

KENTUCKY STATE PLAN FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

2022-2023 (Modified)

KENTUCKY OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION
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PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL)

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan [13] must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA:

Sec. 102(b)(2)(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.

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 and the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. OVR will work with the SRC to seek input for needed improvements and recommendations. This will occur through formal and informal communication including 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 competitive integrated employment and increased skill acquisition.

A. Summary of Input of the State Rehabilitation Council

The Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation has met quarterly with a full quorum in attendance from 10/1/2020 through 9/30/2021. There are six standing committees that drive the work of the council, and they meet quarterly on the same day as the SCVR meeting. Council members are self-appointed to committees. The committees are: 1) Executive Committee; 2) Public Awareness and Legislative; 3) Policy and Planning; 4) Consumer Services and Program Evaluation; 5) Nominating and Bylaws; and 6) Blind Services.

During 2020 and 2021 the Council played an active role and had input in the following:

- The Strategic Planning Process
- The SRC Annual Report
- Statewide Public Hearings
- Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment
- The State Plan Goals Priorities and Strategies
- Consumer Satisfaction Survey
- Review of Field Services Metrics and Data
- Reviewing and analyzing Center Operations
- 2021 Rehabilitation Services Monitoring
- Order of Selection

October 26, 2020, Quarterly Meeting

The quarterly meeting was held with a full quorum in attendance. During the meeting the chair of SCVR presented the annual statewide Emplo9yer Awards. There were seven awards given to recognize employers who work closely with VR. A training was conducted for the SCVR members on Robert's Rules of Orders.

The Executive Director and Executive Leadership gave reports, and questions were taken. OVR staff gave an overview of the effects of the pandemic for service delivery, options for virtual service delivery, Order of Selection, personnel actions and program service metrics. Effective October 1, 2020, OVR suspended their consumer cost-sharing policy, Priority Category IV was opened, and all consumers were removed for the wait list effective October 1, 2020.

The Executive Committee met and discussed the needs of the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center and Charles McDowell Rehabilitation Center for ongoing maintenance and repair and the proposed Capital Projects for the Center Operations. The discussion was prompted by OVR staff were engagement in discussions with the Rehabilitation Services Administration regarding prior approval for the projects. The Executive Committee for SCVR was asked to consider an amendment to the State Plan and the current statewide needs assessment to include a justification of need for the projects in the Capital Plan. A motion was made by the Committee recommending the addition of the goal and additional language to the Statewide Needs Assessment.

The Nominating and Bylaws Committee continued their work on the current bylaws in conjunction with Cabinet legal staff. The process has been delayed due to the pandemic. There were no recommendations.

Blind Services Committee discussed the effects of the pandemic on services and the development of virtual services for consumers. The need for additional Orientation and Mobility staff was

identified. There were no recommendations.

Consumer Services and Program Evaluation Committee had a comprehensive discussion about the Consumer Satisfaction Survey content considering the pandemic affecting services, changes to the UK Research Center and the combining of the two agencies. A motion was made to the full council recommending the Consumer Satisfaction Survey be distributed online with phone calls to be made to consumers that don't respond to the online version. Theresa Thomas seconded the motion with none opposed and the motion carried. The full council made the decision to table the motion until further discussion could occur at the next quarterly meeting.

The Policy and Planning Committee met and discussed the new drafts of Eligibility, Individual Plan for Employment and Individual Plan for Employment without Expanded definitions policies that were distributed via email to the committee prior to the meeting. The committee is aware of these new policies and have no recommendations. The Public Awareness and legislature received an update on the progress of the SCVR Annual Report. A recommendation was made to use the VR 100th Anniversary theme for the report.

January 25, 2021, Quarterly Meeting

The quarterly meeting was held with a full quorum in attendance. The Executive Director and the Executive Leadership staff gave reports, and questions and comments were taken. OVR staff gave an overview of service delivery during the pandemic, the RFP process for a new case management system, the establishment of a Transition Branch, Annual VR Awards Ceremony, the Career Pathway Grant final grant report to RSA, the RETAIN Grant, virtual service delivery at Perkins and McDowell, impacts of the pandemic on the Business Enterprises program, Order of Selection, personnel actions and program service metrics.

The Executive Committee met and discussed the OVR budget, matching funds and the effects of the pandemic on service delivery. OVR staff are adjusting to working remotely and acclimating to virtual service delivery. There were no recommendations.

The Nominating and Bylaws Committee continued their work on the revision of current bylaws. There were no recommendations.

Blind Services Committee had an in-depth conversation about specialized services to the blind and visually impaired and that some of these services simply cannot be delivered remotely. The committee discussed the need for individualized technology training across the state. There were no recommendations.

The Consumer Services and Program Evaluation Committee continued their discussions regarding the distribution method of the Consumer Satisfaction Survey. Discussion was held regarding the Consumer Satisfaction Survey considering the pandemic effect on services. The research center at UK is no longer operational requiring the Human Development Institute conduct the surveys internally until another entity is selected to conduct the survey. A motion was made for the Consumer Satisfaction Survey to be distributed online with phone calls to be made to consumers that don't respond to the online version and the motion carried. OVR staff gave an update on the Comprehensive Statewide Needs assessment. To date surveys have been conducted of the OVR counseling staff, Community Rehabilitation Program Staff, Career Center Staff, Post-Secondary Disability Center, the public, consumers and Secondary Transition Staff. Case reviews are currently conducted monthly and OVR is gathering information to identify service trends. There were no

recommendations.

The Policy and Planning Committee met and reviewed minor revisions to eight Service Fee Memorandums for the purpose of clarity to staff. There were no objections to the changes. These eight Service Fee Memorandums consisted of: 1. Benefits Analysis 2. Guidelines for Purchase of Supported Employment 3. CRP Pre-Employment Transition Services 4. Four Year and Graduate Degree Programs 5. Short Term Training Programs 6. Independent Contracting Agency Interpreting 7. Interpreter Fee Schedule 8. Community Work Transition Program Fee Schedule.

The Public Awareness and Legislature committee met and discussed areas of legislative interest. The group emphasized that the focus this year will be around the state budget.

April 26, 2021, Quarterly Meeting

The quarterly meeting was held in April, with a full quorum in attendance. At this meeting we did a review of what is required to conduct business consistent with the state's Open Meetings Act, KRS 61.805 to 61.850 specific to video teleconferencing meetings. The Executive Director and division directors gave reports, and questions were taken. OVR Executive Director and the Executive Leadership team gave an overview of the upcoming off-site federal monitoring schedule and highlights of the MTAG. Information was presented to the SCVR regarding the statewide needs assessment, OVR contracts and renewals, plan for returning staff to offices on a hybrid plan while adhering to Healthy at Work guidelines, updates on the Strategic Planning process, the 6-year Capital Plan, Business Enterprises and the Randolph-Sheppard Financial relief and Restoration funds, personnel actions and program metrics. OVR field services assistant director gave a presentation to the SCVR on Pre-Employment Transition Services.

SCVR Members participated in the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Stakeholder Forum during the quarterly meeting. University of Kentucky human Development Institute (UK HDI) staff introduced the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. The council members were broken into two groups to provide feedback and input. There were five questions asked to both groups based on major findings from the Needs Assessment from Fall 2020 and Spring 2021. The purpose of the forum was to build upon the major findings and identify ways to address the needs. Members provided feedback and it was collected by UK HDI representatives.

The Executive Committee met and had a discussion regarding the pandemic and vaccination requirements. The Executive Director emphasized how important informed consent is throughout this entire process. There were no recommendations.

The Nominating and Bylaws Committee completed their thorough review of the bylaws. There were significant discussions regarding grammar and wording content. A motion was made to call a special meeting in May to approve the bylaws. The motion was seconded and approved.

The Blind Services committee had a presentation from the Division Director of Blind Services regarding a comparison of virtual versus in person services.

The Consumer Services and Program Evaluation Committee had a presentation from the Community Rehabilitation Branch Manager of OVR on the needs identified for the potential expansion of the Individual Placement and Supports program. OVR would like to expand the successful program statewide with the addition of four new providers. Two of the providers would focus specifically on serving the intellectual and developmental disability population with the other

two providers serving the transitional population (mental illness or drug abuse). Currently there are 25 agencies involved in the project across six counties. The committee indicated this was an area of need identified in the SCVR stakeholder forums. There were no recommendations.

The Policy and Planning committee discussed a proposal for the process for tracking potential cases for Social Security re-imburements to ensure Office of Vocational Rehabilitation receives all potential payments. A request was made for there to be a training provided to the SCVR at the next meeting on Social Security re-imburements.

Public Awareness and Legislative Committee discussed the sub-minimum wage topic as well as issues surrounding unemployment. The committee mad a request for a presentation for the SCVR on Waiver Programs in Kentucky.

June 21, 2021, Special Meeting Nominating and Bylaws Committee

During the Special Meeting, there was discussion regarding grammar and wording throughout the bylaws document. There was significant discussion regarding Committees and member assignments to committees as well as identifying a more explicit definition of a quorum. There were additions to Article VII which is related to amendments to the bylaws. All the changes were recorded and made by OVR Staff and presented at the July quarterly meeting for approval.

July 26, 2021, Quarterly Meeting

The quarterly meeting was held in April, with a full quorum in attendance. The Executive Director and Executive Leadership Team gave reports, and questions and comments were taken. OVR staff gave presentations and updates on the offsite monitoring by RSA that started the week of July 19, the State regulations, Business Enterprises, the biennial budget submissions, the RFP for the new Case Management System, center operations, Learning Collaborative with the Institute for Community and Inclusion (ICI), program services metrics, personnel actions and Order of Selection.

During the July 26th, 2021, quarterly SCVR Meeting, University of Kentucky Human Development representative presented results for the most recent Consumer Satisfaction Survey and the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. Overall, the council reported being pleased with the satisfaction survey results, especially under the current circumstances of the pandemic. Regardless of case closure status, respondents indicated that overall services provided by the Office were good or very good (87.3%).

The Executive Committee discussed agency concerns at this time regarding the inability to recruit and maintain qualified staff in specialized positions with competitive wages. The Executive Director gave an update on the off-site federal monitoring with RSA and the effects the pandemic has had on the blind vendor program. There were no recommendations.

The Ad-hoc By-laws committee covered the suggested changes made from the special called meeting on June 21st. A motion was made to approve the suggested changes to the by-laws and the motion carried.

The Blind Services Committee received an update regarding Center services. The committee requested data specific to services for the blind and visually impaired be presented at the next meeting.

The Consumer Services and program Evaluation Committee discussed the information contained in the Statewide Needs Assessment. There were some suggested edits for the case closure letter for consumers to make them aware they will receive emails or phone calls from the University of Kentucky Human Development Institute. They requested that HDI determine the feasibility of switching to performing the surveys every quarter.

The Policy and Planning committee had a discussion on informed choice, specifically regarding choosing a vendor of services such as a community rehabilitation program. The committee asked for clarification on the definition of a vendor and how OVR measures the services of vendors.

The Public Awareness and Legislative Review Committee brought up the request for training on different waiver programs. The OVR SRC liaison indicated we would follow up with Behavioral Health to get information on a presentation at a future council meeting.

October 25, 2021, Quarterly Meeting

The quarterly meeting was held with a full quorum in attendance. The Executive Director and Executive Leadership Team gave information, and questions were taken. OVR Executive Director informed the council of the anticipated results of the recent federal monitoring. OVR anticipates receiving 2 performance findings and three fiscal findings along with additional recommendations in the report. OVR staff gave updates on program metrics, residential services, hybrid schedules (staff are in the offices 3 days a week and telecommuting 2 days), Business Enterprises, staff vacancies and the State Plan.

The Council had a discussion regarding the best methodology for holding public hearings. The Council made the decision to hold the following virtual hearings:

- November 30, 2021, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. eastern standard time
- December 2, 2021, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. eastern standard time.

Comments were accepted by mail to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, 500 Mero, 4th Floor Frankfort, KY 40621, via e-mail to cora.mcnabb@ky.gov at 502-782,3402. A draft of the State Plan Attachments was posted on the OVR website for public access in February.

The Executive Director gave a presentation on the OVR Strategic Plan and the goals and priorities of the plan. The following goals were presented to the SCVR for their review and input. The goals were sent to the full council electronically prior to the meeting.

The following goals are presented in priority:

1. Sound Fiscal Management: Implement sound fiscal management that aligns with federal and state regulations for accurate and consistent reporting and operations.
2. Quality Assurance: Compliance with federal and state regulations in all areas to ensure continuous improvement and quality outcomes for consumers.
3. Staff Resources: Maximize technology and business processes to effectively support accessibility and the evolving needs of all stakeholders.
4. Center Operations: Improve facilities and expand programs to increase competitive,

integrated employment outcomes.

5. Consumer Services: Implement innovative practices to improve quality outcomes.
6. Public Awareness: Implement an ongoing, flexible marketing plan and process to improve public awareness of VR programs, services, and agency employment.

The Executive Committee met and reviewed the method for holding state public hearings. The Executive Director provided an overview of the initial results of the of site federal monitoring. The committee was made aware Secretary Coleman has stepped down from her role of Cabinet Secretary.

The Nominating and Bylaws committee did not hold a meeting.

The Blind Services Committee received an update on center operations. They discussed the difficulty the agency is having in the recruitment of individuals with specialized experience and knowledge in specific to serving the blind and visually impaired. The committee reviewed and confirmed their committee description is accurate.

The Consumers Services and Program Evaluation Committee received a report on work incentives and benefits counseling. The Human Development Institute at UK has secured a replacement provider to conduct the satisfaction survey that was previously conducted through the UK research center. The committee reviewed and confirmed their committee description is accurate.

The Policy and Planning Committee discussed the VR and referral application and gave feedback on how to make it more accessible with drop down menu. The committee reviewed and confirmed their committee description is accurate.

The Public Awareness and Legislative Committee reviewed and confirmed their committee description is accurate. They had a full agenda starting with a positive review of the OVR website. They discussed the SCVR annual report that was near completion except for adding the year end data from the case management system. The SCVR chair reported on the work of the Labor Task Force, updates to the sub-minimum wage bill and the different parental advocacy group that are looking at the issues of the termination of parental rights based on disability. There were no recommendations.

2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S RESPONSE TO THE COUNCIL'S INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS; AND

Recommendation:

A proposal was made to change the distribution method of the Consumer Satisfaction Survey. Discussion was held regarding the Consumer Satisfaction Survey changes in light of the pandemic affecting services. It was recommended that distribution of the survey be online because the center used for past surveys conducted by phone is no longer in existence. A motion was made for the Consumer Satisfaction Survey to be distributed online with phone calls to be made to consumers that don't respond to the online version and the motion carried.

Response:

OVR accepts the recommendation to review the Satisfaction Survey with the council and gain input to the content of the survey. The Consumer Services and Program Evaluation Committee of the Council are at the quarterly meetings reviewing the questions and making recommendations for edits for the survey to assure the survey captures all the necessary components. The committee will make recommendations to the full council upon completion of their review for edits to the Satisfaction Survey.

