very significant barrier to employment went from 39.0% in 2008 to 15.0% in 2018. Among all public respondents to the survey, the percentage identifying this as an ‘unmet need’ increased slightly (33.6% in 2008 and 38.6% in 2018) probably due to public awareness. However the percentage identifying disability benefits as a very significant barrier decreased (29.7% in 2008 and 16.7% in 2018).

Among vocational rehabilitation counselors, other KYOVR staff, and CRPs, benefits planning services were not rated highly as an ‘unmet need’ nor were disability benefits rated highly as a very significant barrier to employment.

Eye Physicians Survey There were sixty — two eye physicians that responded to the needs assessment survey distributed through the Kentucky Optometric Association. Eighty-five present were optometrists and only five present were ophthalmologists. Of the respondents sixty-three percent indicated they are aware of services provided by OFB with thirty-seven percent responding no they are not. This is reflected in the fact that sixty percent did not know where the closest office location was as a contact and only forty percent reporting they knew who to contact. Seventy-four percent indicated that business cards and brochures are preferred as a method of information for their patients and eighty percent reported they would like a list of services offered by the agency. As reported in previous years the greatest unmet needs of individuals who are blind and visually impaired are low vision services, financial need and assistive technology.

###### D. who have been served through other components of the statewide workforce development system; and

In an effort to assess VR needs of individuals with disabilities served through other components of the state workforce investment system, an online survey of the Kentucky Career Centers was conducted. Each center has a manager of operations with the responsibility of general oversight of the facility.

KYOVR surveyed the managers of these centers via an email distributed through the Kentucky Career Centers distribution list. The email provided information related to the specific purpose of the survey, steps to ensure confidentiality and voluntariness, and instructions to access and complete the survey. The survey was available between January 22, 2018 and March 16, 2018.

Of the Kentucky Career Center managers surveyed, 13 (41%) responded. Most (71%) of them indicated training needs in the areas of vocational rehabilitation services and employer resources or tax credits. When asked about their current knowledge on a variety of topics related to workers with disabilities they expressed very limited knowledge. Most (71%) however, expressed a good or excellent working relationship with local KYOVR and KYOFB staff.

Similar to previous answers KCC staff indicated that they do not utilize resources for job-seekers with disabilities but instead refer to the local KYOVR or KYOFB offices. The Kentucky Career Center managers were asked in the survey if they were of the opinion there were gaps in services for individuals with disabilities in their local center and whether they felt there had been a change in the number of individuals with disabilities accessing their services. The respondents were also asked to discuss their knowledge or training needs related to serving individuals with disabilities, as well as their perception of their relationships with local KYOFB and KYOVR staff.

Lastly, they were asked what resources they use when serving a job-seeker with a disability. Of the Kentucky Career Center managers surveyed, 13 (41%) responded. Most (71%) of them indicated training needs in the areas of vocational rehabilitation services and employer resources or tax credits. When asked about their current knowledge on a variety of topics related to workers with disabilities they expressed very limited knowledge.

Most (71%) however, expressed a good or excellent working relationship with local KYOVR and KYOFB staff. Similar to previous answers KCC staff indicated that they do not utilize resources for job-seekers with disabilities but instead refer to the local KYOVR or KYOFB offices. Of the 13 responses received from the One-stop Career Centers over half indicated training needs in each of the following areas: Americans with Disabilities Act, Social Security work incentives, VR services, employer resources/tax credits, and mental illness.

When asked to rate their satisfaction of the KY OVR there was a rating of 2.8 (out of 4.0) however 71% rated the relationship as good or excellent. When given the opportunity to rate their own knowledge of VR services related to employment, deficits were noted in the areas of assistive technology and accessible formatting.

Of note, is that those who gave OVR an excellent rating also gave examples of working closely, and co-location as contributing to this quality relationship. In an effort to assess the needs of the other customer — the employer, an online survey of employers was conducted. Each job placement specialist through KYOVR was asked to forward the survey email to employers which they have utilized in the past year or so.

KYOVR surveyed these employers via the email distributed through the job placement specialists. The email provided information related to the specific purpose of the survey, steps to ensure confidentiality and voluntariness, and instructions to access and complete the survey. The survey was available between January 22, 2018 and March 16, 2018. The employers were asked in the survey about their familiarity with KYOVR and KYOFB as well as their understanding of the agencies’ services. The respondents were also asked if they have worked with or received services from either agency, as well as what their hiring needs are at this time. Next they were given a list of employee traits and asked to indicate the importance of each attribute. Also they were asked what barriers they encounter when hiring a person with a disability as well as the resources they need to help reduce those barriers. Lastly, they were asked to share how they have benefited from hiring an employee with a disability.

Two focus groups were conducted with the coalition groups in the Louisville and Eastern Kentucky areas. When asked about populations not currently be served by OFB or OVR in Kentucky the following were mentioned: persons with severe mental health issues, case management needs, criminal backgrounds, transportation specifically in rural or evening shifts, and those with intellectual disabilities. When asked about areas where more involvement is needed the waiver services, community access, and supported employment for those not on the waiver. Suggestions for strategies they found effective included the coalition meetings, chambers of commerce, mayors’ offices, community activities and a good support network. Emerging populations were identified as: mental health, younger employees, Autism Spectrum disorders, substance abuse, English as a Second Language, and older workers.

###### E. who are youth with disabilities and students with disabilities, including, as appropriate, their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition services.

Disability Coordinator Survey

The survey used for the disability coordinators was distributed through email. KYOVR/KYOFB surveyed the disability coordinators via an email distributed through the KYOFB transition coordinator’s distribution list. The email provided information related to the specific purpose of the survey, steps to ensure confidentiality and voluntariness, and instructions to access and complete the survey. The survey was available between January 22, 2018 and March 16, 2018.

The survey asked the respondents what percentage of their students require a referral TO KYOVR or KYOFB. Next they were given a list of typical services needed by post-secondary students and asked to indicate which services they provide. Then they were asked about their goals or expectations of working with a vocational rehabilitation counselor. They were also given a list of typical barriers in the post-secondary institution and asked to indicate the barriers which they face as disability coordinators. In the next section, they were given a list of statements about the assistance from vocational rehabilitation staff and asked whether they agreed with them.

Next a list of transition support services was presented, and respondents were asked to rate their skills in their importance in the post-secondary setting. Then they were asked about the barriers their students face when attempting employment after graduation. Lastly, they were asked to compare the success of transition students with disabilities to their peers. Then they were asked to provide any other comments.

The Disability Coordinator survey was sent to a distribution list from KY AHEAD (Kentucky Association on Higher Education and Disability). The survey was completed by 13 disability coordinators from a diverse collection of post-secondary institutions. Most of them indicate very few of their students require a referral to vocational rehabilitation (assuming they already receive VR services if needed). All of them indicated they provide testing accommodations and notetakers/interpreters. Most (92%) indicate that they rely on OVR or OFB to provide the expertise of assistive technology. The greatest issues they experience are funding (85%) and availability of staff with specialized training (77%). When asked about the support and knowledge of VR counselors most responded positively.

When asked about areas of support services which are crucial to the transition process it was that time management, self-initiative and self-management skills were paramount (according to 85% of respondents). When asked about barriers for transition youth the greatest response was soft skills such as interpersonal, money management and decision-making skills.

The survey used for the disability coordinators was distributed through email. KYOVR/KYOFB surveyed the disability coordinators via an email distributed through the KYOFB transition coordinator’s distribution list. The email provided information related to the specific purpose of the survey, steps to ensure confidentiality and voluntariness, and instructions to access and complete the survey. The survey was available between January 22, 2018 and March 16, 2018.

The survey asked the respondents what percentage of their students require a referral TO KYOVR or KYOFB. Next they were given a list of typical services needed by post-secondary students and asked to indicate which services they provide. Then they were asked about their goals or expectations of working with a vocational rehabilitation counselor. They were also given a list of typical barriers in the post-secondary institution and asked to indicate the barriers which they face as disability coordinators.

In the next section, they were given a list of statements about the assistance from vocational rehabilitation staff and asked whether they agreed with them. Next a list of transition support services was presented, and respondents were asked to rate their skills in their importance in the post-secondary setting. Then they were asked about the barriers their students face when attempting employment after graduation. Lastly, they were asked to compare the success of transition students with disabilities to their peers. Then they were asked to provide any other comments.

Visually Impaired Teachers Survey Eight Teachers of the Visually Impaired (VI) were asked questions. We asked VI teachers what triggers a referral to OFB. The choices “Age” (100%) and “Grade Level” (87%) was chosen more often than Age, Law Requirements, Family Request, etc. With new WIOA emphasis on “Pre-Employment Transition Services,” VR counselors now communicate the need for earlier involvement with students and their families. Ideally, students and families should understand the role of the VR counselor in planning for future employment, and the services and programs we make available to students during their secondary school years. This was evident as fifty percent of the teachers responded this year that this triggers a referral to Office for the Blind.

One questions asked the VI teachers about their need for more information regarding pre-employment transition services. Twenty-eight percent responded they were knowledgeable with another twenty-eight percent stated they were not knowledgeable leaving forty-six percent indicated they needed further information on this topic.

Again this year, VI teachers indicated that their expectations in working with a counselor are mainly to provide resources for the student/family, and to include the counselor as part of the student’s IEP team. However, overall the survey indicated that the VI teachers expect greater involvement in the provision of guidance and counseling, training, the employment proves and career counseling. These beliefs may indicate a need to not only affirm our own commitment to early involvement in planning, but to find new ways to stay involved and easily accessible. VI teachers gave positive ratings to OFB”s counseling staff in areas such as knowledge, rapport building ability, and ability to connect to needed vocational services such as training, job search and placement, including post-secondary education as well the development of strong appropriate vocational goals.

The VI teachers listed barriers to the accessing VR services is a lack of information regarding services. The top three areas that VI teachers indicated are crucial in the Transition process are assistance with employment, work experiences and Assistive Technology. The top two barriers to employment for transition age students identified by the teachers are transportation and the lack of soft skills (i.e. interpersonal/social skills, money and time management and decision-making).

Youth Transition Survey

The Youth Transition survey was sent to 2,857 consumer emails who were listed as under age 25 and had given us permission to communicate by email. 43% of the 97 respondents were between the ages of 19-21. Respondents experienced a variety of impairments, schools, training institutions and employment situations, reflecting the diversity of consumers served by KYOVR and KYOFB. 38% of respondents were working above minimum wage. When asked about career exploration more than half have explored careers and also know what career they want in the future (52 and 55% respectively). Almost two-thirds (64%) have had real life experiences and the completing job applications (65%) and receiving a paycheck (64%). 87% of respondents claim to do chores at home and 89% say they can use a computer to find information on the internet. Almost half (47%) are currently attending post-secondary training and also they claim to know what training is needed for their career (43%). Twenty two (22) % have attended one of the post-secondary transition programs and 25% are aware of those programs.

When rating themselves on independent living skills the areas which needed greatest improvement were asking for accommodations and interviewing skills (both at 46%). The survey used for the transition youth was distributed through email. The link was distributed to past and present consumers who were under the age of 25 and had granted KYOVR/KYOFB permission to use email.

The electronic solicitation materials provided a brief explanation of the purpose of the survey and directed the individual to the survey link. This link directed them to the online survey site, which again provided a brief explanation of the purpose of the survey, along with an explanation the information provided would be confidential and no identifying information would be requested. The survey was available between January 22, 2018 and March 16, 2018.

The survey had various demographic items related to age, current situation and employment. If someone indicated that they were over the age of 24 then their answers were not considered in the survey. The survey also had several items related to their work history, and their skills in the 4 transition areas: job exploration, work readiness, work-based learning, and vocational counseling. Next they were provided with a list of transition programs and asked if they had received those services or if they were aware of them.

In the next section, a list of adult living skills was presented, and respondents were asked to rate their skills in those areas. Next they were asked about their current living arrangement both now and in five year. They were then given a list of KYOVR and KYOFB services and asked to indicate their need for those services.

##### 2. Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State; and

Many of the RSA required focus areas of the comprehensive needs assessment reference the possible need for additional and enhanced Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) services, as well as services to underserved populations and individuals with the most significant disabilities. Often, CRPs act as an extension of the public VR agency and have the potential to provide critical input into the current landscape of the VR service provision process.