Recommendation:

The SCVR made a recommendation to add an additional goal to the State Plan amendment for the state-owned center operations as follows:

Carl D. Perkins Rehabilitation Training Center and McDowell Center for the Blind will operate at full capacity, leading and maximizing the delivery of services to the unserved and underserved population. Strategies will follow the guidelines set forth by the Rehabilitation Services Administration to ensure prior approval under C.F.R. 200.

Response:

OVR accepts the recommendation to submit an amendment to the plan including the additional goal and justification of need. OVR staff gave an overview of the capital plan for facilities and discussed the programmatic goals for the centers. The SRC chair participated in the strategic planning for the agency that included the setting of goals and strategies for the centers. The chair presented this information to the Executive Committee and the Council for consideration and approval. OVR shared the results of the monitoring report with the Council members and recommendations made by RSA regarding center operations to analyze the use and effectiveness of the McDowell Center and the Perkins center. OVR accepted the SRC recommendation and added the SRC approved goals and strategies concerning operations of the Carl Perkins Center and the McDowell Center in order to determine the effectiveness of services leading to the achievement of high quality employment outcomes.

Recommendation:

The SCVR submitted a recommendation to use the VR 100 anniversary theme for the annual report.

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. 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 competitive integrated employment. 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.

OVR as a key partner in the workforce system with established working relationships in all ten of Kentucky's workforce regions. OVR has five regional managers that serve on the local workforce boards. They are active in the development and implementation process of the Memorandums of Understanding and infrastructure agreements working closely with the OVR Executive Director. The regional managers as well as other OVR staff serve on local workforce committees and business

services teams in coordination of services to individuals with disabilities. This assures that other workforce partners are well aware of OVR services for individuals with disabilities and staff are available to provide technical assistance as needed.

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. The OVR Executive Director is a member of the KWIB and participates on several of the board committees.

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 workforce programs are centrally located in Frankfort to assure collaboration among the workforce partners. 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 are made to 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.

OVR has 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.

OVR has representation on the State Interagency Council (SIAC) for services and supports to Children and Transition-age Youth. The (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. OVR Executive Director represents the agency on the SIAC.

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 through the Cabinet on the Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. (KCDJHH) advisory board that provides education, advocacy, and programs to eliminate barriers for deaf and hard of hearing Kentuckians.

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 (including the School for the Deaf and the School for the Blind) statewide consisting of 1,477 schools inclusive of 26,675 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 Employment first 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 Director 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.

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.

The Assistive Technology Alternative Financing Program (ATAFP) for Kentucky is the Kentucky Assistive Technology Loan Corporation (KATLC). KATLC provides financial loans for the purchase of assistive technology with its lending partner for individuals with disabilities or the parent or legal guardian of an individual with a disability. KATLC is funded by both private and public monies to assist Kentuckians with disabilities to obtain low interest loans for the purchase of assistive technology that will promote their independence and enhance their quality of life.

3. PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;

The USDA Rural Development makes available funding to rural Kentucky communities across the Commonwealth. One of the main goals of Rural Development is to work to improve not only small businesses but also to engage the communities surrounding the businesses and strengthen the local economies. They assist single families in securing loans and grants to improve their living situations. Agency staff are aware of these programs and provide information and referral to consumers for these programs to meet their individual needs.

4. NON-EDUCATIONAL 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. 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

The OVR Transition Services Branch will coordinate with education officials on a state and local level in the planning and implementation of providing Pre-Employment Transition Services and

Transition services to students with disabilities. The branch consists of one (1) Branch Manager, three (3) Program Administrators, one (1) Administrative Specialist, and six (6) Pre-ETS Coordinators. The Branch Manager oversees all branch activities and represents the agency on inter-agency teams. The Program Administrators coordinate and monitor Pre-ETS and Transition services throughout the state inclusive of the Community Transition Program, including specific contracts with service providers. The Administrative Specialist provides clerical support to the branch. The Pre-ETS Coordinators work with Potentially Eligible students in their specific regions. They collaborate directly with schools and providers to receive referrals, coordinate Pre-Employment Transition Services, and monitor the progress of Potentially Eligible students to help determine if/when it is appropriate for a student to apply for OVR services. The Pre-ETS Coordinators transfer the Potentially Eligible students' cases to VR Counselors who determine eligibility for services and develop Individualized Plans for Employment.

Branch Staff are currently working on the revision of policies and procedures for the branch. OVR staff will receive training on all policies to assure to timely implementation of service delivery and the effective coordination of services. OVR has a focus on internal controls for the areas of documentation and accurate data entry to ensure the efficacy of reporting.

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 provides the following five required pre-employment transition services:

1. Job Exploration Counseling
2. Work Based Learning
3. Counseling on Post-Secondary Opportunities
4. Workplace Readiness Training
5. Instruction in Self -Advocacy

OVR has assigned counselors to each of Kentucky's 171 Local Education Agencies including the School for the Deaf and the School for the Blind 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.

OVR has pre-employment transition services coordinators that work in conjunction with the VR counselor in the provision of services. Service coordination activities may also include resource information about vocational rehabilitation, presentations, handouts, and staff development.

The counselor and pre-employment transition service coordinators work 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 along with the pre-employment transitions coordinators 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 contracts with some of the technical colleges in 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 some of the nine special education cooperatives in the provision of pre-employment Transition Services.

The office’s executive director and Transition Branch staff 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 Pre-employment Transition Services program held either through a virtual platform or at the 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.

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 171 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 and the local education agencies statewide to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services.

The Office participates with the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and 21 other state agencies on the Kentucky Interagency Transition Council in the coordination among agencies in the delivery of transition services.

OVR's current Memorandum of Understanding with KDE is in legal review. Within this agreement are strategies for the two agencies to work collaboratively in evaluating, serving, and planning for a seamless transition from school for students with disabilities who are eligible or potentially eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation ("VR") services.

The intended result of these collaborative strategies and activities is that students will achieve their post-secondary goals as they make the transition from school to adult education, competitive integrated employment (including customized employment and supported employment), continuing and adult education, independent living, and community participation.

Signed agreements are in place with the local educational agencies. These agreements are updated annually and they outline and identify the responsibilities of each party for the provision of services. 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. Currently OVR, HDI the Center for Excellence at the University of Kentucky and KDE are meeting monthly to address policy and procedural changes to address the Community Work Transition Program and transition services, pre-employment transitions services, data sharing agreements and a clear identification of each of the roles of the partners involved in the agreement.

OVR receives ongoing technical assistance from the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition for the area of pre – employment transitions services. NTACT staff provide guidance to assure we have a clear understanding and interpretation of the regulations and any other federal guidance received from the Rehabilitation Services administration. Based on feedback from NTACT and the results of monitoring reviews from other states, OVR is working on implementing a stronger internal controls system. OVR staff will be responsible for monitoring the delivery of pre-employment transition services provided by other entities to ensure the quality of services provided and the accurate reporting of services. Contracts agreements are in place so that OVR has more involvement in the approval of services for students with disabilities for services. OVR's current case management system and the ability to pull accurate information through the Web Intelligence program has not been as strong as it could be.

Currently, two staff, including the VR Administrator responsible for monitoring, are learning about using Power BI as an alternative way to pull more accurate data from the case management system. OVR is in the RFP process for obtaining a new case management system.

OVR transition staff are members and participate in quarterly meetings of the Kentucky Interagency Transition Council for Persons with Disabilities. OVR provides ongoing technical assistance to providers of transition and pre-employment transitions services. OVR transition staff are members and participate in quarterly meetings of the Kentucky interagency Transition Council for Persons with Disabilities.

The Executive Director of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) was appointed to serve as a

voting member of the State Interagency Council (SIAC) for Services and Supports to Children and Transition-Age Youth. The Executive Director or a designee attends monthly SIAC meetings to collaborate on the matters of the council as it relates to youth who are Kentucky students with disabilities. The monthly SIAC meetings gives OVR the opportunity to collaborate, plan and develop on going partnerships with other state agency representatives who serve mutual individuals with disabilities.

Regional OVR representation has been established for the Regional Interagency Councils (RIAC) for the system of care to have consistent OVR representation. There is a total of 18 RIAC's across the commonwealth. An OVR regional representative attends monthly RIAC meetings to establish partnership with state, public and community agencies to address concerns that families have within the regions of Kentucky. OVR regional representation supports the momentum of the system level work that is occurring statewide. Strategies are set in place to promote a spectrum of effective, community-based services and supports for children and transition-age youth, with or at-risk behavioral health needs or other challenges, and their families that: is organized into a coordinated network; builds meaningful partnerships with families and youth and addresses their cultural and linguistic needs in order to help them function better at home, in school, in the community, and throughout life.

OVR and the Kentucky Department of Education continues to meet quarterly with interested interagency partners and serve as the catalyst for development and implementation of an infrastructure which supports youth with disabilities to transition from high school to post-secondary school and employment. Pre-Employment Transition Services will continue to represent the earliest set of services available under OVR for students with disabilities, which are short-term in nature and are designed to help students identify career interests.

OVR continues its work in expanding its relationship with the Kentucky School for the Deaf. A group of stakeholders is part of an Engage for Change group in Kentucky. This is a national effort through the National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes. OVR maintains strong relationships with the KY Deaf-Blind Project and the Kentucky School for the Blind continue, and the programs with these partners are frequently reviewed to improve the quality of these services. Some pre-employment transition service providers are working students with disabilities in the Department of Juvenile Justice, Foster Care, and homeschool programs to reach these populations.

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 save the VR counselor considerable time and effort, but it also allows the student and parents the opportunity to plan a realistic vocational path that will lead them to the vocational goal of their choice.

In October 2020, OVR created the Transition Services Branch to engage with and provide Pre-Employment Transition Services and Transition services to students with disabilities. The branch consists of one (1) Branch Manager, three (3) Program Administrators, one (1) Administrative Specialist, and six (6) Pre-ETS Coordinators. The Branch Manager oversees all branch activities and represents the agency on inter-agency teams. The Program Administrators coordinate and monitor Pre-ETS and Transition services throughout the state, including specific contracts with service providers. The Administrative Specialist provides clerical support to the branch. The Pre-ETS Coordinators work with Potentially Eligible students in their specific regions. They collaborate directly with schools and providers to receive referrals, coordinate Pre-Employment Transition Services, and monitor the progress of Potentially Eligible students to help determine if/when it is appropriate for a student to apply for OVR services. The Pre-ETS Coordinators transfer the Potentially Eligible students' cases to VR Counselors who determine eligibility for services and develop Individualized Plans for Employment.

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.

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 are 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 job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on post-secondary education, workplace readiness training and instruction in self-advocacy.

D. PROCEDURES FOR OUTREACH TO AND IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO NEED TRANSITION SERVICES.

Outreach and Involvement of the VR Counselor begins at age 14. OVR obtains a list of the number of students between the ages of 14 and 21 per county that are accessing modified instructional materials due to their visual disability. Rehabilitation counselors for the Blind receive information regarding the number of students that receive these materials to help identify where unserved students are located in the school districts. Staff conduct outreach to school staff, inclusive of Teachers of the Visually impaired to strengthen partnerships and increase awareness of available services. This includes pre-employment transition services.

The CWTP is designed to provide pre-employment transition and transition services to all students with significant disabilities to assist in transitioning from high school to competitive integrated employment. Employment Specialists, funded by the local education agency, refer students to OVR for services.

Should the student need individualized transition services during this time, OVR counselors work with the Employment Specialists 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 for the target population of in-school youths with disabilities between the ages of 14 and 21 and have significant barriers to success. The area for the curriculum will include 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 certifies “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.

- Central Kentucky Educational Cooperative (CKEC)
- Green River Regional Educational Cooperative (GRREC)
- Greater Louisville Education Cooperative (GLEC)
- Kentucky Educational Development Corporation (KEDC)
- Kentucky Valley Educational Cooperative (KVEC)
- Northern Kentucky Cooperative for Educational Services (NKCES)
- Ohio Valley Educational Cooperative (OVEC)
- Southeast/Southcentral Education Cooperative (SESC)
- West Kentucky Educational Cooperative (WKEC)

OVR has the opportunity to enter into contracts with each of the Educational Cooperatives. Upon contract implementation, Pre-employment Specialists are hired by the cooperatives to provide the five required services to qualified students through individual and group activities. The activities will be determined by individual student need(s). The Cooperatives collaborate and utilize the student's individual education program (IEP), the student need(s), or the ARC committee decisions to determine what Pre-employment activities the student need. Outcomes are determined by multiple data points, such as evidence of participation and evaluation of readiness and engagement in the activities.

The Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) provides Pre-employment Transition Services on a Fee Schedule in groups or individual. Proposals for the provision of pre-employment services 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-employment.

The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) in accordance with Section 511 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) requires OVR to perform certain actions prior to an employer paying an individual a wage that is below the standard minimum wage (subminimum wage). In addition, in accordance with 34 CFR 397.31, OVR assures to not enter into a contract or any other arrangement with an entity for the purpose of operating a program for youth under which work is compensated at a subminimum wage.

OVR ensures that all OVR staff are trained to understand the process that a youth (24 or under) with a disability must complete prior to entering a subminimum wage employment:

- Youth must be determined eligible.
- Youth must have an approved Individualized Plan for Employment.
- Youth must have worked toward their vocational goal for a reasonable amount of time with appropriate supports, without success and have their OVR case closed.

- Pre-employment transition services and/or Transition services, supported employment and/or customized employment are provided as appropriate.
- Career Counseling is provided and information regarding resources and other available programs in support of competitive integrated employment.

OVR provides subminimum wage facilities within the Commonwealth 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, per Federal requirement.
- Offer multiple Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) opportunities for youth with a disability to ensure that this WIOA mandate is met.
- Provides individuals with available resources in their community to help with services for obtaining employment and support.

OVR continues to:

- Monitor and provide technical assistance to subminimum wage facilities to ensure WIOA requirements are met.
- Retain records on all individuals that receive Career Counseling. Provide individuals during first year, Career Counseling twice.
- Provide individuals during subsequent years, Career Counseling annually.

E. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

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 108 CRP's. Currently, 71 CRPs provide Employment and Retention services, another 93 provide supported employment services resulting in competitive integrated employment. Other agreements with private, non-profit OVR service providers will be made as necessary.

To provide services with the agency, the process is as follows:

1. The potential vendor obtains the vendor application, vendor manual, and CRP manual from the OVR website or from an OVR staff.

2. The potential vendor reviews the manuals to ensure to apply for appropriate services.
3. The potential vendor completes the application and provides required supplemental documentation (dependent on types of services applying for) to OVRVendors@ky.gov
4. Central Office staff monitor the web box, and reviews submitted application and any documentation provided.
5. Central Office staff provides application, all documentation provided, and all internal review completed to CRP branch.
6. CRP branch reviews to ensure no additional documentation or clarification is needed.
7. Application is approved, Vendor notified.
8. Vendor completes Vendor Registration Process by: a) Completing Finance Cabinet paperwork to have Vendor Number established b) Reviewing and signing a Vendor Agreement and c) Reviewing and signing a CRP Agreement.
9. CRP Branch assists the Vendor with training and other information.
10. All CRP vendors are required to participate in the Supported Employment Training Project provided through the University of Kentucky Human Development Institute.
11. All CRP vendors are monitored by the CRP Branch Staff for programmatic review.
12. All CRP vendors are monitored by Central Office staff for financial review.
13. All CRPs are audited annually.
14. CRP Branch ensures all CRPs have the mandated 15 hours of continuing education units (CEUs) annually.
15. CRPs are required to review and sign a CRP agreement every two (2) years. NOTE:Current ones are good through 06/30/2022

F. ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

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.

In FY 20-21, the establishment project contract process was initiated for the purpose of expanding IPS SE to unserved and underserved areas and populations. Four CRP's, Voices of Hope, Communicare, Life Skills, and Build Inclusion, were identified as possible contract recipients. Communicare and Build Inclusion are being considered for IPS expansion to individuals with intellectual disabilities. This is the first such initiative in KY.

United Way funding is utilized in minimal amounts for supported employment services. 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 agreements 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). RFPs were sent to non-profit agencies throughout Kentucky that resulted in a total of eight submitting their proposal for review.

In October of 2021, the OVR surveyed VR staff to continue to identify and address the need around customized employment. The OVR will identify 4-5 new CRP's to further expand customized employment support opportunities through the utilization of establishment project contracts.

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. There is a Medicaid Waiver specific to service definitions and fee structures that support, and fund supported employment services.

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, ECU 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 OVR has representation on KY's Behavioral Health Planning Advisory Council, in collaboration with the Department of Behavioral Health to further educate and assist in the expansion, training and funding of IPS throughout KY. The OVR also continues to participate in the KY IPS Implementation Team, IPS VR Liaison Team, and the IPS International Community.

OVR staff collaborate with Special Education planning units throughout the commonwealth to develop supported employment services for students exiting schools. As with all supported employment services, additional funding is needed for extended services to adequately serve students. The Supported Higher Education Project (SHEP) began in 2010, and funded through a grant to the University of Kentucky's Human Development Institute. The purpose of the project was to demonstrate the effectiveness of Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) working together with Post-Secondary Education programs to include people with developmental disabilities in classes and other college campus activities. OVR created a Service Fee Memorandum that would be utilized by CRPs to allow for supported education services. This project was discontinued in 2016. In 2018, focus group meetings took place in Morehead, Murray, and Lexington in effort to identify barriers to students enrolling in higher education. As a result, the University of Kentucky's Human Development Institute received state appropriated funds to revitalize higher education programs and create new programs. This also resulted in the development of a statewide technical assistance center and funding being distributed to Comprehensive Transition Centers throughout the state. OVR continues to utilize a Supported Higher Education Service Fee Memorandum that can be accessed by CRPs to ensure higher education support services are available for students with

intellectual disabilities.

The OVR is implementing strategies through the current Service Fee Memorandum structure to provide extended services to youth participating in Supported Employment. This results in hourly payments to CRPs for extended services once stable employment has been achieved and transition to extended services has occurred.

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. 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 CRPs to provide Customized Supported Employment which requires a unique and specialized skill set.

G. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

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 twelve 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.

The Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation (SCVR), Kentucky's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), and the Employment First Council 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.

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. 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 some 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 some of the schools in 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.

Kentucky's registered apprenticeship program continues to be a national model in preparing individuals for successful entry into the workforce. This administrative move builds momentum by harnessing KEWDC's existing statewide network to connect employers with potential employees and provide increased apprenticeship opportunities for Kentuckians. There are over 4,000 apprentices in Kentucky in 600+ different programs currently representing 200+ 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 Credentials of Completion to apprentices, and promoting the development of new programs through education, outreach and technical assistance.

The Community Work Transition Program (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 CWTP) 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 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.

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

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. 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. 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 everyone'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. The office solicits input to identify areas of understaffing, or of specific needs.

The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation organizational design includes the Executive Director's Office and 4 divisions. There are currently 368 classified and unclassified positions, 2 Federally Funded Time Limited (FFTL) positions and 63 contracted positions for a total of 433 positions.

The **Office of the Executive Director** includes a total of 10 classified, non-classified and contract employees. Executive Director (1) that supervises executive leadership functions such as Deputy Executive Director (1), Division Directors (4), Program Policy and Support Branch Manager (1), Executive Staff Advisor (1), VR Program Administrator (1), and an Administrative Specialist III (1). Number anticipated in five years: 12

The Program Policy and Support (PPS) Administrative Branch Manager supervises the branch that has 15 classified, non-classified and contract employees. There are VR Program Administrators (3), Program Coordinators (2), Resource Management Analyst (5), Grant Specialists (3) and Assistants (2). Number anticipated in five years: 17

Office of Executive Director Number of Individuals Served by Personnel Category (Personnel Category Total/Cases Served/Eligible Cases)

This information reflects the number of individuals served as well as eligible cases by personnel category. Executive Director (1/34,022/17,177) that supervises executive leadership functions such as Deputy Executive Director (1/34,022/17,177), Division Directors (4/8,506/4,294), Program Policy and Support Branch Manager (1/34,022/17,177), Executive Staff Advisor (1/34,022/17,177), VR Program Administrator (1/34,022/17,177), and an Administrative Specialist III (1/34,022/17,177).

The Program Policy and Support (PPS) Administrative Branch Manager supervises the branch that has 15 classified, non-classified and contract employees. There are VR Program Administrators (3/11,341/5,726), Program Coordinators (2/17,011/8,589), Resource Management Analyst (5/6,804/3,435), Grant Specialists (3/11,341/5,726) and Assistants (2/17,011/8,589).

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. This division houses the ancillary supports for services. There are 273 classified, unclassified and FFTL employees in this division. This includes: Assistant Directors (2), Regional Managers (5), Field Branch Managers (23), Counselors (114), Interpreters (6), Office Support Assistants (2), Assistants (86), Employer Services Branch (12), Community Rehabilitation Program Branch (5), Rehabilitation Technology Branch (12), Transition Branch (5), Social Security Reimbursement (1). Number anticipated in 5 years: 300

Division of Field Services Number of Individuals Served by Personnel Category (Personnel Category Total/Cases Served/Eligible Cases)

This information reflects the number of individuals served as well as eligible cases by personnel category. Assistant Directors (2/17,011/8,589), Regional Managers (5/6,804/3,435), Field Branch Managers (23/1479/747), Counselors (114/298/151), Interpreters (6/5,670/2,863), Office Support Assistants (2/17,011/8,589), Assistants (86/296/200), Employer Services Branch (12/2,835/148), Community Rehabilitation Program Branch (5/6,804/3,435), Rehabilitation Technology Branch (12/2,835/148), Transition Branch (5/6,804/3,435), Social Security Reimbursement (1/34,022/17,177).

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 34 classified, unclassified and contracted staff in this division. The division consists of: Facility Administrator (1), Branch Manager (1), Administrative Section Supervisors (2), Administrator (1), Assistants/Support Staff (6), Orientation and Mobility (2), Instructors (5), IL/OIB Specialist (7), Work Experience Counselor (1), Psychologist (1), Patient Aide (1), Maintenance (1), Residential Aide (3), Consumer Services Coordinator (1), Community Resource Specialist (1). Number anticipated in 5 years: 36

Division of Blind Services Number of Individuals Served by Personnel Category (Personnel Category Total/Cases Served/Eligible Cases)

This information reflects the number of individuals served as well as eligible cases by personnel category. Facility Administrator (1/34,022/17,177), Branch Manager (1/34,022/17,177), Administrative Section Supervisors (2/17,011/8,589), Administrator (1/34,022/17,177), Assistants/Support Staff (6/5,670/2,863), Orientation and Mobility (2/17,011/8,589), Instructors (5/6,804/3,435), IL/OIB Specialist (7/4,860/3,454), Work Experience Counselor (1/34,022/17,177), Psychologist (1/34,022/17,177), Patient Aide (1/34,022/17,177), Maintenance (1/34,022/17,177), Residential Aide (3/11,341/5,726), Consumer Services Coordinator (1/34,022/17,177), Community Resource Specialist (1/34,022/17,177).

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 96 employees in this division in classified, Federal Funded Time Limited (FFTL), unclassified or contracted. The Division Director is assisted by Administrators (4), Admissions Counselor (1), Assistants (10), Assistant Director (1), Branch Managers (3), Childcare Staff (2), Counselors (4), Dorm Counselors (2), Driver (3), Evaluation Aide (1), Facilities Security (6), Financial (2), Instructor (15), Janitor (2), Maintenance (5), Mental Health Counselors (2), Nurse (6), Occupational Therapy (4), Patient Aide (2), Physical Therapist (1), Pre-Employment Transition Services (2), Speech Pathologist (2), Staff Assistants Contracted in various roles (15), and Vocational Evaluator (1). Number anticipated in 5 years: 100

Division of Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center Services Number of Individuals Served by Personnel Category (Personnel Category Total/Cases Served/Eligible Cases)

This information reflects the number of individuals served as well as eligible cases by personnel category. Administrators (4/8,506/4,294), Admissions Counselor (1/34,022/17,177), Assistants (10), Assistant Director (1/34,022/17,177), Branch Managers (3/11,341/5,726), Childcare Staff (2/17,011/8,589), Counselors (4/8,506/4,294), Dorm Counselors (2/17,011/8,589), Driver (3/11,341/5,726), Evaluation Aide (1/34,022/17,177), Facilities Security (6/5,670/2,863), Financial (2/17,011/8,589), Instructor (), Janitor (2/17,011/8,589), Maintenance (5/6,804/3,435), Mental Health Counselors (2/17,011/8,589), Nurse (6/5,670/2,863), Occupational Therapy (4/8,506/4,294), Patient Aide (2/17,011/8,589), Physical Therapist (1/34,022/17,177), Pre-Employment Transition Services (2/17,011/8,589), Speech Pathologist (2/17,011/8,589), Staff Assistants Contracted in various roles (15/2,268/1,145), and Vocational Evaluator (1/34,022/17,177).

The **Kentucky Blind Enterprise Division** supervises the vendor program. They currently have 5 employees: Assistant Director (1), Program Coordinator (2), Assistant (1) and Mechanic (1). Number anticipated in 5 years: 6

Division of Kentucky Business Enterprises Services Number of Individuals Served by Personnel Category (Personnel Category Total/Cases Served/Eligible Cases)

This information reflects the number of individuals served as well as eligible cases by personnel category. Assistant Director (1/34,022/17,177), Program Coordinator (2/17,011/8,589), Assistant (1/34,022/17,177) and Mechanic (1/34,022/17,177).

II. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL CURRENTLY NEEDED BY THE STATE AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY; AND

The **Office of the Executive Director** includes a total of 10 classified, non-classified and contract employees. Executive Director (1) that supervises executive leadership functions such as Deputy Executive Director (1), Division Directors (4), Program Policy and Support Branch Manager (1), Executive Staff Advisor (1), VR Program Administrator (1), and an Administrative Specialist III (1).

The Program Policy and Support (PPS) Administrative Branch Manager supervises the branch that has 15 classified, non-classified and contract employees. There are VR Program Administrators (3), Program Coordinators (2), Resource Management Analyst (5), Grant Specialists (3) and Assistants (2).

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. This division houses the ancillary supports for services. There are 273 classified, unclassified and FFTL employees in this division. This includes Assistant Directors (2), Regional Managers (5), Field Branch Managers (23), Counselors (114), Interpreters (6), Office Support Assistants (2), Assistants (86), Employer Services Branch (12), Community Rehabilitation Program Branch (5), Assistive Technology Branch (12), Transition Branch (5), Social Security Reimbursement (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 34 classified, unclassified and contracted staff in this division. The division consists of: Facility Administrator (1), Branch Manager (1), Administrative Section Supervisors (2), Administrator (1), Assistants/Support Staff (6), Orientation and Mobility (2), Instructors (5), IL/OIB Specialist (7), Work Experience Counselor (1), Psychologist (1), Patient Aide (1), Maintenance (1), Residential Aide (3), Consumer Services Coordinator (1), Community Resource Specialist (1).

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 96 employees in this division in classified, Federal Funded Time Limited (FFTL), unclassified or contracted. The Division Director is assisted by Administrators (4), Admissions Counselor (1), Assistants (10), Assistant Director (1), Branch Managers (3), Childcare Staff (2), Counselors (4), Dorm Counselors (2), Driver (3), Evaluation Aide (1), Facilities Security (6), Financial (2), Instructor (15), Janitor (2), Maintenance (5), Mental Health Counselors (2), Nurse (6), Occupational Therapy (4), Patient Aide (2), Physical Therapist (1), Pre-Employment Transition Services (2), Speech Pathologist (2), Staff Assistants Contracted in various roles (15), and Vocational Evaluator (1).

The **Kentucky Blind Enterprise Division** supervises the vendor program. They currently have 5 employees: Assistant Director (1), Program Coordinator (2), Assistant (1) and Mechanic (1).

III. PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY, WHO WILL BE NEEDED BY THE STATE AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES IN 5 YEARS BASED ON PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED, INCLUDING INDIVIDUALS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL EXPECTED TO RETIRE OR LEAVE THE FIELD, AND OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS.

Counselor Information: Of the 114 counselors in the Division of Field Services there are 50 or 44% who are Certified Rehabilitation Counselors. Data 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 9%. Those with 10 – 19 years of service were 25%. Those with 5 – 9 years of service were 25%. Those with less- than 5 years of service were 41%.

Personnel Departures: There were a total of 48 classified employees that left the agency during this reporting period and 8 contractors. Of the classified employees 14 retired, 31 resigned 2 were terminated and 1 passed away. Twenty-Two of the departures were counselors and 9 of them were certified rehabilitation counselors. Fifteen of the counselor departures were resignations, 2 were terminations and 5 were retirements. Of the counselors that resigned, 1 had been with the agency for 14 years and the remainder for 10 or less. All counselors met the Kentucky standards for a qualified rehabilitation counselor. All 8 contractors resigned their positions.

Personnel Hires: There were 40 classified, and 15 contract employees hired for a total of 55. Thirteen of the new hires were counselors and 1 has their CRC. The contracted employees hold various support positions within the agency. Positions titles hired include Assistants, Admissions Counselor, Administrator, Cooks, Dorm Counselor, Employment Specialists, Evaluation Aide, Instructor, Maintenance, Orientation and Mobility and Pre-Employment Transition Coordinator. Eight of these new employees have resigned and two of those resignations were counselor positions.

Personnel Status for Retirement Eligibility: Based on years of services there are a total of 21 staff currently eligible to retire and 26 that will be eligible to retire in the next 5 years based on a calculation of 27 years of service. Those currently eligible are: 4 assistants, 7 counselors all Certified Rehabilitation Counselors, 1 disability resource driver, 2 employer services, 3 managers, 1 speech pathologist, 2 vocational rehabilitation administrator and one vocational rehabilitation technology specialist. Those eligible with five years include: 2 assistants, 9 counselors with 7 of them Certified Rehabilitation Counselors, 3 assistant directors, 2 division directors, 1 employer services, 1 fiscal officer, 2 instructors, 4 managers, 1 program coordinator and 1 security guard.