To obtain this information, KYOVR surveyed CRPs regarding service needs and trends relative to their respective viewpoint. KYOVR maintains a database with listings of contact information for all of the agencies authorized to provide CRP services with the agency. Using the information from this database, the CRP online survey was dispersed electronically, via email. As with previous surveys, the email included a web link to the survey, along with an explanation of the purpose of the study, instructions for completion, assurances of confidentiality and dates the survey would be available. Each agency was to designate one respondent to the survey and it was requested that only one response be provided from each agency. The survey was available between January 22, 2018 and March 16, 2018.

The CRP survey asked for some categorical information, such as: annual KYOVR referrals, agency years of service to KYOVR, number of employees, and the primary KYOVR district served. Consistent with the public and KYOVR staff surveys, a list of VR services was provided and respondents were asked to indicate whether the need for these services was met, somewhat met, or unmet. Next a list of KYOVR services were given and they were asked to rate their knowledge of those services.

Respondents were then presented with a list of potential barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities and asked to utilize a Likert scale to rate the significance of the barrier. The survey also asked about current services and process trends. The CRPs were asked to indicate the percentage of time devoted to various direct VR services by CRP staff. The providers were also asked to estimate the time period to initiate services after referral and whether they had a waiting list for any of their rehabilitation related programs. In terms of population served, CRPs were provided a list of groups/disability populations and asked to indicate whether there had been an increase, decrease, or no change in the incidence of these disabilities in the consumers they served in the past three years.

The CRPs were provided a list of traditional CRP related VR services and asked to state whether their agency anticipated an increase, decrease, or no change in the demand for services for these services in the next three years and if there were any additional services that were needed, but not currently being provided. A list of issues related to inefficient operation of a CRP (lack of referrals, employee turnover, etc.) was provided and the respondent was asked to identify the specific issues significantly impacting their ability to provide services to individuals with disabilities.

In relation to Section 511 of WIOA, it was asked whether the agency was a 14C certificate holder, and their current knowledge about this legislation. In summary, they were asked to list their agency if they had a need for further training. The CRP survey was sent to the 54 CRPs authorized as vendors for KYOVR or KYOFB with 34 actually initiating and completing the survey, for a 63% completion rate. Of the respondents, 53% (18) had provided services to KYOVR or KYOFB consumers for five years or less and 21% (7) had provided services for more than 20 years. When inquired, 38% (13) of the respondents stated their agency received less than 10 referrals per year. In regards to size of the agency, 53% (18) had less than 10 staff and 21% (7) reported more than 50 employees. Based on the fact that there was at least 1 response in all choices of the demographic questions it was felt that a variety of CRPs are represented in the survey responses.

According to CRPs who completed the survey most time is spent in the areas of counseling, instructing, and planning prior to placement. 88% stated they initiate services in two weeks or less. 76% state they do not have a waiting list. They indicated that the issues impacting CRP services are the: lack of available resources (grants, contracts, etc.), and low Kentucky OVR fee for service rates.

When asked what other services are needed, which are not provided by KY OVR, they most often stated gas/transportation (mentioned five times). Other services mentioned were further training for work skills or life skills (mentioned 3 times); waitlist affecting referrals (mentioned twice), and Pre-ETS issues (twice). When asked to identify populations with an increase in the last three years they indicated those with mental illness, learning disability, persons with most-significant disabilities and Autism.

CRPs were asked to identify areas of ‘unmet need’ for their consumers. They indicated support services, mental health treatment and post-employment services were all ‘unmet needs’. When asked what CRP services they foresee an increase in the next 3 years they indicated Employment and retention, skills training and customized supported employment.

A few trends are worth noting when analyzing the CRP Survey. It appears that most CRP’s initiate services soon after receiving a referral. However, they indicate the need for more resources to fund their agency. They also indicated that consumers could use more resources in the area of transportation funding. It appears most are small agencies and don’t usually make a referral for VR services yet they receive most of their referrals from OVR/OFB. Although they don’t know a lot about Assistive Technology but have more knowledge in their areas of expertise — job placement and supported employment.

##### 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 .

Transition services continue to be an unmet need among individuals with disabilities. What do students with disabilities need prior to exiting high school to be successful post-high school? Seems like a simple question with a simple answer, much like the basic mathematical equation A+B=C.

Unfortunately, this question is complex, subjective, multi-layered and by no means is there a one-step process for all students with disabilities to follow in order to leave high school fully prepared for post-secondary life. Vocational Rehabilitation plays a vital role in this abstract equation in preparing students and collaborating with local school districts in fulfilling their No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2004) college and career readiness obligations. Following the directives of the Workforce Innovations and Opportunity Act (WIOA, 2014) VR is partnering and collaborating with local school agencies to build the necessary bridge for students to cross from school life to post-school life.

The National Center for Education indicated in 2014-15, 13 percent of all public school students were receiving special education services. Current Kentucky Department of Education 2016-17 data indicates Kentucky has 24,919 transition students with Individualized Education Plans ages 14-21. Five hundred students with IEP’s ages 14-21 dropped out. 8,536 students in Kentucky dropped out (1.3% of the total population 656,588), so approximately 5.86% of the dropout population had an IEP. Roughly 2.01% of the students with IEPs ages 14 — 21 dropped out.

Census.gov indicates in 2016, KY Sex by age by disability status — 2012-16 American Community Survey 5 year estimates:

5 to 17 years 277,218 with a disability 34,125

18-34 years 478,175 with a disability 43,545

Employment status for Kentucky, civilian noninstitutionalized population 18-64 years Source: Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2013 3-Year American Community Survey 2011-13 American Community Survey 3 year estimates:

2013, in the labor force 1,940,589 with a disability 110,511 Unemployed 180,638 with a disability 26,032

Not in labor force 747,405 with a disability 284,509

WIOA allows KY OVR to address these particular issues by allocating funds for pre-employment transition services. WIOA mandates 15% of all federal funds be set aside to provide pre-employment transition services. Indications of post-school success are broken into categories in ‘Predictors of Post-School Success in Taxonomy 2.0. (Test, et al., 2009) clearly noting areas where Vocational Rehabilitation may play vital roles. The predictors are (possible VR role in parentheses): Student Development (assessment, employment skills attainment, supports), Student-focused planning (IEP development ant IPE participation), and Family engagement (family involvement, family empowerment, and family preparation), Program Structures (strategic planning, high expectation, and high involvement), Interagency Collaboration (collaborative framework, and collaborative service delivery).

2017 Kentucky Post School Outcome data shows that of the 2,438 respondents to their one year out survey to students with disabilities (a student with an Individualized Education Plan) one year post high school exit, 31.1% had neither employment or nor were they attending any post-secondary education program.

Transition services were identified as an ‘unmet need’ as evidenced by a rating average of 2.03 (out of 3.0) according to respondents of the public survey with ‘3’ indicating the greatest need. The results of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment survey in 2018 still indicated an ‘unmet need’ of transition services, similar to the previous surveys. In 2018, similarly, 35.7% completing the public survey indicated the need was unmet. Similarly, CRP’s and VR counselors also indicated transition services as a significant need with 74% of counselors indicating it was an unmet need and a rating of 2.7.

**k. Annual Estimates Describe:**

1. The number of individuals in the State who are eligible for services;

According to data from the 2016 American Community Survey (ACS), published in the annual Compendium of Disability Statistics, 17.02% of Kentucky civilians living in the community report having a disability. This is up from 2015 when it was 17%. Overall, this rate has remained pretty steady since 2013. It was lowest in 2013 at 16.8%. It was highest in 2016 at 17.2%. From 2013 to 2016, this represents an average change of about 0.2%. According to this resource, Kentucky’s overall population is 4,342,711 people. Using the percentage in 2016 and applying it to the population numbers, there is an estimated 777,345 people in the state of Kentucky who have a disability as of 2016. , including 15.5% of the overall rate of individuals with a disability in the United States is 12.6%. It has been holding steady from 2013-2015 (10.5% working age) in 2015. The rate in Kentucky is higher than the rate nationally. The percentage of residents of working age (18-64) in Kentucky who are employed is 27.4%. The national average was 34.9% in 2015. In this instance of employment, the rate in Kentucky is lower than the rate nationally.

#### k. Annual Estimates

Describe:

##### 1. The number of individuals in the State who are eligible for services;

According to data from the 2018 American Community Survey (ACS), published in the annual Compendium of Disability Statistics, 17.04% of Kentucky civilians living in the community report having a disability. Overall, this rate has remained pretty steady since 2013. It was lowest in 2013 at 16.8%.

According to this resource, Kentucky’s overall population is 4,357,195 people. Using the percentage in 2018 and applying it to the population numbers, there is an estimated 758,234 people in the state of Kentucky who have a disability as of 2018. The employment rate for people with disabilities in Kentucky was 29.4%. In this instance of employment, the rate in Kentucky is lower than the rate nationally.

##### 2. The number of eligible individuals who will receive services under:

###### A. The VR Program;

The following data that represents estimated performance for FY 2020 under this State Plan based on historical data from prior years. The estimated service and category numbers are reflective of the average number of new applicants that we expect to receive in 2020 and it is inclusive of the carryover of consumers from the prior year.

The following information reflects the estimated numbers taking into consideration that in FFY 2019 Category One and Two were open and staffing levels increased

Estimated number to be served in 2020 under the combined agency is 23,588 with 2,756 positive employment outcomes. The number for FY 2020 take into account that Category One and Two are open and the agency is currently preparing to open Category Three for the Combined Agency. Included in the estimated amounts are services needed by any eligible individual who began to receive services under an individualized plan for employment prior to the effective date of the order of selection, respective of the severity of the eligible individual’s disability; and individuals requiring post-employment services.

###### B. The Supported Employment Program; and

OVR as a Combined Agency for Program Year 2020 estimates that it will serve around 3,890 individuals with a total estimated associated costs of around $3,064.58. This is an average estimated costs per person of around $3,954 with 775 employment outcomes. Expenditures exceeding the Title VI-B 2019 allotment will be covered with funds from the 110 program.

OVR designates Part B of Title IV funds to serve individuals with the most significant disabilities as further reflection of the Office’s continued dedication to serving those individuals. The estimates found in the table are based on a trend analysis of data extracted from RSA data, and KYOVR expenditure data from fiscal years 2019 and year to date 2020. Policies, practices, and priorities potentially influencing expenditures were considered in the development of these estimates.

###### C. each priority category, if under an order of selection;

OVR is under an order of selection with Category One and Two open. OVR will open Category 3 effective April 1, 2020 leaving only one Category closed – Four. Included in the estimated amounts are services needed by any eligible individual who began to receive services under an individualized plan for employment prior to the effective date of order of selection, respective of the severity of the eligible individual’s disability; and individuals requiring post-employment services.

July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020 the actual estimated number to serve under Category One is 18,146 with 1,986 successful employment outcomes.

The estimated number to serve under Category Two is 3,541 with 467 successful employment outcomes.

The estimated number to serve under Category Thee is 1,824 with 293 successful employment outcomes.

The estimated number to serve under Category Four is 47 with 10 successful employment outcomes.

Estimated number to be served in 2020 under the combined agency is 23,588 with 2,756 positive employment outcomes.

##### 3. The number of individuals who are eligible for VR services, but are not receiving such services due to an order of selection; and

As of January 1, 2020, there were 44 individuals on the waitlist with Category Three and Four closed.

##### 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.

The costs are reflective of the actual direct service cost to consumers for the program year July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019.

2020

Category One Estimated to be served — 18,146 Total Estimated Associated Costs – $15,950,273 Average Estimated Costs per person per closure - $2,647 Estimated Employment Outcomes —1,986

Category Two Estimated to be served — 3,541 Total Estimated Associated Costs - $1,604,353 Average Estimated Costs per person per closure - $944 Estimated Employment Outcomes - 467

Category Three Estimated to be served — 1,823 Total Estimated Associated Costs - $762904 Average Estimated Costs per person per closure - $1,121 Estimated Employment Outcomes - 293

Category Four Estimated to be served - 47 Total Estimated Associated Costs — $26,822 Average Estimated costs per closure: $1,083 Estimated Employment Outcomes: 10

#### l. State Goals and Priorities

The designated State unit must:

##### 1. Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed

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.