Consumer Information: There were 34,022 individuals served with the average cases served by caseload at 233 and the number of potentially eligible cases served 17,177 and the average potentially eligible cases served by caseload was 114. There were 2,756 individuals obtained or maintained employment after receiving services. The large caseload size is due to counselor vacancies. Case coverage was absorbed by other counselors and branch managers due to difficulty in filling vacant positions.

Residential services were heavily impacted by the pandemic. The data reported emphasizes the overall impact of the mandates applied to services in this facility. Total cases were 67, total potentially eligible cases 30, average cases served by caseload 13, average potentially eligible cases served by caseload 6, percentage of potentially eligible cases by caseload 44.78 and new referrals 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) offers a Master of Arts in Counseling degree with a specialty focus in either Clinical Mental Health Counseling, Rehabilitation Counseling or Counselor Education. According to the university website, the specialty area curricula align with the Council on Accreditation for Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) standards, and the Rehabilitation Counseling specialty is accredited through 2022. The Clinical Mental Health specialty area is pending CACREP accreditation. The university offers a doctoral degree in Rehabilitation Counseling Education, Research, and Policy, which is also accredited by CAPCREP through 2021.” This is the only institution in the state that offers a master’s with a Rehabilitation Counseling focus.

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 this university or hybrid online university programs that provide rehabilitation counseling specific programs. 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 aids with 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 hybrid 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 location without using annual leave, but the agency does not cover travel expenses. Approval for out-of-state travel for these programs is not guaranteed and final approval is with the Cabinet.

OVR does not currently have staff participating in any MRC programs. The agency covers the cost of the CRC examination fee for those eligible to sit for the exam and continues to provide the renewal fee costs for all employees that maintain their CRC. The agency provides for exam fees and renewal costs of other applicable certifications required for professionals to perform the functions of their job. A new service offered through CRCC is a review of educational transcripts to determine eligibility or provide an outline path to eligibility for the individual. The agency also covers this cost.

II. THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED AT EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS, BROKEN DOWN BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; AND

OVR obtains information from University of Kentucky annually regarding the number of students enrolled and the number graduating from the Master of Counseling programs. The counseling program provides specialized tracks for Clinical Mental Health, Rehabilitation Counseling and Counselor Education. According to the information provided by the university, there were 46 students enrolled in fall 2020 with 17 in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling track, 24 in the

Rehabilitation Counseling track and 5 in the Counselor Education track. In the spring 2021 there were 51 students enrolled in the Master of Counseling program with 11 of those in the Clinical Mental Health, 20 in the Rehabilitation Counselor track and 20 in the Counselor Education track.

III. THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED DURING THE PRIOR YEAR FROM EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS WITH CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, OR WITH THE CREDENTIALS FOR CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, BROKEN DOWN BY THE PERSONNEL CATEGORY FOR WHICH THEY HAVE RECEIVED, OR HAVE THE CREDENTIALS TO RECEIVE, CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE.

Of the number identified above for fall 2020, there were 9 that graduated from the mental health track and 8 graduated from the rehabilitation counseling track. One person in the mental health track took the CRC examination but didn't pass. There were 4 that took the CRC for the rehabilitation counseling training with 3 of those passing the exam. Of the number identified above for spring 2021, there were 4 that graduated from the mental health track and 6 from the rehabilitation track. Of the mental health track students there were 3 that sat for and passed the CRC examination and of those in the rehabilitation counseling track there were 3 that sat for the exam and 2 passed.

All of those who graduated achieved eligibility for licensure. Based on the agency definition of a qualified rehabilitation counselor, all of those graduating from the three programs at the University of Kentucky meet the defined eligibility standard for the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor grade 13 and those that achieved their certified rehabilitation counselor status are also educationally eligible for the Kentucky OVR VR Counselor Certified positions of grade 14 and 15 once they acquire the required experience for those positions.

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.

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 (DSU) 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 rigorous personnel process the applicants are vetted to ensure that they meet the required qualifications for the classification they are applying for. The Commonwealth Personnel Cabinet now utilizes external job recruitment sites to advertise positions.

In 2020 the agency hired and retained 13 VR Counselors in the Division of Field Services and those 13 individuals achieved the following education levels: Master's degree (7) and bachelor's degree (6). 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 (1), Education (1), Psychology (1), Occupational Therapy (1), Public Administration (1), Social Work (1), and Human Services (1). Only one counselor hired had obtained their rehabilitation counselor certification. Of those with a BA only the following outlines their educational background.: Social Work (3), Psychology (2) and History (1).

OVR strives to achieve a more diverse workforce by working with state personnel systems to recruit and hire 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. Potential applicants are identified through recruitment, posting, and advertising according to the cultural diversity initiative and the agency's Affirmative Action goals. The following excerpts are from the Executive Branch Affirmative Action plan as it relates to personnel recruitment, development, and retention: (1) The Office of Diversity & Equality (ODET) will collaborate with the Division of Career Opportunities to develop innovative ways to increase the number of female and minority applicants for State government employment.

The Office of diversity & Equality will produce a Minority & Female Recruitment Resource Guide to share with the various cabinets and agencies and their recruiters. This guide will identify regional demographic information, along with up-to-date information on educational institutions, minority and female organizations, and other avenues for developing a diverse applicant pool. (3) All of the recruiting sources used by the State will be informed of the State's policy regarding Equal Employment Opportunity and will be asked to refer qualified candidates without regard to their race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, or veteran status. The Executive Branch Affirmative Action Plan also address selection and promotion through the following action items through professional development opportunities, new employee orientation includes information on Equal Employment Opportunity, Affirmative Action and Diversity and Cabinets/Agencies will encourage participation in the Governor's Minority Management Trainee Program.

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. As part of the personnel process the individuals within this program are exposed to varying aspects of job availability within state government. The GMMTP group is very actively involved in the Governor Leadership and Diversity Conference that takes place annually.

The following are also used for recruitment and identification of qualified candidates for vacant position and promotional opportunities:

In 2021 agency leadership identified the need for a Diversity Team to explore opportunities in the

agency to increase diversity initiatives and improve cultural diversity within the agency. The team is comprised of leadership and staff from the agency as well as staff from the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet. The agency created an Accessibility Team to address internal accessibility compliance. This team meets monthly to discuss progress and plans towards 100% compliance with internally developed resources as outlined in the newly developed Strategic Plan. The agency has representation on the Accessibility Team developed by the Kentucky Personnel Cabinet that meets regularly to discuss overall accessibility within the software programs utilized for state personnel initiatives.

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

Partners with human resources within the Personnel Cabinet and agency human resource division to hire the most qualified individuals and 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, program monitoring activities and professional development to prepare for promotional opportunities when available.

Ensure that programs are accessible to minorities.

Encourage staff partnerships with local job fair opportunities throughout the state to broaden the recruitment for agency positions and educate high school and college students on the services and job opportunities within the agency.

Follow EEO guidelines and Affirmative Action Procedures.

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.

Utilize Field 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.

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 competitive integrated 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 agency has worked diligently within the current constraints of the personnel system to provide re-classifications and resign/reinstates to higher pay levels as well as using awards programs to address some of the salary issues that exist. The agency is also actively pursuing salary increases across all positions within the agency to be competitive in the new employment market and to

address retention issues within the agency.

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 including opportunities for virtual internships during the pandemic. The agency has also increased opportunities for internship and practicums to employees and potential applicants in degree programs from related fields. These opportunities are beneficial 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) to ensure that designated State unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:

A. STANDARDS THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH ANY NATIONAL OR STATE-APPROVED OR - RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATION, LICENSING, REGISTRATION, OR OTHER COMPARABLE REQUIREMENTS THAT APPLY TO THE PROFESSION OR DISCIPLINE IN WHICH SUCH PERSONNEL ARE PROVIDING VR SERVICES; AND

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)

The agency also has need of professionals to fulfill medical and specialized services provided at Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center 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
- Nursing Staff

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 2020 there were 114 counselors in the Division of Field Services and 4 additional located at the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center Division (CDPVTC). Of those from Field Services there were 50 or 44% who were Certified Rehabilitation Counselors (CRC) and of the 3 at CDPVTC are CRC's.

Of the new hires for 2020 there are 6 that will not meet the required standard of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor until they complete their probation period. Their probation ends as follows: December 2021(1), February 2022 (2) and April 2022 (2).(1). There are 95% of Vocational Rehabilitation Employees in the field that meet the required standard for the agency. All 3 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: 27 with bachelor's degree only: Rehabilitation Counseling (1), Psychology (11), Social Work (8), Human Services (4), Sociology (2), and History (1). The remaining 87 have master's degrees in: Rehabilitation Counseling (52), Social Work (9), Counseling (5), Clinical Psychology (1), Psychology (3), Mental Health Counseling (2), Human Services/Development (4), Education (2), Criminal Justice/Addiction Studies (1), Family Counseling (1), School Counseling (2), Occupational Therapy (1), Public Administration (1), Sociology (1) and Special Education (2).

Of the managers supervising the VR Counselors, there are 19 total and of that number all meet the qualifying standard for their classification. Fifteen are Certified Rehabilitation Counselors and the remaining 4 have their master's degree in rehabilitation counseling or related field.

The agency also has 29 other employees that maintain their CRC and supports them in the maintenance of this certification.

The agency Assistive Technology Branch provides assistive technology services to the field for consumers as well as to employees as needed. There are 16 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 (9) 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. Staff in this branch provide training to new employees on the ADA, processes within the agency for AT requests, generating accessible documents, 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 2020, CDPVTC employed 98 personnel to provide services in the residential facility. There are 4 VR Counselors, and all meet CSPD standards for the agency and 3 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 and falls under the Blind Services Division. In 2020, there were 25 employed at the facility supervised by the Blind Services Division Director (1). Staff at the McDowell Center including Facility Administrator (1), Assistants (3), Program Administrator (3) Community Resource Specialist (1), Consumer Services Coordinator (1), Instructor (5), Patient Aide (1), Psychologist, Receptionist (1) a Work Experience Counselor (1), Orientation and Mobility Instructors (2), Dorm Residential Aide (3 contracted) and 1 maintenance person (contracted). In addition to the services provided at McDowell, the Blind Services Division also provides oversight for the Independent Living Older Blind Program with one branch manager, IL/OIB counselors (7) and an assistant.

The two facilities continue to explore 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 section 101(a)(7)(C) of the Rehabilitation Act, all personnel employed by the designated State unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:

A. A SYSTEM OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT FOR PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS WITHIN THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO ASSESSMENT, VOCATIONAL COUNSELING, JOB PLACEMENT, AND REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING TRAINING IMPLEMENTED IN COORDINATION WITH ENTITIES CARRYING OUT STATE PROGRAMS UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998; AND

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. The agency utilizes both in-person and online resources for training.

Onboarding for the State of Kentucky, the Cabinet and Office of Vocational Rehabilitation now includes web-based trainings offering more timely engagement. All of the required trainings must be completed within 30 days of employment. 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 was selected to participate in the Center for Innovative Training in Vocational Rehabilitation, an RSA grant through George Washington University. One of the first benefits of this program included access to online training through the VR Development Group. All staff who were in the Division of Field Services with the agency were approved for the grant program. As well, after approval new employees and staff recommended by their immediate supervisors participate in course work. The courses online include: The History of Vocational Rehabilitation, Basics of VR/ Overview of the State-Federal Program, Eligibility Determination, Conducting a Comprehensive Assessment, Developing an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), Job Development and Placement and Case Closure. The agency was also selected by the grant administrators for participation in the personalized development of new employee orientation online through the San Diego State Interworks agency to allow Kentucky to include state specific policy and procedures into online training materials. The agency Counselor Mentor Leadership team were the primary contributors of the materials and feedback regarding the development of this online program. The program is projected to be available for use in May 2022.

In addition to the online training opportunities, this grant has afforded the agency insight into trainings in development and resources available through other VR state agencies. Initially, the

team met monthly and has now transitioned to quarterly in order to discuss updates within each state and resource sharing.

The grant administrators developed a community of practice where participants may ask questions of the group. The introduction for the VR Development Groups YesLMS program is another benefit of participation in this grant as it provides access to already developed VR specific training in an online format. The agency successfully obtained access to this resource for all agency staff and is in the process of implementing these training as part of the orientation process. This includes five courses in Medical Aspects, Ethics, general introductions to vocational rehabilitation, transition and other disability-specific training. All trainings developed by the VR Development Group have certified rehabilitation counselor credits approved and available upon successful completion of the courses and quizzes associated.

Building on the CIT-VR online training, OVR requires new employees to attend a face-to-face training for onboarding. As part of the orientation process, the agency utilizes subject matter experts from within the agency to deliver the training. The subject matter experts include the Division of Field Services Director, Division of Field Services Assistant Directors, Division of Field Services Regional Managers, Employer Services Branch Manager, Rehabilitation Technology Branch Manager, Social Security Administrator and members of the counselor mentoring program. The topics covered are: 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, assistive technology (based on the Assistive Technology Act of 1999), 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 in order to maximize the consumer direction of individualized rehabilitation plans. Information regarding current research is disseminated to all staff via email and formal training opportunities. This training occurs at least 2 times during the calendar year or as often as needed to accommodate new hires. During the pandemic, employees attended training via Zoom. The breakout room feature was used for small group dialog covering case statuses from referral to closure. Each small group was facilitated by a regional manager.

Due to the individualized nature of services, it is known that each group may have different ideas regarding vocational goal development, plans, etc. In order to address that upon completion of processes within the small group, the staff then merged back to a larger group setting to discuss the outcome of their group session to compare processes, thoughts and entertain questions regarding the materials covered. New counselors within the agency also have the opportunity to receive training and guidance from an OVR Counselor Mentor. The rehabilitation counselor mentoring program was implemented in June 2002 with pilot programs in six districts. The pilot program was a success and has been active since the completion of the pilot in 2003. Currently there are 20 counselors actively involved in the program. There is a team that oversees the training development and policies associated with this program. The team consists of an administrator from central office, two field managers (one representing services to the blind and the other representing all other disability services) and appointed counselor mentors with required mentoring experience. There are 14 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.

Eligibility requirements for an individual to apply for the OVR Counselor mentor program are as follows:

1. An applicant must have the minimum of a Bachelor's Degree in a field of study reasonably related to vocational rehabilitation, such as vocational rehabilitation counseling, social work, psychology, disability studies, business administration, human resources, special education, supported employment, customized employment, and economics.
2. An applicant must also have a minimum of three (3) years of experience as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, a Rehabilitation Counselor for the Blind (RCB), or a Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf (RCD) for the state of Kentucky and submit a recommendation from their supervisor.
3. The applicant must have successfully completed probation.
4. Applicants must complete a questionnaire with essays regarding their reasons for applying for the mentor program and submit a sanitized case that reflects their best casework.

When the case is reviewed, the team reviews the application to determine if the deadline for submission was met, the appropriate documents for the application were provided, the case was sanitized, and that the case contains the required documents as per federal law and agency policy. The Mentor Leadership Team reviews the application and case provided to determine admission into the program.

If approved, the applicant attends an orientation that contains an overview of the mentor handbook. All mentors are required to attend annual training designed by the mentor leadership team to hone their skills and knowledge for the mentoring process.

The pandemic and salary discrepancies are variables that have impacted our ability to provide consequential data regarding the formal mentoring process on retention and improved competitive integrated employment outcomes. OVR leadership has charged the mentoring team to refocus their review to include updated data tracking the impact of this program on the areas identified. The agency communicates available training opportunities to staff on a regular basis and maintains a master calendar within the Outlook program to track training opportunities that have been announced via mass email distribution. The Outlook calendar includes details regarding registration, appropriate audience and necessary approval processes for participation.

One of the benefits of the pandemic is the increased opportunity for staff to participate in national trainings for associations and other professional groups because they were moved to an online format. Due to limited approvals for attending out-of-state conference the staff often must receive training information secondhand rather than participating personally in the events. The online formats allowed for a broader audience and receiving the information firsthand. The Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation, the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind, Kentucky Rehabilitation Association and Association for Persons for Supported Employment are just a few of the opportunities that were afforded to staff due to an online training presence.

The agency utilizes webinar resources to deliver training to new employees when it is an appropriate method for the topic. In 2019 the online training programs include: Assistive

Technology, Driver Tech Processes, Case Management, Case Management System, Kentucky Business Enterprise Vendor Program Training, Introduction to Eligibility and Introduction to IPE. These trainings were recorded to be utilized with all new employees. Platforms that are accessible to all are utilized for webinars and online training.

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. The pandemic limited in-person tours, but an online tour is available.

CDPVTC employees are required to take training programs online to fulfill the requirements for their Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARP). These trainings include:

- Identification of Critical Incidents,
- Promoting Wellness of Consumers,
- Reporting Abuse & Neglect of Vulnerable Adults and
- Consumer rights.

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

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 University of Kentucky Human Development Institute (UKHDI) from the University of Kentucky. Employees also utilize the webinar series topics offered by UKHDI during a spring, summer and fall training program.

Topics of 2020 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. 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.

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 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 including the training resources available through the Office of Diversity Equality and Training (ODET) in the Kentucky Personnel Cabinet. Examples of approved and required courses include: Foundations of Leadership, Coping with Difficult Behaviors, Conflict Management, Hiring and Selection Process, Managing Employee Performance, Leadership Communication, Managing Work Relationships, Personal Accountability and Shared Accountability. The Education and Workforce Development Cabinet implemented an Emerging Leaders Program where multiple OVR staff applied and were accepted to participate in the program.

Agency staff are encouraged to participate in the Leadership and Diversity Conference hosted by the Kentucky Personnel Cabinet Office of Diversity Equality and Training. The most recent training took place in September 2020. As with many other conferences, this one took place in a virtual format which created a positive outcome of more employee participating in the event.

B. 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 2020 OVR staff represented the agency at the following virtual conferences: National Rehabilitation Association Annual Conference, , Kentucky Rehabilitation Association Annual Conference, Kentucky Association of Persons for Supported Employment Conference, Kentucky AHEAD, Kentucky Governor's Diversity Conference, Access University, Sagebrush Conference for Randolph-Sheppard, Council of State Administrator of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), National Council of State Agencies for the Blind, National Federal for the Blind, American Federation for the Blind, VR Technical Assistance Webinars and Southeast Rehabilitation Institute on Deafness (SERID).

In June 2020 the agency was selected to participate in the Center for Innovative Training in Vocational Rehabilitation (CIT-VR) along with nine other state agencies. Through this program the staff have been participants in training developed through CIT-VR and their partnership programs such as VR Development Group and San Diego State University Interworks. In 2022 the Interworks program will have completed an individualized training program for Kentucky OVR. This development has been a work in progress for 5 months.

The agency also communicates available training from a myriad of entities both locally and nationally. This includes trainings developed through Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Centers, University programs offering professional development training such as

University of Arkansas Currents and University of Wisconsin Stout SVRI. The agency maintains a Master Planning Calendar on Outlook that is updated with information disseminated via email to allow staff an easy reference to training opportunities that have been offered to them for professional growth and development.

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.

OVR is committed to establishing and maintaining practices that ensure that existing staff is trained and knowledgeable of resources to assure consumers receive the appropriate modes of communication. To address the diverse individual cultural needs of individuals OVR has designated counselors with specialized skills assigned to handle caseloads serving individuals who are deaf, deaf/blind, blind and visually impaired. Recruitment of individuals with specialized skills occurs utilizing the Kentucky Personnel Cabinet through their online job's portal. Classifications for these positions specifically outline the necessary skills required to fill the position. The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Branch actively provides internship and volunteer opportunities for students graduating from the American Sign Language program at Eastern Kentucky University and those graduates that need training hours for their certification. This gives the graduates a chance to learn and gain exposure to working within the state agency as an employee or serving as in an ASL contracted employee for the state.

Communication specialists are recruited from within the existing agency counselor group and provided with the necessary training to provide services to individuals who are hard of hearing. Currently there are 62 designated communication specialists training to provide these services. The agency maintains a personnel database that easily identifies the counselors approved as communication specialists.

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. Some of their training occurs prior to hiring, but the agency provides ongoing support for participation in opportunities for professional development in the specialized areas to ensure that staff maintain/update their skills. Both groups are trained to coordinate together on services for individuals who are deaf/blind. The agency also employs a deaf/blind statewide administrator dedicated to service provision for deaf/blind consumers. The agency has a strong working relationship with the Helen Keller National Center as additional support for services provided to consumers who are deaf/blind. All counselors work with consumers to meet their communication needs to successfully participate in their rehabilitation plan.

The manager of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Branch works to ensure that all employees have adequate American Sign Language skills resources to communicate with consumers who are deaf by using 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.

As meetings, webinars and online training opportunities increase, the agency utilizes platforms that are accessible for staff. ASL interpreters are included. Trainers are coached to provide descriptive wording for visual elements to insure those with visual disabilities can fully participate in the training. Automated transcript services or Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART)

recorders are utilized as appropriate for the training medium utilized.

When language and communication needs exist for consumers that are beyond the scope of personnel resources within the agency or with the state government there are additional measures employed to ensure that individual have necessary access. These include, but are not limited to the following:

American Sign Language interpreters are available on staff, but due to high demand the agency will contract with outside resources as needed to ensure the communication resources are available. The services for outside vendors for ASL are coordinated through our Deaf and Hard of Hearing Branch.

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.

OVR also has used a language telephone interpreting service that is available to all staff across the state. This enables staff to effectively communicate with individuals who walk into OVR offices without an appointment and who do not speak English. OVR works with vendors across the state that can provide qualified foreign language interpreters as well as written translation. This enables OVR to arrange for in-person interpretation when meeting one-on-one with a non- English speaking individual and allows OVR to provide written reports in their native language upon request.

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.

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). Staff attend 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

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) in an effort to comprehensively assess the various vocational rehabilitation (VR) needs in the Commonwealth of Kentucky conducted in 2021. 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 previously conducted a comprehensive needs assessment in 2018. It was conducted jointly in 2018 with both KYOVR and KYOFB 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 (2021) 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 in 2021 with guidance provided by the Kentucky Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation (KYSCVR), 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.

Kentucky's 2021 Comprehensive needs assessment contains both quantitative and qualitative data addressing the needs of the state vocational rehabilitation system. The data collection included:

- 1). a review of OVR metrics data of individuals receiving services.
- 2). demographic information for Kentucky.
- 3). a review of the Satisfaction Survey of closed cases successful and unsuccessful.
- 4). input from stakeholder focus groups.
- 5). input from online surveys.
- 6). facilities assessment of maintenance needs.
- 7). strategic planning; and
- 8). data reports and feedback from the Rehabilitation Services Administration off site monitoring and the draft monitoring report.

A Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) was implemented to identify gaps in existing services that can be reduced through programs and policies by the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR). A mixed method of online surveys and forums was used to collect insights about the rehabilitation needs of Kentuckians with disabilities. The insights gained from the CSNA will provide the information needed for the development of the State Plan for services. The Needs Assessment was carried out by the staff and faculty at the Human Development Institute (HDI). HDI staff worked closely with OVR staff to ensure that the approach would meet OVR needs.

A mixed method approach was used to collect information from varied stakeholders. An online survey was sent to OVR consumers, OVR consumers of pre-ETS (employment transition services), OVR counselors, OVR staff, Community Rehabilitation Provider staff, Disability Resource Coordinators, and Kentucky Career Centers. Online forums were conducted with the public, OVR staff, counselors, and the State Vocational Rehabilitation Council. Survey results were used to inform the questions used in the online forums. This approach allowed evaluators to collect more in-depth information. . A descriptive analysis of the survey results and a thematic analysis of the textual data (collected through open-ended survey questions and online forums) was conducted.

The most recent CSNA identified gaps in existing services to assist OVR in determining what programs and policies could be increased or established. Surveys and public forums were utilized to collect information from various stakeholders, consumers and staff across the commonwealth. Below are the trends highlighted from the report.

1. Counselors indicate that the highest-rated needs are job placement, support s services, mental restoration and vocational guidance and counseling.
2. The greatest increase in services were for consumers with a mental illness, drug and alcohol use and criminal background.

3. Barriers are listed as transportation, job search skills and qualified service providers.
4. The highest-rated needs identified are vocational guidance and counseling.

For complete details and results of the assessment, visit the following link: <https://bit.ly/3C5NwxB>

Counselor Survey

Sixty individuals completed the Vocational Rehabilitation Comprehensive State Needs Assessment Counselor Survey. More than half (53.3%) of the respondents had worked at OVR for between 1 and 10 years (6-10 years – 22.67%, 1-5 years – 22.7%).

Regarding technology needs, half said their technology needs were met (50.0%); and concerning technology use, most said they were using more technology than before COVID-19 (91.7%).

Participants were asked about their average caseload size. The most common responses were “51-100 cases” and “201- 250 cases” (21.7% each).

Participants were asked about their highest level of educational training. The most common response was “Master’s Degree” (85.0%).

Participants were asked about what primary impairments they see most often on their caseload. The most common response was “Mental Health/Psycho-social impairments” (58.3%).

Participants were asked about who makes the majority of referrals to them. The most common response was “Self or other consumers” (21.7%).

Participants were asked to rate the level of need for various services for Kentuckians with disabilities. Participants could select from a four-point scale (1 – No Need, 2 – Low Need, 3 – High Need, 4 – Very High Need). Of the fourteen services listed, the service with the highest rated level of need was “Job Placement,” with a mean score of 3.49, indicating an average response between “High Need” and “Very High Need.”

The survey next asked participants to identify any employment related needs/services that have become more apparent or requested since March 2020 (during the COVID-19 pandemic). Among the 32 responses, three themes emerged: technology, job placement services, and work from home.

Participants were asked to rate the barriers they feel prevent or hinder Kentuckians with disabilities from gaining and maintaining employment and leading fuller and more independent lives. Participants could select from a four-point scale (1 – Not a Barrier, 2 – Low Barrier, 3 – High Barrier, 4 – Very High Barrier). Of the fifteen barriers listed, “Transportation” was rated as the highest barrier with a mean score of 3.64, indicating an average response between “High Barrier” and “Very High Barrier.” The lowest rated barrier was “Access to Healthcare,” with a mean score of 2.51, indicating an average response between a “Low Barrier” and “High Barrier.”

Participants were then asked to identify additional high or very high barriers that were not listed on the survey. Of the 16 responses to this question, answers varied. Barriers included “Lack of technology,” lack of “Internet service for consumers,” “Lack of training and skills,” and “underlying health issues.”

Participants were asked to identify for which services they routinely refer consumers to CRPs.

Participants could choose multiple options. The most common response was “Traditional Supported Employment” (89.1%). The least common response was “Adjustment Services.”

Participants were asked how many different Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) they generally refer consumers to in a given year. The most common response was two (26.3%).

Participants were then asked to rate their level of agreement with three statements about CRPs. Participants could select from a four-point scale (1 – Strongly Disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Agree, 4 – Strongly Agree). The highest rated statement, “CRPs provide quality services that meet identified needs of my consumers,” was still relatively low, indicating an average response between “Disagree” and “Agree” with a mean score of 2.59. The lowest rated statement was “There are enough CRPs to serve consumers in need of services in my area” with a mean score of 2.14, also indicating an average response between “Disagree” and “Agree.”

Participants were asked if they felt additional or enhanced Supported Employment services were needed in their area. The most common response was “Yes” (77.2%). Only 12.3% responded “No.”

Participants were then asked to provide any other information they feel would be useful for the Agency to consider when determining the needs for future CRP services. Of the 19 responses to this question, three themes emerged: need for more training, need for more CRPs in their areas, and a need for more quality services.

Participants were asked approximately how many consumers they referred for Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center (CDPVTC) services in the past three years. The most common response was “0-5 Consumers” (60.7%).

Participants were then asked what additional services or programs they would suggest CDPVTC consider to better serve individuals on their caseload. Participants offered a wide variety of suggestions for new programs including transportation (Bioptic driving and how to ride a city bus), job placement (and how to use the Internet to job search), welding, small engine repair, working with animals, administrative certification, and evaluation.

Participants were asked approximately how many consumers they referred for Charles D. McDowell Center (McDowell) services in the past three years. The most common response was “0-5 Consumers” (85.2%).

Participants were then asked what additional services or programs they would suggest McDowell consider to better serve individuals on their caseload. Six participants shared suggestions including: “Apprenticeships,” “job shadowing, job training and job carving.

Participants were asked which statement best describes their technology needs as it relates to doing their job. The most common response was “My technology needs are met” (50.0%).

Participants were asked how much they are using technology to do their job. The most common response was “More than before COVID-19” (91.7%).

Participants were asked when they last had a consumer utilize the services of the local Kentucky Career Center. The most common response was “Between 3 months and 1 year” (44.8%). The highest rated needs identified by the OVR Counselor survey were: 1) job placement; 2) Support Services; 3) Mental Restoration and 4) Vocational Guidance and Counseling.

The highest rated barriers identified by the OVR Counselor survey were: 1) Transportation; 2) Job Search Skills; 3) Social Skills and 4) Qualified Service Providers. The greatest increase in services were consumers with mental illness, drug and alcohol use and criminal backgrounds.