Kentucky on October 1, 2018, integrated into a single vocational rehabilitation program the following programs that are operated under the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. Sections 720 through 751): (1) the vocational rehabilitation program for individuals with visual impairments; and (2) the vocational rehabilitation program for individuals with other disabilities. The 2018 CSNA was conducted jointly by both agencies with input from both State Rehabilitation Councils of the respective agencies. This plan contains goals and priorities based on the identified needs through the FFY 2018 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) for the newly Combined Agency.

##### 2. Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program Goals

Goal 1: Recruit, employ, retain the most qualified and highly skilled rehabilitation staff which reflects employment focused, job driven outcomes.

Objective: Examine staff patterns and service capacity in order to effectively deliver quality vocational rehabilitation services.

Measures: Increase staff retention rates by 10%

Goal 2: Develop and implement training that adequately address the needs of staff under WIOA and changes to policies and procedures under the combined agency.

Objective: Develop and deliver identified training to staff that aligns with a shared vision and mission of the combined agency.

Measures: needs assessment completed of staff training delivered on WIOA of staff training delivered relating to policies and procedures

Goal 3: Develop the policy and procedures manual, Service Fee Memorandums, and other written materials to be concise, accurate, and accessible in order to support staff, eliminate confusion, and improve the function of the combined agency.

Objective: Ensure the provision of consistent and quality services for individuals with disabilities in the Commonwealth.

Measures: Completion of the combined policies and procedures manual

Revision and Implementation of Service Fee Memorandums All materials produced in accessible formats

Goal 4: Effectively utilize staff and fiscal resources in order to provide statewide services to all eligible consumers and increase competitive integrated employment outcomes.

Objective: Open categories under Order of Selection

Measure: Elimination of the waiting list by category

Measure: Serve open categories keeping with the OOS policy Objective: Expedite services in order to increase outcomes Measure: Average time between eligibility and plan reduction of 10%

Measure: All applicants who receive SSA benefits will receive information on benefits planning and at least 50% of them will receive a benefits analysis.

The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation set the following goals for the distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds.

Goal 1: Increase the number of CRP’s providing Supported Employment Services

Strategies: Recruit more providers for supported employment by holding outreach opportunities for potential providers and support providers for unserved and underserved areas;

Measure: Increase in the number of providers (5%)

Goal 2: continue to monitor and explore additional strategies to improve CRP service quality and compliance

Strategies: Involve job coaches with transition students by the last semester of school;

Strategies: Train staff on new policies related to customized employment and person—centered planning;

Strategies: Require notes to be submitted by Supported Employment Providers by the 5th day of each month.

Strategies: Continued monitoring by the Section 511 Implementation Team to insure agency compliance to WIOA requirements related to OVR relationships with sheltered workshops;

Goal 3: Seek alternative strategies for providing and funding Long Term Support Services.

Strategies: Gather input from staff, education partners, and service providers, individuals with disabilities, their families and other stakeholders.

##### 3. Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas:

The 2018 CSNA WAS conducted jointly by both agencies with input from both State Rehabilitation Councils of the respective agencies. The plan contains goals and priorities based on the identified needs through the FFY 2018 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). The purpose of this Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) is to assist in that effort, by providing a base of evidence on which priorities, goals and strategic planning can be developed. Currently, OVR is in process of developing and conducting the 2021 Comprehensive State Needs Assessment.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and signed into law on July 22, 2014. WIOA mandates that each state and its State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) conduct a comprehensive statewide assessment every three years. This study examines the rehabilitation needs of Kentucky residents with disabilities. In addition, we seek to clarify the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, minorities, individuals who have been unserved and underserved, individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce development system, and youth and students with disabilities and the need to establish, develop or improve community rehabilitation programs.

###### A. The most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates;

This 2018 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment informs the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation strategic and state plans; meets the Federal regulatory requirements of 34 CFR §361.29; and provides vital information on the State VR program which is used by both public and private disability advocacy agencies. The State Rehabilitation Councils along with the Office for the Blind and Office of Vocational Rehabilitation worked collaboratively to assess the needs of individuals with visual disabilities. OVR is in process of the design and conducting of the 2021 Comprehensive Statewide needs Assessment.

**B. the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and**

OVR submitted the second WIOA annual Performance Report on October 1, 2019 along with the other partners.

Kentucky is committed to acquiring a system that gathers the collective data required under section 116 of WIOA for all the core partners. Currently, Kentucky is in process of the procurement of a system that will collect, track, measure and report data needed under section 116 of WIOA. Currently, the workforce partners use different systems and tracking mechanisms. The current Kentucky OVR Case Management System (CMS) is 15 years old. OVR is in process of procuring a new system.The new system(s) should allow OVR to have paperless cases, electronic signatures, improved reporting access, increased electronic communication and corroboration among Department partners, and system generated notifications and reminders to increase productivity.

Core programs and partners have access to a business customer relationship management system based on a Salesforce platform. Phase 1 allowed shared access to employer contacts and business needs, and Phase 2 gave the partnership the ability to add and assess employer programs and resources. This platform allows the tracking of business engagement and reporting for the aligned goal of furthering business services, and is the tool that encompasses the Kentucky Integrated Business Engagement System (KIBES). This allows for tracking of the Employer measures.

###### 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.

OVR and the State Rehabilitation Council examined a number of statistics, estimates and internal program data from our Case Management System as well as other documents and publications.

These included:

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment

State Plan

Annual Report Strategic Plan

Satisfaction Survey of Closed Cases (successful and unsuccessful) Caseload Statistics

Prior performance on the standards and indicators

OVR was last monitored in 2009 and all findings and recommendations from those monitored activities under section 107 have been addressed or resolved.

#### m. Order of Selection

Describe:

##### 1. Whether the designated State unit will implement and order of selection. If so, describe:

###### A. The order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided VR services.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, requires an Order of Selection of individuals to be served, ensuring that individuals who have the most significant disabilities will be given first priority whenever all eligible individuals who apply cannot be served.

The order of selection gives first priority to those individuals with the most significant disabilities as defined by OVR. The criterion to determine individuals with the most significant disabilities and the subsequent order of categories to be followed in selection of individuals to be provided services, is based on a refinement of the criteria set forth in the definition of individual with a significant disability, specifically, the degree by which an individual’s impairment seriously limits his or her functional capacities and the number of rehabilitation services needed by an individual.

OVR has four priority service categories with Priority Category One and Two Open and Three and Four Closed. Priority Category Two was opened on February 18, 2019 and Category 3 will be opened effective April 1, 2020.

The following is Kentucky’s order of selection for the combined agency:

Category 1: Eligible individuals who have the most significant disabilities and require a minimum of two services one of which meets an expanded definition.

Category 2: Eligible individuals with significant disabilities who have limitations in two (2) major areas of functional capacities and require a minimum of two services one of which meets an expanded definition (closed).

Category 3: Eligible individuals with significant disabilities who have limitations in on (1) major areas of functional capacities and require a minimum of two services one of which meets an expanded definition (closed).

Category 4: consumers with a non-significant disability without functional limitations or who do not require two or more services (closed).

For FFY 2020, priority category 1 and 2 will receive services under the order. KYOVR will open priority category 3 effective April 1, 2020. OVR will continually monitor influencing factors to determine if individuals on the waitlist (priority category 4) are to receive services. Should funds become available, the Office may re-open services to closed priority categories.

Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation will first serve those individuals on the waitlist on a first-applied, first-served basis, as established by the date of application. In cases where more than one priority category is opened, preference will be given to the higher priority category group based on significance of disability.

POLICIES: OVR has been and will continue to operate under an Order of Selection due to limited resources and will continually evaluate need, funding, and priority categories. Within the Order of Selection the office will continue to accept referrals of and applications from individuals with disabilities. The Order of Selection will in no way regulate the provision or authorization of an assessment for determining eligibility. Any individual who has begun to receive services under an Individualized Plan for Employment will in no way be affected by an Order of Selection. The Order of Selection policy will permit immediate reclassification into a higher category, with Priority Category I being the highest category, whenever circumstances justify the reclassification.

###### B. The justification for the order.

OVR utilizes a multimodal approach to assessing the resources available to allow the agency to provide vocational rehabilitation services to all eligible individuals who apply, such as:

Population data related to disability incidence

Short and long—term budgetary outlook short and Long—term staffing projections

Comprehensive Needs Assessment

Waiting list for services

VR Counselor Caseload size and expenditures.

SRC input Public Forum Input

The agency carefully analyzes information from these sources to predict its ability to provide quality services to eligible individuals with disabilities as required by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as Amended. OVR will continually monitor influencing factors to determine if individuals on the waitlist will be served in FY2020 and beyond.

According to data from the 2018 American Community Survey, published in the annual Compendium of Disability Statistics, 17.4% of Kentucky civilians living in the community report having a disability. This is higher than the national average of 12.7%). The employment rate for individuals with disabilities in Kentucky was 29.4%. In comparison the national rate for individuals with disabilities 18 – 64 years that were employed was 37%. Kentucky percentage of individuals who fall below the poverty line at 34%. (8% higher than the national rate of 26%). According to the Social Security Administration, in 2017, 19.7% of Kentuckians receive blind and disabled Supplemental Security Income benefits. The Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI), in 2016, reported the percentage of SSI recipients in Kentucky who were working was 2.9%. These statistics provide a description of the potentially high demand for OVR services based on the number of individuals in the state with disabilities.

In FFY 2019 and year to date FY2020, agency staff along with fiscal and the State Council of Vocational Rehabilitation reviewed on a quarterly and often monthly basis data on numbers served, the number placed on a waiting list, and agency fiscal resources to determine the need to open or close categories. During FFY 2019 and year to date in 2020 budgets and fiscal resources were reviewed monthly by the agency Executive Leadership Team (ELT). Information was presented to the State Rehabilitation Council at each meeting.

In 2019 OVR continues its efforts in maintaining administrative costs to a minimum. The decision was made to open Priority Category Two in February of 2019 and OVR will open Category Three effective April 1, 2020 leaving only Category Four closed.

###### C. The service and outcome goals.

The numbers below outline the current service population numbers and costs. Service Numbers and costs for 2019 and 20 and are estimated based on current numbers year to date from queries run in the Case Management System (CMS). Included in the estimated amounts are services needed by any eligible individual who began to receive services under an individualized plan for employment prior to the effective date of the order of selection, irrespective of the severity of the eligible individual’s disability; and individuals requiring post—employment services. FY 2019 Included in the estimated amounts are services needed by any eligible individual who began to receive services under an individualized plan for employment prior to the effective date of the order of selection, irrespective of the severity of the eligible individual’s disability; and individuals requiring post—employment services. The estimated year end actual outcomes and costs for 2019 for July 1, 2018 through June 30, 209 to match the new federal year under WIOA for quarterly reporting are as follows:

The following FY 2020—2021 estimates are based on a trend analysis of data from the previous years, adjusted to account for the current OOS and anticipated and historic changes in various environmental factors such as budget, personnel, etc.

FY 2020 SERVICE GOALS and OUTCOMES:

Priority Category I Active Cases GOAL: 18,146 Outcomes GOAL: 1,986

Priority Category 2 Active Cases GOAL: 3,541 Outcomes GOAL: 467

Priority Category 3 Active Cases GOAL: 1,824 Outcomes GOAL: 293

Priority Category 4 Active Cases GOAL: 47 Closed Outcomes GOAL: 10

TOTAL Active Cases GOAL: 23,588 Outcomes GOAL: 2,756

SERVICE COSTS ESTIMATE FY 2020: 18,500,500 \* Includes Case Service, Guidance and Counseling, Public Community Rehabilitation Programs and Placement Costs

FY 2021 SERVICE GOALS:

Priority Category I Active Cases GOAL: 18,200 Outcomes GOAL: 2,000

Priority Category 2 Active Cases GOAL: 3,550 Outcomes GOAL: 475

Priority Category 3 Active Cases GOAL: 1,850 Outcomes GOAL: 300

Priority Category 4 Active Cases GOAL: 100 Closed Outcomes GOAL: 25 TOTAL

Active Cases GOAL: 23,700 Outcomes GOAL: 2,800

###### D. The time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.

2020 YEAR END ESTIMATED OUTCOMES AND COSTS 7/1/19 THROUGH 6/30/20 YEAR END ESTIMATED OUTCOMES and COSTS 7/1/20 through 6/30/21

###### E. How individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities; and

Once eligibility is determined, the significance or non-significance of the disability must be established. As part of the eligibility decision, the counselor determines whether the individual has a physical or mental impairment or combination of impairments that seriously limit one or more functional capacities in terms of employment outcome. In order to be considered significantly disabled, an individual is expected to require multiple vocational rehabilitation services one of which is assumed to be vocational rehabilitation counseling and guidance. At least one additional service must be required as defined by the definition of expanded services. Expanded services are those services required as the result of a disability to circumvent, minimize, or alleviate barriers to employment but, due to their intensity, duration, or complexity, go beyond the routine services normally required for that disability.