Staff Survey

Eighty-seven OVR staff completed the Comprehensive State Needs Assessment Staff Survey. Around 40% of the respondents had worked at OVR for between 1 and 10 years (6-10 years – 20.7%, 1-5 years – 19.5%). Nearly half of the responses (45.3%) worked in one of three locations: Central Office (17.4%), Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center (16.3%), or Louisville (11.6%). Regarding technology needs, nearly three fourths said their technology needs were met (72.1%); and concerning technology use, more than three fourths said they were using more technology than before COVID-19 (83.7%). The OVR Staff were asked to identify any employment related needs/services that have become more apparent or requested since March 2020, (COVID-19).” Among the 27 responses, four themes emerged: technology, training, internet access, and employment. The OVR staff were asked to rate fifteen barriers they felt prevent Kentuckians with disabilities from gaining and maintaining employment and leading fuller and more independent lives. Respondents could select from a five-point scale (1 – Not a Barrier, 2 – Low Barrier, 3 – High Barrier, 4 – Very High Barrier, N/A – Not Applicable/Don’t Know). Respondents were asked to choose “Not Applicable/Don’t Know” if they were not able to rate the item. The highest rated barrier, with a mean score of 3.51, was “Transportation,” indicating an average response between “High Barrier” and “Very High Barrier.” The lowest rated barrier was “Co-worker Attitudes” with a mean score of 2.73 indicating an average response between “Low Barrier” and “High Barrier. The OVR staff were asked to identify additional high or very high barriers not listed on the survey. Of the 11 responses, one theme emerged: technology.

The highest rated needs identified by the OVR staff survey were: The highest rated needs identified by the OVR staff survey were: 1) Vocational Guidance and Counseling; 2) Mental Restoration; 3) Support Services and 4) Assistive Technology. The highest rated barriers identified by the OVR Staff survey were: 1) Transportation; 2) Social Skills and 3) Job Search Skills.

Community Rehabilitation Provider Survey Report

Seventy-six Community Rehabilitation Provider staff completed the Comprehensive State Needs Assessment CRP survey. Around one third of the responses indicated that their organization had provided services to OVR consumers for 1-5 years (34.2%). Nearly half of the responses indicated that they received fewer than 10 referrals from OVR on a yearly basis (46.1%), and more than half of the responses indicated that they made fewer than 10 referrals to OVR on a yearly basis (60.0%). More than half of the responses indicated that they employed fewer than 10 staff (57.9%). Regarding technology needs, more than three fourths said their technology needs were met (81.6%); and concerning technology use, more than three fourths reported using technology more now than before COVID-19 (86.8%). On issues that impact their ability to provide services, more than half of the responses cited the Slowing Economy (55.8%) and Lack of Referrals (54.4%). The CRP survey asked how many staff are employed by the organization. The most common response was “Fewer than 10 staff” (72.1%).

The CRP survey asked with which of KY OVR offices the participants’ organization regularly work. The most common response was “Louisville” (25.6%).

The CRP survey asked respondents to rate the level of service for ten populations. Respondents

could select from a four-point scale (1 – No service provided, 2 – A little service provided, 3 – Some service provided, 4 – A lot of service provided). The highest rated service need was “Cognitive Disability” with a mean score of 3.28, indicating an average response between “Some service provided” and “A lot of service provided.” The lowest rated population served was “Veterans” with a mean score of 1.74, indicating an average response between “No service provided” and “A little service provided”.

The CRP survey asked respondents to identify any employment related needs/services that have become more apparent or requested since March 2020 (COVID-19). Among the 54 responses, four themes emerged: technology, referrals, virtual challenges, COVID-19 related job losses.

The CRP survey asked respondents to rate fifteen barriers they felt prevent Kentuckians with disabilities from gaining and maintaining employment and leading fuller and more independent lives. Respondents could select from a five-point scale (1 – Not a Barrier, 2 – Low Barrier, 3 – High Barrier, 4 – Very High Barrier, N/A – Not Applicable/Don’t Know). Respondents were asked to choose “Not Applicable/Don’t Know” if they were not able to rate the item. The highest rated barrier, with a mean score of 3.04, was “Transportation,” indicating an average response between “High Barrier” and “Very High Barrier.” The lowest rated barrier was “Qualified Service Providers” with a mean score of 2.03 indicating an average response between “Low Barrier” and “High Barrier.”

The CRP survey asked respondents to identify additional high or very high barriers not listed on the survey. Of the 14 responses, one theme emerged: in-person communication. One respondent said, “During a time when individuals must rely more heavily on technology for communication purposes due to social distancing guidelines as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many individuals with disabilities have difficulty utilizing modern technology as their sole means of communication. It is my opinion that the loss of in-person communications has drastically impacted the Vocational Rehabilitation program [causing it] suffer in terms of how effective we can be in terms of providing support.”

The CRP survey asked respondents to rate how quickly they were able to initiate services after receiving a referral from OVR. Respondents could select from a five-point scale (1 – Same Day as Referral, 2 – Within a Week, 3 – Between One and Two Weeks, 4 – Between Two and Three Weeks, 5 – More than Three Weeks). The most common response was “Within a Week” (53.5%). The least common response was “More than Three Weeks” (4.2%). The mean score of all responses was 2.37, indicating an average response between “Within a Week” and “Between One and Two Weeks.”

The CRP survey asked respondents if they currently had a wait list for services. Respondents could select from three options (Yes, No, Don’t Know). The majority of responses indicated “No” (84.5%).

The CRP survey asked respondents to rate the quality of coordination with Special Education providers with whom they coordinate their Pre-employment services. Respondents could choose from a four-point scale (1 – Poor, 2 – Fair, 3 – Good, 4 – Excellent). The mean score of all responses was 2.74, indicating an average response between “Fair” and “Good.”

The CRP survey asked respondents to select which issues impacted their organization’s ability to provide services to persons with disabilities. Respondents could select from a list of eleven responses, and they could select more than one response. The most common responses were “Slowing economy” (55.9%) and “Lack of Referrals” (54.4%). The least common responses were “Rising cost of commodities” and “Increase in consumers with multiple disabilities (both 14.7%).

The CRP survey asked respondents the open response question what are the supports (related to employment) that you would like to have to serve your clients effectively? Forty respondents provided responses to the question. Three themes emerged from the responses – Transportation supports, Technology supports, Communication supports with OVR.

The CRP survey asked respondents the open response question what are the gaps in employment services that Kentuckians with disabilities are facing? Forty-one respondents provided answers to the question. Three themes emerged – Employer education, availability of jobs, customized employment.

The CRP survey asked respondents the open response question what are the employment service needs that your clients have? Thirty-nine respondents provided answers. Three themes emerged in these responses – In-Person services, Job acquisition skills, person-centered consideration. The highest rated barriers identified by the OVR Staff survey were: 1) Transportation; 2) Social Skills and 3) Job Search Skills.

Disability Resource Coordinator Survey

Eleven individuals completed the Disability Coordinator Comprehensive State Needs Assessment Survey. Nearly three fourths of responses indicated that the proportion of their students who require a referral to OVR is less than 20% (70.0%). The most common services provided were Testing Accommodations and Physical Accessibility to Campus (90.0%). When identifying issues in their role as Disability Resource Coordinator, all responses identified Technology (100.0%) and most identified the Number of Professional Support Staff (90.0%).

Participants were asked to identify the type of post-secondary institution with which they were associated. Participants could provide more than one response. The most common response was a University (50.0%). Participants were asked: “What proportion of their students require a referral to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) upon enrollment at your institution?” The most common response was “Less than 20%” (70.0%). working with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. Participants could select from a four- point scale (1 – Strongly Disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Agree, 4 – Strongly Agree). The highest level of agreement was with the statement, “VR counseling assists the students in resolving issues related to academic performance” with a mean score of 3.2, indicating an average response between “Agree” and “Strongly Agree.” The lowest rated statements were “VR counseling staff are able to connect students to needed support services” and “VR counseling staff build good rapport with you as a coordinator and with the student,” both with a mean score of 3.0, also indicating an average response of “Agree”. Participants were asked to indicate which skills are crucial in the transition process. Participants could provide more than one response. The three areas that all participants (100%) felt were crucial for the transition process were “Time Management Skills,” “Self- Initiative” and “Self-Management Skills.” One individual answered with an “Other” response that included “Case management advising/ tutoring.”

Consumer/Public Survey

Seven hundred and sixty-two individuals completed the Comprehensive State Needs Assessment Consumer/Public Survey. Around 80% of the respondents were Individuals with a disability (80.6%). Nearly two thirds were current consumers of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation services (62.1%). Regarding technology needs, nearly three fourths said their technology needs

were met (74.0%); and concerning technology use, slightly less than half reported using technology more now than before COVID-19 (43.0%). A majority of the respondents were female (60.1%) and white (87.9%). Over half of the respondents were working (Full time – 34.4%, Part time but not because of COVID – 15.5%, and Part time because of COVID 2.9%). Among those who were working, the average response for work support was between “Somewhat Supported” and “Very Supported” (3.45 out of 4), and the average response for job security was between “Somewhat Secure” and “Very Secure” (3.32 out of 4). Participants were asked which statement best describes their technology needs. The most common response was “My technology needs are met” (74.0%). Participants were asked how much they are using technology to do their job. The most common response was “About the same as before COVID- 19” (49.7%). Participants were asked what kinds of technology they are using to do their job.

Participants could choose multiple options. The most common response was “Smartphone” (84.1%). Participants were asked to rate the level of need for various services for Kentuckians with disabilities. Participants could select from a four-point scale (1 – No Need, 2 – Low Need, 3 – High Need, 4 – Very High Need). Of the fourteen services listed, the service with the highest rated level of need was “Help Finding Jobs” with a mean score of 3.12, indicating an average response between “High Need” and “Very High Need.” The survey next asked participants to identify any employment related needs/services that have become more apparent or requested since March 2020, (COVID-19). Among the 277 responses, three themes emerged: technology, greater assistance in job search, PPE/Vaccine availability. Participants were asked to rate the barriers they feel prevent or hinder Kentuckians with disabilities from gaining and maintaining employment and leading fuller and more independent lives. Participants could select from a four-point scale (1 – Not a Barrier, 2 – Low Barrier, 3 – High Barrier, 4 – Very High Barrier). Of the sixteen barriers listed, “Employer Attitudes” was rated as the highest barrier with a mean score of 2.86, indicating an average response between “High Barrier” and “Very High Barrier.” The lowest rated barrier was “Access to Healthcare,” with a mean score of 2.51, indicating an average response between a “Low Barrier” and “High Barrier.” Participants were then asked to identify additional high or very high barriers that were not listed on the survey. Of the 139 responses to the question, three themes emerged – “Need for more/Better help from OVR”, “Financial/Poverty Barriers”.

The highest rated needs identified by the Public/Consumer survey were: 1) Help Finding Jobs; 2) Job training; 3) Mental Health Counseling and 4) Assistive Technology. The highest rated barriers identified by the Public/Consumer survey were: 1) Employer Attitudes; 2) Transportation; 3) Job Search Skills; 4) Long Term Support and 5) Social Skills.

Youth Transition Survey

Seventy-two individuals completed the Vocational Rehabilitation Comprehensive State Needs Assessment Youth Transition Survey. Over half were currently enrolled in postsecondary education (38.9% College or University, 13.9% Community or Technical College).

Regarding technology needs, more than three fourths said their technology needs were met (78.6%); and concerning technology usage, more than half said they were using more technology than before COVID-19 (59.2%). Nearly one third reported that they are currently working (part time – 23.2%, full time 7.3%).

Seventy-one people responded to the question “Please check one or more of the following which describes your disability(s) or those of the individual you represent:” The most common type of disability selected was “autism spectrum disorder.”

Sixty-nine people responded to the question “Which of the following describe your work situation?” The most common statement was “I have not had a paid work experience in the last five years. Seventy-one people responded to the question “Which of the following describes your current living situation?” The most common statement was “I live with other people (family, roommates, group home).

For those who have answered “I am working part time (less than 30 hours)” or “I am working full time (more than 30 hours),” they were able to respond to the statement “I currently make...” The most common response was “at least or more than minimum wage (\$7.25 per hour) in my main job.”

Fifty-three people responded to the question “Which of the following services would be useful to you now or in the near future?” The results of this question are “Independent Living Skills (Laundry, Money, Shopping, Cooking, Cleaning, etc.).”

Respondents were asked “How would you rate yourself in the following areas?” Respondents could select from a four-point scale (1 – Needs Improvement, 2 – Fair, 3 – Good, 4 – Great). The highest rated area was “Attendance and Punctuality,” indicating an average response between “Good” and “Great. The highest self-ratings for job skills were: 1) Attendance and Punctuality; 2) Orientation and Mobility Skills and 3) Working with Others. The lowest rated job skills were: 1) Job Seeking Skills; 2) Money Management and 3) Asking for Accommodations.

Career Center Partner Staff Survey

Five individuals completed the Vocational Rehabilitation Comprehensive State Needs Assessment 2020: Kentucky Career Center Survey. Respondents rated the working relationship with OVR as “Good” (an average of three on a four-point scale). Participants were asked to answer the following question “Are individuals with disabilities able to access and participate in the same level of services as other center customers?” All five participants answered “yes” (100.0%). Participants were asked what resources they used when accommodating a job seeker with a disability in the Career Center. Participants could choose more than one option. The most common responses were “Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Staff” and “Ask the job seeker or the referring employer” (both 60.0%).

The most requested trainings were:

- The Americans with Disabilities Act
- Social Security Work Incentives

The respondents needed the most help with:

- Assistive technology and how to obtain assistive devices through various funding sources.

Online Stakeholder Forums

Four groups were invited to participate in online forums to discuss survey results – OVR Counselors, Staff, Public/Consumers, and members of the Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation (SCVR). Over forty individuals participated in these forums. There were five questions posed to the forums.

The first question dealt with challenges of the common needs identified across stakeholder groups including vocational guidance/counseling, mental restoration, job placement and support services.

- The Counselor forum participants discussed the turnover/lack of providers, and the lack of services in rural areas.
- The Staff forum participants talked about greater accessibility, the high need for in- person services, and a lack of sufficient funding.
- The Public forum participants outlined the need to start in early childhood building a foundation for pre-employment transition services and build stronger relationships between educators and OVR.
- The SCVR forum participants noted the lack of accessibility in services to be a major challenge.

The second question dealt with populations identified by counselors as having an increased need for services over the past three years. These included: people with mental health conditions, people with substance use disorders, people with felony backgrounds, and people with cognitive disabilities.

- The Counselor forum participants discussed the need to educate employers and deal with the stigma of employing people with substance use disorders, people with felony backgrounds, and people with cognitive disabilities.
- The Staff forum participants noted the need to deal with the stigma and the lack of trained staff.
- The Public forum participants highlighted the need to educate employers on these populations.
- The SCVR forum participants talked about the need to educate and train staff and employers on mental health conditions.

The third question dealt with specific strategies to provide for the increasing service needs of people with substance use disorders, people with felony background, and people with cognitive disabilities

- The Counselor forum participants highlighted educating employers.
- The Staff forum participants noted the need to educate people on stigma and mental health.
- The SCVR forum participants mentioned reducing the stigma of employing these groups.

The fourth question dealt with other groups that the forum participants perceived to be currently underserved by OVR.

- The Counselor forum brought up people with Social Security benefits.
- The Staff forum participants highlighted need for customized employment .

- The Public forum participants mentioned especially students with disabilities.
- The SCVR forum participants discussed the need to involve families and support networks.