Presumption of Eligibility for Social Security Recipients and Beneficiaries means that an individual who has been determined eligible under Title I or Title XVI of the Social Security Act is:

Considered to be an individual with a significant disability; and

Presumed to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services under Title I (provided the individual intends to achieve an employment outcome consistent with the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual) unless the office can demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that such individual is incapable of benefiting from vocational rehabilitation services in terms of employment outcome due to the severity of the disability of the individual.

If the Executive Director and State Rehabilitation Council determine that the agency lacks available funds to serve all consumers, the office shall follow an order of selection to give priority for services according to a ranking of categories of consumers based on the severity of the disability. The Executive Director of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation shall direct the order of selection by designating in written memorandum, the priority categories to be served.

Order of Selection will not use any of the following factors in determining eligible individuals Residency duration, type of disability; age, gender, race, color, or national origin, source of referral, type of expected employment outcome, need for specific services or anticipated cost of services, or the income level of the individual or its family.

The order of selection shall be implemented on a statewide basis.

The order of selection shall be implemented to assure that eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities are provided services before other eligible individuals.

The order of selection shall not affect: The acceptance of referrals and applicants; the provision of assessment services to determine whether an individual is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, and the individual’s priority under the order of selection; services needed by any eligible individual who has begun to receive services under an individualized plan for employment prior to the effective date of the order of selection, irrespective of the severity of the eligible individual’s disability; and individuals requiring post-employment services. The office will ensure that all funding arrangements for providing services under the State plan, including third-party arrangements and awards under the establishment authority, are consistent with the order of selection.

An eligible individual shall be immediately reclassified into a higher priority category whenever appropriate justification exists in the case record of the individual.

The office shall conduct an assessment to determine whether an individual is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services and the individual’s priority under the order of selection. The VR Counselor determines the eligibility of the individual and their priority category based on a review of the data from the assessment.

In the order of selection each eligible individual within a closed priority category shall be placed on a waiting list until such time as the priority category is opened. The process for the waiting list is as follows:

Once an individual has been determined eligible within a closed priority category by the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor the individual will receive notification through the counselor in writing of:

Their assignment to a particular category;

The priority categories currently being served;

Their right to appeal their category assignment and the availability of the Client Assistance Program (CAP); Information and referral services; and

They are given the option to be placed on a waiting list by date of application until such a time the priority category can be opened and the individual employment plan can be developed and initiated.

The waiting list will be maintained by the Director of Field Services.

The waiting list will be reviewed quarterly by the Director of Field Services and Regional Managers.

Consumers will be contacted annually to inform them the status of Order of Selection and their specific priority category. Additional information (I & R) will be given. The consumer will be asked regarding their preference for remaining on the waiting list.

At the time when funds become adequate and a priority category will be opened the following sequence of action will occur for those individuals in a closed category:

Priority Category Two (2) will be opened and individuals on the waiting list will be served by date of application. The office will assure that eligible individuals, who do not meet the order of selection criteria for the priority categories, shall have access to services provided through the information and referral system in accordance to the 1973 Rehabilitation Act. These services will include referral to other Federal and State programs including the statewide workforce investment programs. The process for this is as follows: The agency will provide the individual with a notice of referral; The notice will contain a point of contact for the program or service an individual is being referred to and; any relevant information regarding services for the individual relating to the preparation, securing, obtaining or retaining of employment; and documentation of the nature and scope of information and referral services provided will be included in the individual service record and entered in the Case Management System (CMS).

Individuals who are presumed to be significantly disabled because they receive SSA benefits will be further assessed to determine if they meet the agency’s criteria for “individual with a most significant disability.”

Consumers making the decision not to be placed on a waiting list after they receive notification of their priority category will be closed. They will receive notification from their VR Counselor that their case will close and of their right to appeal the agency’s decision, including information on how to contact CAP. The notification will include information on how they may reapply for services in the future if their circumstances change or if the agency makes changes to order of selection.

When a request for services by an eligible individual is affected by the order of selection, the individual shall be immediately notified of such in writing, and provided with information on procedures for individual rights for appeal, and how the Client Assistance Program may provide help in the process.

Quarterly, the Executive Director, State Rehabilitation Council and Executive Leadership Team along with fiscal staff will reevaluate the agency circumstances to determine whether or not the agency’s resources are sufficient in serving all individuals or there is a need to implement, establish or make changes in order of Selection. At such time that the agency finds that it is able to serve those individuals in any closed priority category, that category will be re-opened. If the Agency finds that they have the resources to serve some individuals but not all individuals in a priority category the date of application will be utilized as a criterion for ranking individuals within a priority category. The timeline for this would be a year, unless the agency’s financial situation should change drastically. Circumstances that would allow this to occur include a decrease in the number of referrals or other sources that would result in additional funds, which could be utilized to serve these individuals.

When a priority category is to be opened for services, the Executive Director shall issue an implementing memorandum to staff, with instructions that appropriate services delayed under the order of selection may be provided.

##### 2. 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.

The State has not elected to serve eligible individuals regardless of any established order of selection.

#### n. Goals and Plans for Distribution of title VI Funds.

##### 1. Specify the State's goals and priorities for funds received under section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services.

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation is committed to the principle that individuals with the most significant disabilities (MSD), including those who have not traditionally experienced competitive work, are capable of engaging in employment in integrated settings. The agency and State Rehabilitation Council have agreed upon the goals and priorities in this section for Supported Employment. The goals and priorities in this section reflect the commitment of OVR to increase competitive integrated employment outcomes for individuals who are blind through supported employment.

Based on the information gathered and analyzed from the comprehensive statewide needs assessment conducted in FFY 2018, the Agency’s performance, the 107 monitoring report, real time data from the case management system, the Strategic Planning process and other sources of information the following goals for the distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds were set. A review of the set goals and priorities will occur annually for any needed revisions for the State Plan.

OVR will distribute funding from Title VI, Part B through its established network of Supported Employment Providers. Yearly agreements are developed with each Supported Employment Provider. Fees—for—service and outcome fees, along with policies and procedures for each, have been developed and will be followed by each Provider. All services are monitored by the Supported Employment Branch Staff, consisting of one Branch Manager and three Supported Employment Consultants.

OVR, through the Community Rehabilitation Branch, will assure choice and quality services for its consumers served in supported employment by:

a. thoroughly reviewing all applications for Supported Employment vendorship;

b. monitoring the ongoing and extended supports provided by each agency;

c. verifying the provider’s ability to fund ongoing supports using funds other than VR;

d. conducting annual reviews of each vendor;

e. being available to consult with individuals, their families, service providers, and others using person—centered planning approaches.

OVR will seek to improve the competency of current and future service providers by:

a. providing technical assistance and training for provider staff (through a contract with University of KY—Human Development Institute’s Supported Employment Training Project);

b. utilizing local teams (where appropriate) to evaluate services and plan for technical assistance;

c. presenting Basics of Supported Employment regularly for agency staff orientation training (Skills Enhancement Training); and h. developing and keeping updated policy and procedural manuals on supported employment for staff via OVR Intranet, and for Providers via Internet and other means.

Below are the goals for the program:

The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation set the following goals for the distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds.

Goal 1: Increase the number of CRP’s providing Supported Employment Services

Strategies: Recruit more providers for supported employment by holding outreach opportunities for potential providers and support providers for unserved and underserved areas;

Measure: Increase in the number of providers (5%)

Goal 2: continue to monitor and explore additional strategies to improve CRP service quality and compliance Strategies: Involve job coaches with transition students by the last semester of school; Strategies: Train staff on new policies related to customized employment and person—centered planning;

Strategies: Require notes to be submitted by Supported Employment Providers by the 5th day of each month.

Strategies: Continued monitoring by the Section 511 Implementation Team to insure agency compliance to WIOA requirements related to OVR relationships with sheltered workshops;

Goal 3: Seek alternative strategies for providing and funding Long Term Support Services.

Strategies: Gather input from staff, education partners, and service providers, individuals with disabilities, their families and other stakeholders.

##### 2. Describe the activities to be conducted, with funds reserved pursuant to section 603(d), for youth with the most significant disabilities, including:

###### A. the provision of extended services for a period not to exceed 4 years; and

Extended Services are those services provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, which may include youth with the most significant disabilities. Services may be provided by the State agency, a private nonprofit organization, employer or any other appropriate resource when the individual no longer receives support services from the agency. OVR will determine the need for and fund services on a case-by-case basis dependent upon each individual's need for services.

OVR will reserve and expend half (50%) of the State's allotment for the provision of supported employment services and extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities. Extended services will be available for youth without delay for a period not to exceed four years or until the youth no longer meets the definition of a "youth with a disability". OVR will work with providers to ensure another source of extended services is available so there will be no interruption of services for individuals with significant disabilities.

The Office will collaborate with the Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities (DBHDID) to expand supported employment options to not served and underserved groups, as well as youth with most significant disabilities without delay.

Extended Services are those services provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, which may include youth with the most significant disabilities. Services may be provided by the State agency, a private nonprofit organization, employer or any other appropriate resource when the individual no longer receives support services from the agency. OVR will determine the need for and fund services on a case-by case basis dependent upon each individual’s need for services.

OVR will reserve and expend half (50%) of the State’s allotment for the provision of supported employment services and extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities. Extended services will be available for youth without delay for a period not to exceed four years or until the youth no longer meets the definition of a youth with a disability. OVR will work with providers to ensure another source of extended services to available to there will be no interruption of services for individuals with significant disabilities. Collaborative Efforts include:

a. participation in Commissions established as a result of state legislation, including Commission on Services and Supports for Individuals with an Intellectual Disability and other Developmental Disabilities (HB 144); Commission on Services and Supports to People with Mental Illness and Dual Diagnoses (HB 843); and the Advisory Council on Autism Spectrum Disorders;

b. development of partnerships with Kentucky Medicaid Waiver Programs (Supports for Community Living, Michelle P, Home and Community Based Waivers, and Acquired Brain Injury Waivers) so that these sources of extended support funding can be fully utilized; and

c. utilization of interagency workgroups to develop better understanding and expand awareness of work incentives (such as in SCL Waiver, Social Security, etc.).

d. developing and implementing the IPS Supported Employment programs for consumers with severe mental illness within the community mental health centers.

###### B. how the State will leverage other public and private funds to increase resources for extended services and expanded supported employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities.

The Office will seek to expand services to not served and underserved counties as well as not served and underserved disability groups, including youth with the most significant disabilities and will encourage continuous improvement in supported employment by monitoring the state fiscal climate for opportunities to partner with KY APSE (Association for Persons in Supporting Employment First) to advocate for increased state funding for extended support services. OVR will continue to maximize existing dollars for extended support services through collaborative agreements and contracts, increasing knowledge of Kentucky’s plan for self—determination strategies, especially within the Medicaid Waiver (Supports for Community Living, Michelle P) programs, continuing partnerships with local Community Mental Health Centers, recruiting new Providers, provide training and technical assistance to new supported employment agencies, and providing consultation and technical assistance to OVR staff and providers as needed, researching better ways to fund and/or deliver services. Currently, meetings are ongoing with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental and intellectual Disabilities to strengthen the partnership by leveraging funding to expand IPS SE services in unserved areas, as well as exploring possibilities of implementing IPS services for individuals with intellectual disabilities, which would be one of the first endeavors for this evidenced based practice. For example, an enhanced fee for Vocational Profile development has been developed, piloting and expansion of new programs through Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs), and training providers in the use of strategies for individualized services specific to customized employment.

#### o. State's Strategies

Describe the required strategies and how the agency will use these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome any barriers to accessing the VR and the Supported Employment programs (See sections 101(a)(15)(D) and (18)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act and section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)):

##### 1. The methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities.

The strategies included in this section were developed for the established goals and priorities. Goals are assigned to an OVR Administrator or work group to assure that each strategy action step is carried out and goals are met. The designated staff person or work group will report quarterly on a grid for each goal strategy. A quarterly report will be compiled of the results of the steps taken in meeting the set goals and reviewed by the OVR Executive Leadership Team and State Rehabilitation Council. The Council through its committees and the Executive Leadership Team will quarterly review the summarized reports monitoring the agencies performance in meeting the State Plan Goals and Priorities.

Additionally, through quality assurance processes OVR provides internal and external methods and examinations to identify areas where improvement and training are needed. Internal and external methods utilized are WEBI, Crystal Reports, Case Reviews, Satisfaction Surveys, Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, the State’s performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA and the Strategic Planning Process.

Real time data is pulled and evaluated from the Web Intelligence system (WEBI) and Crystal Reports monthly or as needed (daily, weekly). The data is reviewed for positive or negative issues and trends in services, data integrity. Any issues that arise are addressed with staff as soon as possible.

##### 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.

The agency currently employs ten Rehabilitation Technologists and one branch manager who provide a full spectrum of Assistive Technology (AT) services throughout the Commonwealth. Three of the ten staff are assistive technology specialists for the blind and visually impaired. The AT Branch provides a comprehensive array of services including, but not limited to, the following: assessment, referral, vehicle modifications, home modifications consultations, workplace accommodations consultation, etc. The availability of full time staff allow the opportunity for the consumer to access these services during the assessment phase, during IPE development and implementation and in the job placement phase of the case.

The agency partners with the KATS Network, Kentucky AgrAbility and Protection and Advocacy to coordinate a statewide training on current best practices, emerging trends and issues related to the various aspects of assistive technology. The Summer Assistive Technology Workshops are attended by OVR staff , AT professionals, educators, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists and other professionals that have in interest in, or contact with AT.

OVR administers the KATS Network, the Commonwealth’s Assistive Technology program. The KATS Network coordinates a statewide network of organizations to enhance the availability of AT devices to individuals with disabilities of any age. There are 5 Regional AT Resource Centers. These sites provide services related to: Device Demonstration, AT Loan, AT Reutilization, Training and Technical Assistance, Public Assistance. The Agency employs a KATS coordinator, and continues to seek opportunities for increased collaboration and growth among the network and OVR. The KATS Network will continue to promote the reuse and reutilization of assistive technology and durable medical equipment through CARAT (Coordinating and Assistive the Reuse of Assistive Technology, a project first funded by a grant through the Health Resource Services Administration (HRSA). The project has been extended to include the entire state. Partners include the Kentucky Appalachian Rural Rehabilitation Network, Appalachian Regional Healthcare, and The Center for Excellence in Hazard, the University of Kentucky Physical Therapy Program, the Kentucky Appalachian Rural Rehabilitation Network (KARRN), the Carl D Perkins Vocational Training Center, Spalding University in Louisville, HDICATS in Lexington, and Lourdes Hospital in Paducah. The agency will continue to seek to expand its services by adding additional staff, continuing to partner with existing AT stakeholders, and increasing professional awareness of assistive technology best practices through training and presentations.

Rehabilitation Counselors for the Blind (RCB) work with AT Specialists and the McDowell Center for the Blind’s AT instructors to provide necessary assistive technology used by individuals who are blind or visually impaired, such as laptop computers, tablets, braille writers, pocket recorders for notetaking, closed-circuit televisions to magnify documents, hand-held magnifiers, and computer software including screen readers and magnification (Zoomtext), speech (JAWS, WindowEyes) and Braille displays. AT Specialists work closely with employers to ensure that consumers have the tools and training necessary to perform jobs in a wide variety of settings, such as customer service call centers, law firms, universities, and utility companies.

The Office is also responsible for the administration of the Kentucky Assistive Technology Loan Corporation, as authorized by the AT Act. This program offers low interest loans for qualified applicants through its relationship with Fifth Third Bank. KATLC can provide loans for modified vehicles, hearing aids, adapted computers, mobility devices, augmentative communication devices or any other type of equipment or home modification that will improve the quality of life or increase the independence of Kentuckians with disabilities. The KATLC is available on a statewide basis to any qualified individual in need of AT services.

##### 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.

OVR is committed in its effort to build the capacity to effectively serve individuals with most significant disabilities who are minorities. OVR will provide vocational rehabilitation services to all individuals who have disabilities who are eligible for services regardless of gender, race, national origin, religion, color, disability or age. The Agency assures the provision of services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities to the same extent as it provides services to other significant populations or individuals.

Management and staff shall focus on the agency mission, which is competitive integrated employment, in assignment of tasks, planning and utilization of work time, initiation of self-directed work teams, and innovative projects. This includes expanding the diversity of the Agency in terms of employment outcomes to individuals with the most significant disabilities who are minorities. Staff shall ensure that persons with the most significant disabilities who are minorities will receive the same employment related services that non-minority and individuals with disabilities receive. OVR works to develop outreach activities to minorities to facilitate increased consumer referrals to the Agency. OVR encourages staff to get to know key community leaders and minority organizations to facilitate outreach. The Office follows Equal Employment Opportunity guidelines and Affirmative Action Procedures. The Office encourages existing minority staff to play an active role in policy and program development, service delivery and program monitoring activities.

The Office provides cultural diversity training to staff in order to develop a better understanding of different cultures and value systems. Staff participates in the Governor’s Equal Employment Opportunity Conference. Service demographic and population data is utilized to determine the number of minorities in regions and develop strategies to increase percentages. OVR will utilize different methods and channels of communication in targeting minority populations. This will include usage of the "Language Line" that will enable our staff to communicate with non-English speaking applicants in their native language.

##### 4. The methods to be used to improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities, including the coordination of services designed to facilitate the transition of such students from school to postsecondary life (including the receipt of VR services, postsecondary education, employment, and pre-employment transition services).

OVR will use a variety of methods to improve and expand VR services for students. As stated in this section internal and external methods utilized are WEBI, Crystal Reports, Case Reviews, Satisfaction Surveys, Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, the State’s performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA and the Strategic Planning Process.

OVR will use the strategic planning process as one of its methods to ensure it’s effectively implementing rehabilitation programs and services to this target population. Through quality assurance processes OVR provides internal and external methods and examinations to identify areas where improvement and training are needed. OVR will utilize the case review process to Improve Professional Skills to review transition cases.

In November of 2019 the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC) staff were on site in Kentucky to conduct a pre-Employment and Transition Services Strategic Planning Meeting. OVR leadership completed a SWOT analysis and worked with WINTAC staff in completing a statewide strategic plan for Transition Services in Kentucky. During the session, WINTAC staff led us through a discussion of OVR’s current delivery system, the SWOT analysis and a development of a plan with actions, roles and responsibilities. WINTAC staff participate in monthly call with OVR staff in the implementation of the plan.

As stated earlier in this section the OVR conducts a statewide comprehensive needs assessment in order to satisfy requirements in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The assessment has a component that identifies additional VR service needs of both students and youth. A part of the assessment is tailored to this population to identify emerging needs. Information gained through this process is then analyzed to develop conclusions and potential action strategies in serving this population.

In order to assure the coordination of services to facilitate the transition students from school to postsecondary life (including the receipt of VR services, postsecondary education, competitive integrated employment, and pre-employment transition services) OVR utilizes the following process. The VR Counselor is responsible for the schools located in their assigned county areas. Counselors work with school staff to identify potentially eligible students assuring that they are given the opportunity to apply for services starting at age 14. While the student is enrolled in school, the VR Counselor works with school staff to ensure the student receives the needed services to aid in the transition to post-secondary life. Services include but are not limited to pre-employment transition services, other VR services and programming offered by OVR, and other services specific to transition aged students by school districts and other entities. VR Counselors provide individualized services and where gaps in services are identified staff work to developed new and innovative services in the students’ home area to better serve this population.

One project that aligns with this area in serving students is Project CASE (Creating Access to Successful Employment). In October 2015, the Kentucky Office for the Blind/Kentucky Career Center was awarded the Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities Model Demonstration Program Grant (CFDA 84.235N). This federal grant was provided through the Rehabilitation Services Administration (Department of Education) to create a program that would result in greater participation of VR-eligible individuals, including students and youth with disabilities, to acquire marketable skills and recognized postsecondary credentials necessary to secure competitive integrated employment in high-demand, high-quality occupations. Creating Access to Successful Employment (CASE) is in its final year. At this time the advisory team is working on a succession strategy to ensure that the work on this project continues. OVR and the partners on the grant want to ensure individuals with disabilities, even at the secondary school level, are not left out of participating in these existing initiatives, and can prepare for and obtain jobs in high-wage and high-demand occupations.

##### 5. If applicable, plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs within the State.

In 2019, the OVR implemented Memorandums of Agreements (MOA's) with four CRP's to improve capacity and quality of Customized Supported Employment(CSE) services in Kentucky.  This was a direct result of a needs assessment conducted by the OVR, which clearly indicated a need for customized employment services for individuals requiring supporting employment.  Additionally, this assessment clearly showed that there were only 4 CRP's in the state that had at least one Employment Specialist who had completed the required Certification process by the KY OVR to effectively provide Customized Supported Employment services.  As a result, these contracts allowed the OVR to increase CRP participation and increase the number of ES's who can provided CSE by 200%.  Ongoing efforts continue in effort to assist in building capacity for this much needed service.

The OVR continues to encourage CRP involvement as it relates to student and youth services through the implementation of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), with a primary focus of Work Based Learning Experience services.  In 2019, the OVR had agreements with 32 CRP's for the implementation and provision of Pre-ETS.

The KY OVR works closely with the Department of Behavioral Health for the implementation and provision of Individual Placement and Support (IPS), an evidenced based model of supported employment for individuals with Serious Mental Illness (SMI) and substance abuse conditions.  Currently, there are 18 CRP's that are credentialed to provide IPS, with at least 74 counties having access to this service.  The CRP Branch of the KY OVR continues to meet regularly with partners to ensure quality IPS services are readily available.

The KY OVR revamped the Supported Employment Service Fee Memorandum (SFM) payment structure to CRP's, which included outcome payments that extended to 90 days.  More specifically, it included increased payments to CRP's when outcomes of stable employment were achieved for 30, 60 and 90 days.  This change was implemented for all models of supported employment.

##### 6. Strategies to improve the performance of the State with respect to the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA.

Kentucky is committed to gathering the collective data required under section 116 of WIOA for all the core partners. KYStats and state agencies will work with the state board to ensure required reports for the performance accountability are completed to the best of the state’s ability. An approach Kentucky is actively exploring would house all data required for these reports in the Kentucky Longitudinal Data System (KLDS). The priority is to identify and deploy a third—party, non—agency entity to receive, clean and report from multiple data sources in the short term and ultimately assist in the development of common reports when the common system is implemented.

Kentucky assesses the overall effectiveness of the workforce investment system in relation to the strategic vision and goals of the WorkSmart Kentucky and Economic Competitiveness plans, seeking integration of activities and information from all the core programs. The ultimate goal is to increase the long—term employment outcomes for individuals seeking services, especially those with barriers to employment, to improve services to employers and demonstrate continuous improvement. Kentucky will assess the effectiveness, physical and programmatic accessibility in accordance with Section 188 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.), and continuous improvement of the career center.

Kentucky has a certification process in place to ensure that KCC offices are ready to serve all qualified persons in the regional and local areas as expected. The certification policy is fundamental to aligning programs, policies and activities in the workforce system. Workforce agencies and partners are engaged in this assessment and continuous high—quality improvements to ensure that all related activities are being coordinated in a way that allows partners to review relevant information and take action to improve the system.