The fifth question dealt with emerging challenges as communities navigate COVID-19 and its aftermath.

- The Counselor forum participants highlighted limited resources.
- The Staff forum participants mentioned the need for flexibility and the lack of funding.
- The Public forum participants noted safety concerns and the removal of sheltered workshops.
- The SCVR forum participants discussed the need for increased flexibility.

2020 Satisfaction Survey Results Analysis

As part of federal requirements, OVR has collaborated with the State Rehabilitation Council and the University of Kentucky Human Development Institute (HDI) since 1996 to coordinate the annual OVR Consumer Satisfaction Survey. The most recent survey was for completed assess closed between October 2019 – September 2020. Participants randomly were selected. The Evaluation Unit at HDI emailed and/or telephoned consumers to request participation in the survey between January 17- May 8, 2021. HDI compiled the results, and the final report was reviewed by the SCVR Consumer Services and program evaluation Committee prior to HDI presenting to the entire council during the July 2021 quarterly meeting.

A total of 539 individuals participated in the survey with responses received from each of the 17 regional districts. The overall statewide consumer satisfaction was 87.5% while the highest satisfaction was reported from the west Blind District (100%). For access to the full report visit <https://bit.ly/3B62kLr>.

Highlights from the report include the following:

1. Regardless of closure status, 87.3% of respondents indicated that services were good or very good
2. Overall rating was the highest for those who closed with a Positive Employment Outcome, 95.3% indicated good or very good.
3. Almost three fourths of respondents whose cases were closed successfully felt that OVR helped prepare them for their current job.
4. 92% of consumers said they would return to OVR in the future.
 - a. 91.2% of consumers who were employed indicated they are satisfied with the kind of work they do.
 - b. 83.1% reported being satisfied with the salary they receive.
 - c. 87.3% reported overall satisfaction with the quality of services as good to very good.

OVR Strategic Planning

OVR in conjunction with the State rehabilitation Council utilized the strategic planning process to develop a plan of action that includes goals, strategies and timeframes of completion. The strategic planning process was used as a part of the triennial Comprehensive Statewide needs Assessment (CSNA). Information collected through this process was used to inform the State Plan.

OVR worked with the Facilitation Center at Eastern Kentucky University (EKU). The first session was a Strategic Planning Kick Off virtual meeting with 22 attendees, including the Executive Leadership Team, Regional Managers, Cabinet Staff, The State rehabilitation Council Chair and Branch Managers. During the session the group identified key components of the strategic plan focusing on key concepts/ideas for the newly revised mission, vision and core values. A Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirational and Results Analysis was utilized to develop broad goal areas and key ideas.

In the second session approximately 10 attendees from the Executive Leadership team met and analyzed the ideas generated during the first meeting. The group compiled a draft mission vision and core values and began working on goal statements and objectives. In the third session, the Executive Leadership team met virtually to work on finalizing the draft objectives, measures and core values. A fourth session was held to complete the work on the plan. The following goals were established in priority order:

Sound Fiscal Management: Implement sound fiscal management that aligns with federal and state regulations for accurate and consistent reporting and operations.

Quality Assurance: Compliance with federal and state regulations in all areas to ensure continuous improvement and quality outcomes for consumers.

Staff Resources: maximize technology and business processes to effectively support accessibility and the evolving needs of all stakeholders.

Center Operations: Improve facilities and expand programs to increase competitive, integrated employment outcomes.

Public Awareness: Implement an ongoing, flexible marketing plan and process to improve public awareness of VR programs, services, and agency employment.

State Plan Public Forums

Two virtual open forums were held to gain input regarding the State Plan of services on November 30, 2021, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. eastern standard time and December 2, 2021, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. eastern standard time. At the first open forum there were 40 attendees and 10 at the second forum. A summary of the results of those open forums are as follows.

Recommendations:

- Consider a Comprehensive Awareness Campaign of all Services. Utilize Apprenticeships for individuals with disabilities.
- Benefits Planning.

- Expansion of Customized Employment
- Expansion of Individualized Placement and Supports (ISP). Employment First.
- Utilize technology to create system efficiencies.
- Give providers positive reinforcement for successes.
- Establishment projects for CRPs to develop ISP, Customized Employment and specialized skills for CRP staff in serving the deaf and hard of hearing and the blind and visually impaired.
- Expansion of programs at the world port of UPS through pilot projects using the model of an embedded job coach specifically surrounding innovative employer engagement. Establishment projects to expand the successful program.
- OVR would develop communications for consumers and other community base organizations sent out through a list serve.
- Transportation Applications
- Virtual service Delivery
- Focus on Supported Employment
- Increase support in Job Search and Placement Outcome Payments
- Identified Needs:
 - Individuals with Disabilities are underserved in employment Transportation (especially in rural communities) Residential Stability Housing Supports
 - Lag in Service Deliver
 - Minority Population is underserved
 - Life Skills are needed prior to pre-employment transition services Return to Work Services
 - Trauma Informed Care
 - Lack of Orientation and Mobility Services
 - CRP's mentioned low referrals and slowed processes in accessing authorizations Counselors have unmanageable caseloads.
 - Soft skills
 - Slow State Process for authorizations

RSA Monitoring and Data Reports

OVR participated in off site monitoring with the Rehabilitation Services Administration during the time period of July 16, 2021, through August 20, 2021. During the time OVR received technical assistance from RSA for multiple topical areas. The RSA Monitoring Process and Performance Data will be utilized to develop a plan of action. OVR received their draft monitoring report on January 22, 2022 and formulated a response to RSA. OVR received their final report on March 3, 2022. After a thorough review of the recommendations, findings and corrective actions, OVR will utilize the information in formulating a plan of corrective action to address the following issues identified by RSA regarding the Vocational rehabilitation and Supported Employment Programs. OVR had findings in the following areas for Performance:

1) Insufficient Internal Controls for Management of the Federal Award and 2) Non-Compliant and Outdated State Education Agreement. OVR had findings in the following areas for Financial Management: 1) Missing/Insufficient Internal Controls and Financial Management Deficiencies.

Throughout the year, RSA has conducted quarterly performance data reviews that has assisted OVR in identifying areas of concern from the RSA data dashboards. This allowed for comprehensive discussions and RSA provided technical assistance during the sessions. During the monitoring visit RSA shared ten performance tables as well as an additional six tables regarding Other Measures that Matter for review and discussion.

One area of need identified where there are clear gaps in services was the area of engagement of individuals with disabilities throughout the VR process as evidenced by the significant numbers of individuals existing the program as applicants. Another area was performance related issues due to inaccurate data reporting. Through the monitoring process, RSA and OVR identified the need to look at how the Executive Leadership and managers use Data to inform performance and management of the agency operations of the VR and Supported Employment Programs inclusive the states owned and operated centers. There is a need for the agency to implement sufficient internal controls for both financial and performance management. OVR has identified the need to purchase a new case management system to meet the growing needs of the agency.

Given the monitoring process was completed in September of 2021 and the report was just received, OVR has just begun the process of reviewing the plan and identifying needed corrective actions in response to the report. This will be a work in progress over the next several months.

Assistive Technology Branch

A high tech driving system is one in which electronic gas, brake, and/ or steering is required to allow an individual to safely and independently operate a motor vehicle. In 2021, high tech driver evaluations were completed for 11 consumers. Of these, six were repeat vehicle modifications. Repeat modifications are relatively streamlined because evaluations can be completed in the consumer's current vehicle and training is not typically required. The five remaining evaluations were for new high tech drivers. On average, for the new drivers, it took approximately 120 days from referral before a completed evaluation report was returned to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

While referrals were made as early as March, 2021, consumers were not seen until much later. Two were seen in September, and one each in October, November, and December. The delay in services is, in part, due to the lack of availability of a high-tech driving evaluation van in Kentucky. Currently, a van is borrowed from Superior Van and Mobility when a high-tech evaluation needs to be completed. However, the van available through Superior is shared among states where Superior has

dealerships and its availability is limited. For the five consumers who had evaluations in 2021, one is waiting on an exception, one has been completed, and three are waiting on the availability of a van to receive training.

Once an individual is evaluated and a driving system recommended, they must have an IPE approved for the modification before services can continue. This process typically takes about one to two months. With the IPE approved, training authorizations are obtained immediately. However, due to the lack of availability of the van, services are delayed two to three months while waiting for a van for training. Once the van is available, the minimum training time for a high-tech vehicle is 20 hours and can be up to about 60 hours. Where possible, training is completed in 2 to 4 weeks. It is important to complete the training at one time because driving is a skill that is lost if not practiced regularly. It is not effective to train for a day and then wait a few weeks and train another day. The van has to be available for an extended period that matches the expected training time of the consumer before training is started. Vehicle setup is also an issue in providing efficient services. It can take a day to properly set a vehicle up and this time takes away from training time when a van is borrowed. With our own van, OVR could set up the vehicle and leave it set for the consumer until training is complete. Then the setup could be switched for the next consumer.

The lack of an evaluation vehicle creates a significant delay for consumers. It can be three to four months before they are evaluated and another three months before training can begin. If the agency owned a vehicle, the evaluations and training could be scheduled much more quickly and consumers would have the independence they need to go to work.

Kentucky Business Enterprises

Kentucky Business Enterprise's (KBE) mission is to provide opportunity and independence to blind entrepreneurs. This mission will continue as we come out of the pandemic, while working to replace opportunities, improving efficiencies, while maintaining and updating current locations. KBE's goal is to increase independence and the abilities of its vendors through technology.

As more agencies and businesses allow staff to work from home, it reduces the opportunities for blind vendors in those locations. The continued telecommuting trend means modifications to KBE sites may be necessary. This will likely require updating equipment, changing the service line from a snack shop to a micro market, utilizing self-ordering technology, and other possibilities which may not even be on the market yet. The food service industry has been quick to embrace rapidly changing technology, with the intention of reducing costs and/or decreasing labor. This creates a unique challenge for KBE as we look at fiscal planning for the future of the program. Much of the technology we will be purchasing in a year or two may be only in the development stage right now.

The future of vending, as we have known it, is uncertain. KBE will need the funding to embrace new technology as it comes on the market, although we cannot put a dollar value on it now. We will look to industry groups (Kentucky Restaurant Association, National Restaurant Association, National Automated Merchandisers Association) consumer groups (National Association of Blind Merchants, Randolph Shepard Vendors of America, Kentucky Committee of Blind Vendors), and other stakeholders (General Services Administration, Department of Defense, Kentucky Finance Cabinet) to identify the future technology which will provide new or greater independence to blind vendors, and superior service to the locations we serve.

Ongoing education and training will be essential for Kentucky's vendor population and agency staff, over the next three years, this includes new vendor training. As always, traditional industry

trainings are important, and training on emerging technology will be vital. In addition to technology, vendors need education and training in all areas from customer service and food safety to business practices. These trainings may be provided by agency staff, or be industry and specialty led. These training opportunities may be, but are not limited to, national industry events that require travel and the associated costs, including the cost of accessible, independent travel for the vendors. Vendor participation in industry events increases active participation from the vendors in the assessment of needs and the purchasing process for new equipment.

With dwindling sales due to building staff permanently telecommuting, many vendors will no longer be able to make a sustainable wage at those locations. There will be an increased need for KBE to provide additional opportunities by obtaining new sites for blind vendors, while maintaining the current locations. As history has shown, KBE will not willingly be awarded locations that are lucrative for others. In many cases, this involves legal battles with federal and state entities to defend the Randolph- Sheppard priority against those who do not recognize it, or the comparable state law. Legal options should always be a last resort, but in most cases, have proven to be both necessary, and quite costly. These legal expenses are often prolonged over time and can necessitate a long-term financial outlay by the agency. KBE will always provide the location and vendor with the most current and advanced assets that meet all stakeholders needs.

An immediate need moving forward is a modified box truck. Until a few months ago, KBE could borrow one from a sister agency. That option is no longer available to us. It has become a hardship as a box truck is needed on a regular basis to move equipment across the state to our blind vendors. The truck we need must meet certain criteria, including a high weight liftgate, the ability to secure items while in route, and the capacity for moving large amounts of equipment at one time. The liftgate is necessary as KBE moves equipment statewide and many locations do not have loading docks or receiving areas.

Having a box truck will allow KBE to meet the needs of our locations and vendors in a timely manner. Many times, we need to move things with only a day's notice. Currently, if we need a box truck, rental agencies can't always accommodate us, as it is hit or miss whether they have a truck available with the modifications we need. We may have to wait for an extended time before one becomes available. This is not good business practice as our vendors and locations depend on us and are left without machines that should be serving their customers and earning income for the vendor. The cost of this purchase would also need to include maintenance, repair, and fuel needs for the life of the vehicle.

Case Management System

The current VR case management system is approximately twenty years old. The system processes are cumbersome, time consuming, and plagued with technical problems. System modifications take time, which means we can focus only on the critical additions and changes with little time for effective process improvements. The current process combines paper and electronic data, and is not time-efficient for staff.

With the Covid Pandemic, we were caught without an electronic system to operate and service the citizens we serve. We were forced to move to a paperless process with the current system which is not built or set up to these needs. This has magnified our need for a more robust, user friendly system that can fully meet the demands for data collection in a streamlined paperless process.

With a streamlined process, staff would be saved the time of dual entry, document conversion and

emailing for electronic signature, as well as improved access to information when needed. This would free up more time to provide direct consumer services and would reflect the KWIB goal of a consistent focus on assisting those with barriers to employment.

OVR is seeking a commercial off-the-shelf vocational rehabilitation case management system to track the life cycle of a VR consumer's case from referral to closure and post-employment, collecting data for each status and requiring the completion of RSA-mandated reporting elements as the customer's case progresses. The ideal system will provide tools for VR counselors to manage the customer's case, such as to-do reminders, case notes, vendor management, communication, and budgeting. The system would enable document retention and data integration with other existing systems.

COVID 19 Pandemic Needs

This is a great area of need identified as VR needs to make employment for individuals a priority in an environment where there yet many unknown variables. The complexity of the COVID-19 pandemic on the workforce is not fully known. Employment is a struggle for all populations and if you are an individual with a disability the difficulty can be magnified. During the pandemic, individuals with disabilities in Kentucky were impacted by the lack of technology to learn or access services remotely. There is a lot of research on this issue titled the "digital divide" and its impact on students and adults. Another factor affecting services, even after the availability of vaccinations, some individuals with disabilities are at a higher risk due to different health condition. In Kentucky, public transportation has been interrupted by staffing shortages; and consumers report that they do not feel safe accessing rides. Social distancing created isolation and loneliness increasing the occurrence of mental health conditions. All of these factors contribute to the fact that individuals that have lost their employment are slower to re enter the workforce.

OVR and employment service providers and other stakeholders in Kentucky are working together to mitigate risks for themselves and the individuals they serve in order to provide needed services for employment. This is complicated by staff shortages, rapid changes in the job market, changing hiring needs and a lack of resources. Prior to the pandemic, health and economic disparities existed among individuals with disabilities in Kentucky and this has been heightened over the past two years.