KYStats works with all relevant state agencies to integrate data storage activities which, hitherto, were being carried out separately. This ensures that data about all persons seeking services from any of the core programs are captured and matched so as to avoid duplication of service delivery. Not only does this help track the workforce services provided, it also enables evaluation of those services — for example, the employment status of eligible training program completions several years out.

Storing all WIOA—related data in a common data warehouse will enhance data retrieval and analysis, which will help KCC to efficiently assess the quality of our workforce service providers. Kentucky will review data to track provider success in meeting the targets in the following areas:

learning gains;

entry into employment in required quarters;

obtaining a secondary credential and enrollment into post—secondary or training;

obtaining a secondary credential and gaining employment;

and gaining a post—secondary credential.

Having all core programs’ data integrated will enable service providers to conduct regular audits to determine which program service providers are challenged in meeting targets and in need of technical assistance beyond the standard leadership activities that are provided. Technical assistance will be targeted to the area of need; it will be individualized and focused.

KYStats and state agencies will continue to work with KWIB to ensure required reports for the performance accountability are completed to the best of the state’s ability.

Currently, in Kentucky the work continues to identify a plan for collecting, tracking, measuring and reporting data from the workforce partners. This requires substantial work on several levels prior to the development and implementation of a system to capture the data. Changes under WIOA have required significant modifications in the current manner that data is collected. This is further complicated by the fact that theworkforce partners use different systems and tracking mechanisms.

The current Kentucky OVR VR Case Management System (CMS); a web-based system used to collect required data, enforce work flow rules, verify data accuracy, authorize and pay for consumer services, and produce a variety of monthly and real time reports; was implemented in October 2008. The system was designed to be fully accessible with particular attention to usability with screen reading technology - a goal that none of the “off the shelf” options for case management systems for vocational rehabilitation agencies could meet at the time.

With recent improvements in technology, several systems could meet the programmatic and accessibility needs of the agency. The current CMS system is approaching its useful life expectancy and upgrades to the current system as well as the purchase or licensing of other systems that would meet both the needs of the agency and those of common measure reporting. OVR is in process of procurement of a new system. OVR and the partners access to a Customer Relationship Management system via the SalesForce application.

Regardless of the system that the Agencies choose to implement, innovations that are anticipated include: paperless cases, electronic signatures, improved reporting access, increased electronic communication and corroboration among Department partners, and system generated notifications and reminders to increase productivity. In the interim, the current system is being modified to meet the data collection requirements for common measures as well as the additional data elements required for RSA 911 quarterly reporting. The current system has allowed for us to collect the necessary data and produce accurate reports prior to the due dates for Rehabilitation Services Administration and common measures reporting.

Once a baseline is determined and the relationship between services, partnerships, etc. and successful outcomes and measurable progress is analyzed, strategies will be developed to improve the performance outcomes.

##### 7. Strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce development system in assisting individuals with disabilities.

The Kentucky Workforce Investment Board over the past year led a rigorous process to identify challenges that may be limiting the ability of employers, communities and citizens to reach their potential. To address these challenges, there are a series of steps that require a sustained commitment from state and local policymakers along with the support of Kentucky's business community. In 2017, responding to concerns over Kentucky's workforce participation rate, educational attainment statistics, and public health indications the KWIB revisited its workforce strategy, developing recommendations to support a lifetime continuum of training, preparation, and investment for citizens. The Kentucky Work Ready - An Urgent Call to Action has the following four goals:

1) Actively engage employers to drive Kentucky's workforce development system.

2) Align and integrate P-12 adult education and postsecondary education to provide lifelong opportunities for Kentuckians that prepare them for the rapidly shifting realities of work in the future.

3) Increase Kentucky's Workforce participation by creating opportunities, workforce participation, and removing employment barriers for Kentuckians.

4) Focus resources on the most effective initiatives and improve the return on our workforce investment utilizing data to constantly improve workforce development in Kentucky.

The Department of Workforce Investment has established reciprocal referral services which allow for more efficient services to individuals with disabilities.

The Central Office administrative functions for workforce programs are centrally located in Frankfort to assure collaboration among the workforce partners. The Workforce Development Leadership team meets bimonthly to cover pertinent issues within the department.

The office participates in the ten Workforce local boards throughout the state as well as serving on different committees of those boards. All five of the core partners are represented on the team. Kentucky strategies have and will continue to support WIOA’s focus on low income adults and youth who have limited skills, lack work experience, and face other barriers to economic success. Vocational Rehabilitation is a full and actively engaged partner in Kentucky in the workforce system. OVR is actively engaged in the planning process, on committees and staff serves as project directors on some of the KWIB initiatives. They are advocates in the workforce system for individuals with disabilities.

##### 8. How the agency's strategies will be used to:

###### A. achieve goals and priorities by the State, consistent with the comprehensive needs assessment;

OVR followed the guidelines established for a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and the Vocational Rehabilitation Needs Assessment Guide established by the Rehabilitation Services Administration and The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, signed into law on July 22, 2014. As specified by the guidelines, a number of data sources were used for this report. In order to provide some context to our analysis of the needs of blind and visually impaired Kentucky residents, this CSNA also examines a number of statistics and estimates provided at the state and national levels.

**Priority I: Develop and implement strategies to improve OVR’s performance on the required accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA.**

**Priority II: Provide excellent customer service and maintain collaborative working relationships with the WIOA partners in the Career Centers. Priority**

**Priority III: Provide supported employment services that lead to competitive integrated employment and improve the number of successful outcomes for supported employment cases across the state**

**Goal 1: Recruit, employ, retain the most qualified and highly skilled rehabilitation staff which reflects employment focused, job driven outcomes.**

Objective 1.1: Examine staff patterns and service capacity in order to effectively deliver quality vocational rehabilitation services.

Strategies: Identify crucial positions to be filled with qualified candidates Strategies: Staff Utilize sector strategies regional, industry—focused approaches to building skilled workforces that result in job opportunities for all workers across a range of industries

Measure: Increase staff retention rates

Measure Crucial positions identified are filled with qualified candidates

Objective 1.2: Training and mentorship opportunities to facilitate advancement to prevent gaps in services

Measure: Programs are developed for all class specifications.

Objective: 1.3 Increase salaries as a method to address employee retention

Measure: Increase staff retention rates by 5%

**Goal 2: Develop and implement training that adequately address the needs of staff under WIOA and changes to policies and procedures under the combined agency.**

Objective 2.1: Assess the training needs of staff as they apply to combined policies and procedures and WIOA.

Measure: Needs Assessment completed

Objective 2.2: Develop and deliver identified training to staff that aligns with a shared vision and mission of the combined agency. Strategies: Assess the training needs of staff as they apply to combined policies and procedures and WIOA. Measures: needs assessment completed of staff training delivered on WIOA of staff training delivered relating to policies and procedures

Measure: Staff trained on WIOA

Measure: Staff training on policies and procedures

**Goal 3: Develop the policy and procedures manual, Service Fee Memorandums, and other written materials to be concise, accurate, and accessible in order to support staff, eliminate confusion, and improve the function of the combined agency.**

Objective 3.1.: Ensure the provision of consistent and quality services for individuals with disabilities in the Commonwealth.

Strategies: Assign staff to specific work teams Strategies: Review and modify forms, printed materials and manuals in keeping with the combined policies and procedures.

Measure: Completion of the combined policies and procedures manual

Measure: Revision and Implementation of Service Fee Memorandums Review and modify forms, printed materials and manuals in keeping with the combined policies and procedures.

Measure: Review and modify forms, printed materials and manuals in keeping with the combined policies and procedures. All materials produced in accessible formats

Objective 3.2: Develop operations manual

Measure: Completed, staff trained and manual distributed.

**Goal 4: Effectively utilize staff and fiscal resources in order to provide statewide services to all eligible consumers and increase competitive integrated employment outcomes.**

Objective 4.1: Effective and efficient fiscal operations

Measure: Elimination of the waiting list by category

Measure: Serve open categories keeping with the OOS policy

Measure Open categories under Order of Selection

Measure: Operating budget

Measure: Accurate and timely reporting.

Objective 4.2: Maximize effectiveness of the Employer Services Branch

Measure: Mission Clarification

Measure Implementation of Quality Controls

Measure: Services available in every county of the state

Objective 4.3: Expedite services in order to increase outcomes

Strategies: Counselors will address and distribute a Benefits Planning Fact Sheet, developed by the SSA Coordinator for Vocational Rehabilitation, for eligible consumers, especially during discussion of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE);

Strategies: Provide instruction in self—advocacy, benefits planning, and financial readiness at Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center (CDPVTC) and Charles W. McDowell Center Strategies: Participate in the Kentucky Career Center Business Service Teams and make business contacts statewide;

Strategies: Collaborate with the Coalition for Workforce Diversity in Louisville and explore expanding the model statewide;

Measure: Average time between eligibility and plan reduction of 10%

Measure: All applicants who receive SSA benefits will receive information on benefits planning and at least 50% of them will receive a benefits analysis.

**Supported Employment Goals and Strategies**

**Goal 1: Improve efficiency and effectiveness of CRP services**

Objective 1.1 Increase the number of CRP’s providing Supported Employment Services

Strategies: Recruit more providers for supported employment by holding outreach opportunities for potential providers and support providers for unserved and underserved areas;

Measure: Increase in the number of providers (5%)

Objective 2.1: Improve monitoring and exploration of additional strategies to improve CRP service quality and compliance

Strategies: Involve job coaches with transition students by the last semester of school;

Strategies: Train staff on new policies related to customized employment and person—centered planning;

Strategies: Require notes to be submitted by Supported Employment Providers by the 5th day of each month.

Strategies: Continued monitoring by the Section 511 Implementation Team to insure agency compliance to WIOA requirements related to OVR relationships with sheltered workshops;

Measure: Scorecard

Objective 3.1: Seek alternative strategies for providing and funding Long Term Support Services.

Strategies: Gather input from staff, education partners, and service providers, individuals with disabilities, their families and other stakeholders.

Measure: Two alternative strategies implemented by 2021.

###### B. support innovation and expansion activities; and

OVR will use innovation and expansion funds to support the following activities: To support the Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation (SCVR, Kentucky’s SRC), including all meeting expenses and expenses related to conducting an annual survey of consumer satisfaction; the Annual Report of the council; and support of the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC).

Other activities are:

To conduct marketing activities for KYOVR, including the printing of brochures and other materials

To support summer transitions program specifically designed for high school rising juniors and rising seniors who have been diagnosed on the Autism Spectrum who have expressed an interest in transitioning into higher education, as Pre—Employment Transition Service activity.

It is anticipated the tasks identified in the current plan would provide expansion and innovation related to Supported Employment, partnerships with business, access to Assistive Technology, asset development programs and community rehabilitation programs.

The plan will also focus on innovation related to counselor training, staff recruitment, and quality assurance. OVR has been involved in a number of initiatives and projects in an effort to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities. There are other projects that are just beginning that should also help expand and improve services.

Past, current and planned projects and efforts include:

An effort to incorporate asset development and financial education strategies into the vocational rehabilitation process. The effort has included several facets. Agency staff has received numerous training opportunities related to asset development in the last few years. KYOVR has partnered with Louisville Metro government to make their financial empowerment services more inclusive of individuals with disabilities.

KYOVR continues to make benefits planning an integral part of services to individuals who receive Social Security benefits because of disability, instituting a benefits planning fee—for—service that has been well utilized by VR counselors for their consumers. KYOVR has developed a Financial Resources Directory for use by staff and consumers.  As a result of the SGA Project, which concluded in 2017, we now provide these services through a contract so that the services may be provided in-house.  VR counselors can refer directly to their local WIPA or (if not eligible) they can refer to the contracted in-house services.  Also the agency continues to participate in the Return on Investment (ROI) grant. This study is being conducted by the University of Richmond and George Washington University on the Return on Investment (ROI) of vocational rehabilitation services. The results of the study can hopefully be used to help agency leadership make decisions on where to focus services and resources.

Two efforts spearheaded by the KATS Network, the state assistive technology project within OVR, to increase access to assistive technology. One, Project CARAT (Coordinating and Assisting the Reuse of Assistive Technology), refurbishes and redistributes durable medical equipment to individuals who need it. The other, Project SHARP (Statewide Hearing Aid Assistance and Reuse Program) assist low income individuals in obtaining hearing aids.

Through its CPID project, OVR in collaboration with the Workforce System partners assists consumers in three career pathways (healthcare, manufacturing, and information technology) in two of Kentucky Career Centers, Kentuckian Works in the Louisville metropolitan area and the Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program (EKCEP) in rural Appalachia.

###### 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.

OVR has taken steps to ensure equitable access to and participation in federally funded programs for all consumers and for agency staff regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or age. The agency takes into consideration the needs of staff in correlation to the service needs of individuals with disabilities in Kentucky specifically for: Individuals with the most significant disabilities, including the need for supported employment services; and individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program. We will comply with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Public Law 101—336, and applicable federal regulations relating to prohibiting discrimination against otherwise qualified disabled individuals under any program or activity and adhere to the US Department of Labor Final Rule on Federal Executive Order 11246.

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation is committed to a policy of equal opportunity to all qualified applicants without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, age or disability. OVR encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have been traditionally underrepresented in the workplace such as members of racial or ethnic minority groups, women, and those with disabilities. There is an explicit commitment to assuring equal access for all communications through outreach, media contact of any form inclusive of social media, websites, online learning or flyers, and other announcements or correspondence under the project.

#### p. Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals

Describe:

##### 1. An evaluation of the extent to which the VR program goals described in the approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan for the most recently completed program year were achieved. The evaluation must:

###### A. Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.

###### Priority I: Develop and implement strategies to improve OVR’s performance on the required accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA.

###### Priority II: Provide excellent customer service and maintain collaborative working relationships with the WIOA partners in the Career Centers.

###### Priority III: Provide supported employment services that lead to competitive integrated employment and improve the number of successful outcomes for supported employment cases across the state

###### Goal 1: Recruit, employ, retain the most qualified and highly skilled rehabilitation staff which reflects employment focused, job driven outcomes.

###### Objective 1.1: Examine staff patterns and service capacity in order to effectively deliver quality vocational rehabilitation services.

###### Strategies: Identify crucial positions to be filled with qualified candidates Strategies: Staff Utilize sector strategies regional, industry—focused approaches to building skilled workforces that result in job opportunities for all workers across a range of industries

###### Measure: Increase staff retention rates

###### Measure Crucial positions identified are filled with qualified candidates

###### Objective 1.2: Training and mentorship opportunities to facilitate advancement to prevent gaps in services

###### Measure: Programs are developed for all class specifications.

###### Objective: 1.3 Increase salaries as a method to address employee retention

###### Measure: Increase staff retention rates by 5%

###### Progress:

###### A process is in place to review all requests to fill positions and a tracking mechanism is utilized to track the position request from its initial posting through the entire personnel position. Currently OVR has 33 positions posted. We will establish a baseline for staff retention from the 2019 calendar year.

###### Executive Leadership members met with Human Resources at a Cabinet and State Level to review job classifications for the VR series and request an increase in the in-range hiring for applicants. The job specifications were changed to broaden the scope of allowable degrees given that many candidates that apply do not qualify for positions given how stringent the specifications of the job are written. There were changes made to the entry level salary managers can offer candidates. Currently, there is consistency in candidates turning down the entry level wage as well as an offer of 10% above the entry level refusing the offer of employment.

###### OVR submitted a proposal for salary increases for staff that would stretch across the next two years of the biennial budget.

###### OVR has a strong mentoring program for new hires. A counselor mentor training took place in July of 2019. There was continued growth on the mentor team with 9 new applicants in the 2020 recruitment cycle. The team worked on the following components for the mentoring program: Rehabilitation Counselors for the Blind review of eligibility, Individual Plan development, Specific Disabilities, Application/Referral, Follow-up/Closure, Community Work Transition Program and Pre-employment transition services.

###### Goal 2: Develop and implement training that adequately address the needs of staff under WIOA and changes to policies and procedures under the combined agency.

###### Objective 2.1: Assess the training needs of staff as they apply to combined policies and procedures and WIOA.

###### Measure: Needs Assessment completed

###### Objective 2.2: Develop and deliver identified training to staff that aligns with a shared vision and mission of the combined agency. Strategies: Assess the training needs of staff as they apply to combined policies and procedures and WIOA. Measures: needs assessment completed of staff training delivered on WIOA of staff training delivered relating to policies and procedures

###### Measure: Staff trained on WIOA

###### Measure: Staff training on policies and procedures

###### Progress:

###### A training needs assessment survey was conducted in June of 2019 and the results were analyzed for trends.

###### Staff receive resources on an ongoing basis regarding training opportunities weekly. As a result of the reorganization a new employee training was held to address concerns of the Rehabilitation Counselors for the Blind. A statewide common measures training was held in October of 2019 that included policies established for common measures. Ethics and social media training was conducted as well as a variety of zoom trainings on policy.

###### Goal 3: Develop the policy and procedures manual, Service Fee Memorandums, and other written materials to be concise, accurate, and accessible in order to support staff, eliminate confusion, and improve the function of the combined agency.

###### Objective 3.1.: Ensure the provision of consistent and quality services for individuals with disabilities in the Commonwealth.

###### Strategies: Assign staff to specific work teams Strategies: Review and modify forms, printed materials and manuals in keeping with the combined policies and procedures.

###### Measure: Completion of the combined policies and procedures manual

###### Measure: Revision and Implementation of Service Fee Memorandums Review and modify forms, printed materials and manuals in keeping with the combined policies and procedures.

###### Measure: Review and modify forms, printed materials and manuals in keeping with the combined policies and procedures. All materials produced in accessible formats

###### Objective 3.2: Develop operations manual

###### Measure: Completed, staff trained and manual distributed.

###### Progress:

###### This goal is a result of the Reorganization and the combining of the blind and general agency. A Program Procedural Manual is in draft form in review for edits.

###### All performance plans for Counselors have been updated to reflect goals for common measures.

###### Staff participate in a state Accessibility Community of Practice that looks at external programs and documents. Staff continue to work on internal applications.

###### Service Fee Memorandum revisions and updates are in the review process.

###### An administrative operations manual is in draft form.

###### Goal 4: Effectively utilize staff and fiscal resources in order to provide statewide services to all eligible consumers and increase competitive integrated employment outcomes.

###### Objective 4.1: Effective and efficient fiscal operations

###### Measure: Elimination of the waiting list by category

###### Measure: Serve open categories keeping with the OOS policy

###### Measure Open categories under Order of Selection

###### Measure: Operating budget

###### Measure: Accurate and timely reporting.

###### Objective 4.2: Maximize effectiveness of the Employer Services Branch

###### Measure: Mission Clarification

###### Measure Implementation of Quality Controls

###### Measure: Services available in every county of the state

###### Objective 4.3: Expedite services in order to increase outcomes

###### Strategies: Counselors will address and distribute a Benefits Planning Fact Sheet, developed by the SSA Coordinator for Vocational Rehabilitation, for eligible consumers, especially during discussion of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE);

###### Strategies: Provide instruction in self—advocacy, benefits planning, and financial readiness at Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center (CDPVTC) and Charles W. McDowell Center Strategies: Participate in the Kentucky Career Center Business Service Teams and make business contacts statewide;

###### Strategies: Collaborate with the Coalition for Workforce Diversity in Louisville and explore expanding the model statewide;

###### Measure: Average time between eligibility and plan reduction of 10%

###### Measure: All applicants who receive SSA benefits will receive information on benefits planning and at least 50% of them will receive a benefits analysis.

###### Progress:

###### Fiscal staff assigned to OVR operations are new to their positions (length of service under six months). Technical support was requested from RSA and this is ongoing.

###### DB101 (an online tool for Social Security and SSI Disability beneficiaries) has been purchased and staff as well as community partners have been trained in its use. This online resource can be utilized by anyone including the consumer’s assists with benefits planning. The agency provides benefits and financial planning to consumers through a fee-for-service or in-house through statewide contracts. VR counselors can refer directly to their local WIPA or (if not eligible) they can refer to the contracted in-house services. In-house services are highly encouraged or the fee-for-service since they are not held to any time constraints with a greater emphasis on financial planning and follow-up. OVR has conducted presentations to Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) and non-profit providers to consider providing benefits planning services. The agency is encouraging the CRPs and non-profit providers to participate in “Introduction to Social Security Disability Benefits, Work Incentives, and Employment Support Programs” offered by Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) in hopes that some staff might become interested in pursuing certification to provide those services.

###### Category Two was opened in February of 2019 and Category Three will open effective April 1, 2020. Only Category Four will remain closed.

The KATLC website offers online financial education and empowerment resource**s** for consumers. The agency also seeks to partner with other entities to promote and expand financial empowerment activities for individuals with disabilities. The agency is partnering with Louisville Metro Government, Kentucky **Coalition against Domestic Violence**, and Bank on Louisville. The agency also collaborates with the Kentucky Career Centers to provide financial education as appropriate.

###### Core programs and partners gained access to a business customer relationship management system based on a Salesforce platform. This platform allows the tracking of business engagement and reporting for the aligned goal of furthering business services, and is the tool that encompasses the Kentucky Integrated Business Engagement System (KIBES).The OVR Employer Services Branch is dedicated to employer outreach and consumer job placement services allowing for a consistent approach to services across the state. This enables the agency to focus on more intensive employer outreach, including increased emphasis on corporate employers and partnership, and expand direct employer interaction statewide with the business services teams.

###### Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

###### As with any merger or reorganization there is major work associated with the combining of policies, procedural operations. The process is good in many respects because agencies must closely examine operations and this bring about change that often benefits the organization. Change on this level also brings resistance from staff and requires adjustment on the part of the organizations employees. This has been a focus for Kentucky OVR over the past two years and is still a work in progress. In order to accomplish the goals and priorities of the agency this has required an intense focus for this area.

###### Given that there has been two reorganizations of the fiscal operations in Kentucky in the past 3 years, increased turnover this has had a major impact on OVR’s ability to complete federal reports in a timely manner. Turnover created the loss of veteran knowledge creating an environment where staff have needed training on every aspect of the VR program.

##### 2. An evaluation of the extent to which the Supported Employment program goals described in the Supported Employment Supplement for the most recent program year were achieved. The evaluation must:

###### A. Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.

**Goal 1: Improve efficiency and effectiveness of CRP services**

Objective 1.1 Increase the number of CRP’s providing Supported Employment Services

Strategies: Recruit more providers for supported employment by holding outreach opportunities for potential providers and support providers for unserved and underserved areas;

Measure: Increase in the number of providers (5%)

Objective 2.1: Improve monitoring and exploration of additional strategies to improve CRP service quality and compliance

Strategies: Involve job coaches with transition students by the last semester of school;

Strategies: Train staff on new policies related to customized employment and person—centered planning;

Strategies: Require notes to be submitted by Supported Employment Providers by the 5th day of each month.

Strategies: Continued monitoring by the Section 511 Implementation Team to insure agency compliance to WIOA requirements related to OVR relationships with sheltered workshops;

Measure: Scorecard

Objective 3.1: Seek alternative strategies for providing and funding Long Term Support Services.

Strategies: Gather input from staff, education partners, and service providers, individuals with disabilities, their families and other stakeholders.

Measure: Two alternative strategies implemented by 2021.

**Progress:**

Four additional providers expanded services to include Customized Supported Employment via contract opportunities. An 11% increase occurred resulting in a total of 91 CRP’s throughout Kentucky that provide SE services.

The team explored the development and implementation of a CRP Qualitative Assessment scale. The CRP Qualitative Survey was distributed in October of 2019.

###### There is a MOU initiative with the Department of Behavioral health and other state agencies to partner in addressing Long Term Support Needs.

###### Staff conduct ongoing education and collaboration with the Department of Behavioral Health to access Medicaid Waiver Programs.

###### B. Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

##### As with any merger or reorganization there is major work associated with the combining of policies, procedural operations. The process is good in many respects because agencies must closely examine operations and this bring about change that often benefits the organization. Change on this level also brings resistance from staff and requires adjustment on the part of the organizations employees. This has been a focus for Kentucky OVR over the past two years and is still a work in progress. In order to accomplish the goals and priorities of the agency this has required an intense focus for this area.

##### 3. The VR program's performance on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA.

##### In the fall of 2019 OVR conducted trainings specific to measurable skill gains and entering data into the consumer record in the case management system. Trainings were held regionally across the staff for all vocational rehabilitation counselors and assistants to increase their understanding of MSG and the importance of maintaining accurate records. OVR has adjusted the VR Counselor performance evaluation to reflect a focus for this area.

##### The Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities Model Demonstration Program Grant (CFDA 84.235N) provided through the Rehabilitation Services Administration (Department of Education) has resulted in greater participation of VR-eligible individuals, including youth with disabilities, to acquire marketable skills and recognized postsecondary credentials necessary to secure competitive integrated employment in high-demand, high-quality occupations. The goals and strategies of this five year project and the evaluation plan for it strongly aligns with the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA. OVR is in the final year of this grant and is actively engaging the partners in succession planning surrounding the goals and strategies of the grant.

Kentucky is currently reviewing collected data and developing strategies to improve the collection and performance for the State’s performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA. The current Kentucky VR Case Management System (CMS); a web—based system used to collect required data, enforce work flow rules, verify data accuracy, authorize and pay for consumer services, and produce a variety of monthly and real time reports; was implemented in October 2008. The system is being edited for improvement in the collection and reporting of the required data. Currently, OVR is in process of procuring a new system to replace the antiquated system in place.

Regardless of the system that the Agencies choose to implement, innovations that are anticipated include: paperless cases, electronic signatures, improved reporting access, increased electronic communication and corroboration among Department partners, and system generated notifications and reminders to increase productivity. In the interim, the current system is being modified to meet the data collection requirements for common measures as well as the additional data elements required for RSA 911 quarterly reporting. Currently the agency is looking at establishing baselines looking at what defines a successful outcome and measurable progress in order to develop strategies to improve the performance outcomes.

##### 4. How the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized.

To support the activities of the Statewide Council on Vocational Rehabilitation (SCVR, Kentucky’s SRC), including all meeting expenses and expenses related to conducting an annual survey of consumer satisfaction survey and the comprehensive statewide needs assessment;

To support the activities of the Kentucky Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), including all meeting expenses and the salary of a part—time SILC Coordinator

To conduct marketing activities for KYOVR, including the printing of brochures and other materials

#### q. Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services.

Include the following:

##### 1. The quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

Supported employment offers more than just the assistance needed to find and learn a job. It provides the necessary ongoing support to help an individual maintain employment. Kentucky has identified 91 supported employment providers throughout the state. Individualized strategies are also utilized to arrange for supported employment services outside of "organized programs" when necessary (i.e. coworkers at the job site may provide support paid for with various resources; independent supported employment specialists may be hired, etc.). More than three-fourths of Kentucky’s 120 counties have access to supported employment programs. The lack of accessible and dependable transportation often limits access to supported job opportunities.

Extended support services are provided by each local supported employment program utilizing funds from a myriad of sources, including the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities (DBHDID) , the Kentucky Council on Developmental Disabilities, city and county governments, United Way, fund-raising campaigns, PASS funding, Medicaid, Supports for Community Living Waiver funds, Michelle P waiver funds and other resources. Most programs utilize a combination of funding sources for the provision of extended support services. Natural supports are encouraged (such as co-workers, peers, etc.) and are carefully monitored by the supported employment provider.

Kentucky OVR’s partner, the Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities (DBHDID), has developed a new Medicaid Waiver that would more adequately fund supported employment services for people with developmental disabilities. The new Supports for Community Living Waiver 2 (SCL2) was rolled out during the 2014 calendar year. It has increased the fee structure and modified the service definitions for supported employment. Kentucky’s supported employment programs have primarily served individuals with intellectual disability and individuals with chronic mental illness. This is largely due to greater availability of funding for extended support for these two groups. Individuals with other disabilities are served if funding for extended support is available and if the supported employment provider has the expertise to meet that individual’s needs for employment training and support.

Kentucky has become the 12th state to participate in the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model of supported employment, which is an evidenced-based practice. The goal is to demonstrate the effectiveness of the IPS model for supported employment for people with serious mental illness throughout Kentucky. In July 2011, four sites in Kentucky began pilot site implementation. In 2012, two sites were added. In 2013, three sites were added. In 2014 BHDDID required that all Community Mental Health Centers implement the IPS program as one of the four evidence based practices required in their state plan. A Statewide Coordinator, employed through the University of Kentucky, Human Development Institute, oversees the pilot sites.

A second coordinator was hired in late 2013. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Kentucky Division of Behavioral Health collaborate as Team Leading agencies for the project. The Kentucky Association for Persons in Supported Employment (KY APSE) has been successful in creating greater supported employment awareness among the legislators in Kentucky’s General Assembly. These awareness/advocacy efforts will continue with the goal of increased statewide funding allocations and possible supported employment legislation to create a more solid funding base for extended services.

QUALITY Pursuant to federal regulations, supported employment services provided by approved vendors must contain these elements: 1) competitive work; 2) integrated work settings; and 3) provision of extended support services. In order to ensure that supported employment services are provided according to regulation, the following guidelines must be met: 1. Services will be provided for individuals with the most significant disabilities who have a documented need for supported employment services, including extended support services. 2. Work will be performed on a full-time or part-time basis. Each individual in supported employment and his/her OVR counselor shall jointly establish in the IPE an appropriate goal for the number of hours per week that will maximize the individual’s vocational potential. 3. Work must take place in integrated settings where most workers do not have disabilities. 4. Wages must be in compliance with Fair Labor Standards Act. Each supported employee will have a goal of earning at least minimum wage. Kentucky’s supported employment providers adhere to the following principles: •The supported employment concept assumes that all persons, regardless of degree of disability, have the capacity and should be afforded the opportunity to participate in real employment with appropriate support. •Emphasis is placed on recognizing and maximizing opportunities in the workplace rather than just providing skills training. •The purpose of the program is employment with all of the general expectations of a job such as wages, job security, and performing meaningful work. Job Development, rather than Job Placement is the focus. •Ongoing, extended supports are tailored to meet each individual’s needs. •Individuals are offered choices in the selection and maintenance of jobs. Decisions about appropriate services are made jointly with the individual and/or the family, the supported employment provider, and the VR counselor. •Integration on the job site is recognized as necessary and important. Opportunities are available for non-work interactions with non-disabled workers. Interactions with non-disabled co-workers are a part of regular job responsibilities. "Natural supports" are developed and emphasized. •Extended services are proactive, not merely reactive. For example, plans are developed with individuals in anticipation of career advancement rather than merely waiting for a job loss, lay off, company closing, etc., before seeking other opportunities. The primary staff responsible for providing supported employment services are "job coaches," "job trainers," and/or "supported employment specialists." Positions are both full and part-time, depending on the size and service territory of the local provider. Training and Consultation for staff is provided by the Supported Employment Branch according to the needs of the provider. Supported Employment Training Project core values training is required for all vendors in the SE Outcome-based Reimbursement System. This is funded collaboratively using Department of Behavioral Health Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities/OVR dollars and is implemented by the Supported Employment Training Project at the University of Kentucky Human Development Institute. Technical assistance is also provided by the OVR CRP Branch staff. A resource manual and other policies and guidelines memorandum were developed for vocational rehabilitation counselors. These are periodically revised and updated so that staff may better understand the rehabilitation process in regard to supported employment. This is a useful tool for supported employment providers as well. Seminars, workshops, and training/awareness sessions are arranged and/or participated in throughout the state with various agencies and organizations that can assist with funding, conversion, employment, and other related supported employment issues. Meetings of this nature are regularly held with such groups as The Arc of Kentucky, the Kentucky Commonwealth Council on Developmental Disabilities, Community Mental Health Centers, Kentucky Consortium for Values Based Training, KY APSE, Kentucky Rehabilitation Association and others. The quality of supported employment outcomes is assessed individually. Such issues as Consumer satisfaction, earnings, benefits, employee and employer satisfaction, the degree of integration, availability of dependable transportation, co-worker support, socialization, work environment, and provision of support services are important. On a regular basis, the CRP Branch staff conducts technical assistance visits with each provider for quality assurance purposes. As well, each supported employment provider has established on-going strategies to measure customer satisfaction. EXTENT As a part of the eligibility determination process for the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation services, supported employment will be considered as a possible vocational outcome for individuals with the most significant disabilities. The agency is now in an order of selection, serving individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities in Category 1 first. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation will be able to provide supported employment services through approved vendors and/or individual providers.

These services include:

A. Development of a Person Centered Employment Plan (PCEP) with recommendations for job-development;

B. Individually designed job development services, including assistance with job carving, reasonable accommodation, technology and/or other support strategies;

C. Intensive on-the-job skills training and other support services provided by supported employment specialists and/or co-workers and employers;

D. Time-unlimited follow-up services (including regular contact with employer, trainee, parent, guardian, or others deemed appropriate);

E. Other services needed to support the individual, such as travel, training, employment advocacy, non-employment advocacy, and counseling;

F. Development of a Long-Term Support Plan, which includes an outline of the extended support to be provided, and a plan for review and update. The amount, frequency and type of services will be based on the needs of each individual once eligibility is established for supported employment. If off-job-site monitoring is determined to be appropriate, the monitoring, at a minimum, will consist of two meetings per month with the individual and one meeting each month with the employer. Extended long-term follow-up support services will be the responsibility of other relevant state agencies, private organizations, and other sources of funding. These services will be considered and planned for prior to an individual receiving the services listed above. Vendor status is not approved unless assurance is made of the availability of extended support services. If extended services are not fully assured at the onset of the IPE, the Vocational Rehabilitation counselor and the OVR CRP Branch staff will participate with the provider in making arrangements for these services before the Vocational Rehabilitation case is closed. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation conducted a statewide survey of field counselors to explore the need and availability of Customized Supported Employment services for individuals with the most significant disabilities. It was expected, due to Section 511 of WIOA, that there would be an increase in the need and demand for Customized Supported Employment Services. Fifty-six percent (56%) stated that there are Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) providers in their area that provide CSE. However, 56% also states that it’s not readily available due to limited staff or oversized caseloads. Around 79% of the counselor’s state that only 3 or fewer of their individuals have been able to utilize this service due to lack of availability. When asked if there was a need for CSE in their area, overwhelmingly, 89% stated that there was a need. Over 77% stated that they have at least 4 or more consumers on their caseloads that could benefit from CSE. Over 42% state that they have at least 8 or more consumers that need this service.

As a result, the OVR is exploring possible contract scenarios to assist in making this service readily available to individuals with the most significant disabilities in the areas of the state that need it most. This need continues to grow, and the data retrieved from a recent survey illustrates this vividly.

The CRP Branch within the OVR is making this a main priority to ensure the needs of the individuals being served are met, which will assist them in accomplishing their vocational goals and dreams.

The timing of transition to extended services.

Transition from Title VI, Part B funds to various other individually-determined funding sources begins 30-days post-placement in the job. The transition to extended services funding is completed (generally) after 60 days on the job. Monitoring of services continues for a minimum of 30 additional days to assure that the job is stable. Extended services then continue by the provider indefinitely using funds other than Title VI, Part B. The VR case is closed when the supported employment provider, the VR counselor, and the consumer determine that stabilization has been achieved. Stabilization is measured for each individual by considering all circumstances including support needs, consumer choice and satisfaction regarding services, and employer feedback. Extended services are funded and made available without delay for youth with the most significant disabilities.

Extended Services are those services provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, which may include youth with the most significant disabilities. Services may be provided by the State agency, a private nonprofit organization, employer or any other appropriate resource when the individual no longer receives support services from the agency. OVR will determine the need for and fund services on a case-by case basis dependent upon each individual’s need for services. OVR will reserve and expend half (50%) of the State’s allotment for the provision of supported employment services and extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities. Extended services will be available for youth without delay for a period not to exceed four years or until the youth no longer meets the definition of a youth with a disability. OVR will work with providers to ensure another source of extended services to available to there will be no interruption of services for individuals with significant disabilities.

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