The State Exchange on Employment & Disability (SEED) convened the COVID-19 Policy Collaborative for an inclusive Recover. The Collaborative identified four broad areas that the SEED highlighted as needed to ensure a disability-inclusive recovery. They were: 1) Inclusive Safety and Health Policies and Plans, 2) Inclusive COVID-19 Vaccination Policies, 3) Inclusive Covid-19 Mental Health Policies and 4) Inclusive Workforce Readiness Policies. This document will assist OVR in looking at strategies to mitigate the effects of the Pandemic.

This will require OVR to provide supports in an innovative way to face the challenges of the current environment. OVR will need to have a focus moving forward to ensure our methods of service delivery meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. This includes making sure accessible services modes to counter the digital divide, a focus on Employment First initiatives, training for individuals that leads to sustainable employment in high demand industries and staff training to better meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. OVR has addressed these areas in setting goals for the next three years. OVR's work in Employment First and the RETAIN Grant provide an avenue to address inclusive worker issues and early return to work initiatives across the state.

B. WHO ARE MINORITIES;

Ethnically, Kentucky remains a surprisingly homogenous state. According to the (2021 American Community Survey), Kentucky is 87.5.4% Caucasian and Black or African Americans compose 8.5% of the population in Kentucky. The Hispanic population in the state is estimated at only 3.9%. The Asian population of Kentucky is 1.6%. Seventy-three (9.6%) African Americans participated in the surveys and 49 (6.5%) respondents identified themselves as belonging to all other minority groups.

The needs and barriers identified by minority respondents were similar to those identified by all respondents to the public/consumer survey with some differences. The top needs identified by minorities were "Help Finding Jobs" (3.09 out of 4, indicating an average rating between "High Need" and "Very High Need"), and "Support Services Including Transportation, Rental Assistance, etc." (2.88 out of 4, indicating an average between "Low Need" and "High Need"). All 10 need areas had a slightly lower average need rating for respondents from minority backgrounds than for all respondents. The lowest rated need for minority respondents "Transition Services" (2.41) also had the greatest difference in average response compared to the overall average (0.18 lower for minority respondents than the overall average). When filtered for minority groups only 21% said they were employed full-time as compared to 34% of all respondents. The primary barriers to gaining and maintaining employment and leading fuller and more independent lives identified minority respondents were "Transportation" (2.94 out of 4, indicating a rating between "Low Barrier" and "High Barrier"), "Information about Available Jobs" (2.92 out of 4, indicating an average rating between "Low Barrier and "High Barrier").

Minority respondents had a higher average barrier rating for 9 of 16 barrier areas. For example, the highest rated needs for minority respondents' "Transportation" and "Information about Available Jobs" were also rated higher than the overall average (0.10 and 0.14 higher for minority respondents than the overall average, respectively).

C. WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM;

Populations in Kentucky identified through the needs assessment that are unserved or underserved are individuals with mental illness, individuals with criminal backgrounds, out of school youth, the blind and visually impaired and the deaf and hard of hearing. The Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet identifies the following as underserved in the State: 1) Persons with one or more disability; 2) People who are deaf/heard of hearing; 3) Geographically isolated individuals; and 4) those affected by poverty.

The second question asked during the open forums for the needs assessment dealt with populations identified by counselors as having an increased need for services over the past three years. These include people with mental health conditions, people with substance use disorders, people with felony backgrounds, and people with cognitive disabilities.

A Customized Supported Employment (CSE) needs assessment survey was sent to OVR field staff in fall of 2021 in effort to identify current need for customized SE services throughout the state. As expected, the results illustrate an extensive need for CSE throughout the state. Eighty- five percent (85%) of the counselors polled, stated that they have a need for CSE in their area. Forty-six percent (46%) have identified at least 4 or more individuals on their caseload that could benefit from this service. Sixty-two percent (62%) state that CSE is not readily available to their consumers. Overall, this clearly illustrates that there are many job seekers throughout the state that need CSE services but do not have unrestricted access to it.

OVR is an active partner of the statewide IPS Implementation Team that provides oversight of the development and implementation of IPS programs throughout the state. KY has been an active member of the International IPS Learning Community since 2010 and provides information to the community regarding effective strategies being utilized in KY that aide in the expansion and effectiveness of IPS. KY seeks to initiate innovative ideas, such as utilizing IPS for individuals with intellectual disabilities. This is not a common practice but has been utilized by other states. KY seeks to utilize this evidenced based model for individuals with intellectual disabilities and provide comparative data specific to other models to members of the learning collaborative. The Department of Behavioral Health has been the primary partner in the development and implementation of IPS programs throughout the state. Therefore, OVR seeks parallel DBHs long standing commitment by implementing Establishment Projects to further IPS expansion efforts.

Specifically, 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. Thirteen of Kentucky's 54 counties are listed as at risk. The remaining 38 counties are designated as distressed. No Kentucky ARC county is designated as competitive or attainment. This is a serious concern, as the number of distressed counties in Kentucky has not changed despite improvement in the Commonwealth's overall economic condition before COVID - 19.

D. WHO HAVE BEEN SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND

In Kentucky 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. Kentucky offers a wide range of workforce education and training activities tailored to meet the needs of employers and job seekers in varied and unique communities across the state. The certified Kentucky Career Centers (KCC) are the storefront, but the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act's (WIOA) core and optional one-stop partner services reach into communities as well.

OVR has five regional managers that are assigned as liaisons with the local workforce areas in their regions. As the liaison they work closely with the local managers and operators for their areas. They serve on the local workforce boards and their respective committees. The Regional Managers submit reports quarterly to the Field Services Director and the Executive Director summarizing activities and projects on the local area.

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 response to the survey was limited. Five individuals completed the Vocational Rehabilitation Comprehensive State Needs Assessment 2020: Kentucky Career Center Survey. Respondents rated the working relationship with OVR as "Good" (an average of three on a four-point scale). Participants were asked to answer the following question "Are individuals with disabilities able to access and participate in the same level of services as other

center customers?" All five participants answered "yes" (100.0%).

Participants were asked what resources they used when accommodating a job seeker with a disability in the Career Center. Participants could choose more than one option. The most common responses were "Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Staff" and "Ask the job seeker or the referring employer" (both 60.0%).

The most requested trainings were:

- The Americans with Disabilities Act
- Social Security Work Incentives

The respondents needed the most help with:

- Assistive technology and how to obtain assistive devices through various funding sources.

E. WHO ARE YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING, AS APPROPRIATE, THEIR NEED FOR PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES OR OTHER TRANSITION SERVICES.

Eleven individuals completed the Disability Coordinator Comprehensive State Needs Assessment. Nearly three fourths of responses indicated that the proportion of their students who require a referral to OVR is less than 20% (70.0%). The most common services provided were Testing Accommodations and Physical Accessibility to Campus (90.0%).

When identifying issues in their role as Disability Resource Coordinator, all responses identified Technology (100.0%) and most identified the Number of Professional Support Staff (90.0%). Regarding crucial supportive service areas, all responses identified Assistive Technology (100.0%) and most identified Orientation and Mobility (90.0%).

Participants were asked to identify the type of post-secondary institution with which they were associated. Participants could provide more than one response. The most common response was a University (50.0%). Participants were asked: "What proportion of their students require a referral to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) upon enrollment at your institution?" The most common response was "Less than 20%" (70.0%). working with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. Participants could select from a four- point scale (1 – Strongly Disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Agree, 4 – Strongly Agree).

The highest level of agreement was with the statement, "VR counseling assists the students in resolving issues related to academic performance" with a mean score of 3.2, indicating an average response between "Agree" and "Strongly Agree."

The lowest rated statements were "VR counseling staff are able to connect students to needed support services" and "VR counseling staff build good rapport with you as a coordinator and with the student," both with a mean score of 3.0, also indicating an average response of "Agree".

Participants were asked to indicate which skills are crucial in the transition process. Participants could provide more than one response. The three areas that all participants (100%) felt were crucial for the transition process were "Time Management Skills," "Self- Initiative" and "Self- Management Skills." One individual answered with an "Other" response that included "Case

management advising/ tutoring.”

Seventy-two individuals completed the Vocational Rehabilitation Comprehensive State Needs Assessment Youth Transition Survey. Over half were currently enrolled in postsecondary education (38.9% College or University, 13.9% Community or Technical College).

Regarding technology needs, more than three fourths said their technology needs were met (78.6%); and concerning technology usage, more than half said they were using more technology than before COVID-19 (59.2%). Nearly one third reported that they are currently working (part time – 23.2%, full time 7.3%).

Seventy-one people responded to the question “Please check one or more of the following which describes your disability(s) or those of the individual you represent:” The most common type of disability selected was “autism spectrum disorder.”

Sixty-nine people responded to the question “Which of the following describe your work situation?” The most common statement was “I have not had a paid work experience in the last five years. Seventy-one people responded to the question “Which of the following describes your current living situation?” The most common statement was “I live with other people (family, roommates, group home).

For those who have answered “I am working part time (less than 30 hours)” or “I am working full time (more than 30 hours),” they were able to respond to the statement “I currently make...” The most common response was “at least or more than minimum wage (\$7.25 per hour) in my main job.”

Fifty-three people responded to the question “Which of the following services would be useful to you now or in the near future?” The results of this question are “Independent Living Skills (Laundry, Money, Shopping, Cooking, Cleaning, etc.).”

Respondents were asked “How would you rate yourself in the following areas?” Respondents could select from a four-point scale (1 – Needs Improvement, 2 – Fair, 3 – Good, 4 – Great). The highest rated area was “Attendance and Punctuality,” indicating an average response between “Good” and “Great”.

The highest self-ratings for job skills were: 1) Attendance and Punctuality; 2) Orientation and Mobility Skills and 3) Working with Others. The lowest rated job skills were: 1) Job Seeking Skills; 2) Money Management and 3) Asking for Accommodations.

2. IDENTIFY THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE; AND

Seventy-six Community Rehabilitation Provider staff completed the Comprehensive State Needs Assessment CRP survey. Around one third of the responses indicated that their organization had provided services to OVR consumers for 1-5 years (34.2%). Nearly half of the responses indicated that they received fewer than 10 referrals from OVR on a yearly basis (46.1%), and more than half of the responses indicated that they made fewer than 10 referrals to OVR on a yearly basis (60.0%). More than half of the responses indicated that they employed fewer than 10 staff (57.9%).

Regarding technology needs, more than three fourths said their technology needs were met

(81.6%); and concerning technology use, more than three fourths reported using technology more now than before COVID-19 (86.8%). On issues that impact their ability to provide services, more than half of the responses cited the Slowing Economy (55.8%) and Lack of Referrals (54.4%).

The CRP survey asked how many staff are employed by the organization. The most common response was “Fewer than 10 staff” (72.1%). The CRP survey asked with which of KY OVR offices the participants’ organization regularly work. The most common response was “Louisville” (25.6%).

The CRP survey asked respondents to rate the level of service for ten populations. Respondents could select from a four-point scale (1 – No service provided, 2 – A little service provided, 3 – Some service provided, 4 – A lot of service provided). The highest rated service need was “Cognitive Disability” with a mean score of 3.28, indicating an average response between “Some service provided” and “A lot of service provided.” The lowest rated population served was “Veterans” with a mean score of 1.74, indicating an average response between “No service provided” and “A little service provided”.

The CRP survey asked respondents to identify any employment related needs/services that have become more apparent or requested since March 2020 (COVID-19). Among the 54 responses, four themes emerged: technology, referrals, virtual challenges, COVID- 19 related job losses.

The CRP survey asked respondents to rate fifteen barriers they felt prevent Kentuckians with disabilities from gaining and maintaining employment and leading fuller and more independent lives. Respondents could select from a five-point scale (1 – Not a Barrier, 2 – Low Barrier, 3 – High Barrier, 4 – Very High Barrier, N/A – Not Applicable/Don’t Know). Respondents were asked to choose “Not Applicable/Don’t Know” if they were not able to rate the item. The highest rated barrier, with a mean score of 3.04, was “Transportation,” indicating an average response between “High Barrier” and “Very High Barrier.” The lowest rated barrier was “Qualified Service Providers” with a mean score of 2.03 indicating an average response between “Low Barrier” and “High Barrier.”

The CRP survey asked respondents to identify additional high or very high barriers not listed on the survey. Of the 14 responses, one theme emerged: in-person communication. One respondent said, “During a time when individuals must rely more heavily on technology for communication purposes due to social distancing guidelines as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many individuals with disabilities have difficulty utilizing modern technology as their sole means of communication. It is my opinion that the loss of in- person communications has drastically impacted the Vocational Rehabilitation program \[causing it\] suffer in terms of how effective we can be in terms of providing support.”

The CRP survey asked respondents to rate how quickly they were able to initiate services after receiving a referral from OVR. Respondents could select from a five-point scale (1 – Same Day as Referral, 2 – Within a Week, 3 – Between One and Two Weeks, 4 – Between Two and Three Weeks, 5 – More than Three Weeks). The most common response was “Within a Week” (53.5%). The least common response was “More than Three Weeks” (4.2%). The mean score of all responses was 2.37, indicating an average response between “Within a Week” and “Between One and Two Weeks.” The CRP survey asked respondents if they currently had a wait list for services. Respondents could select from three options (Yes, No, Don’t Know). The majority of responses indicated “No” (84.5%). The CRP survey asked respondents to rate the quality of coordination with Special Education providers with whom they coordinate their Pre-employment services. Respondents could choose

from a four-point scale (1 – Poor, 2 – Fair, 3 – Good, 4 – Excellent). The mean score of all responses was 2.74, indicating an average response between “Fair” and “Good.” The CRP survey asked respondents to select which issues impacted their organization’s ability to provide services to persons with disabilities.

Respondents could select from a list of eleven responses, and they could select more than one response. The most common responses were “Slowing economy” (55.9%) and “Lack of Referrals” (54.4%). The least common responses were “Rising cost of commodities” and “Increase in consumers with multiple disabilities (both 14.7%).

The CRP survey asked respondents the open response question what are the supports (related to employment) that you would you like to have to serve your clients effectively? Forty respondents provided responses to the question. Three themes emerged from the responses – Transportation supports, Technology supports, Communication supports with OVR.

The CRP survey asked respondents the open response question what are the gaps in employment services that Kentuckians with disabilities are facing? Forty-one respondents provided answers to the question. Three themes emerged – Employer education, availability of jobs, customized employment.

The CRP survey asked respondents the open response question what are the employment service needs that your clients have? Thirty-nine respondents provided answers. Three themes emerged in these responses – In-Person services, Job acquisition skills, person- centered consideration. The highest rated barriers identified by the survey were: 1) Transportation; 2) Social Skills and 3) Job Search Skills.

A thorough review of existing and prospective agencies was conducted by OVR. OVR conducted several meetings with Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) staff throughout the state to obtain information of existing agencies that have longitudinally strong relationships with DBH, and that also exemplifies high quality service delivery. The purpose of such a selection process is to increase the likelihood of success among programs. This process aided in the identification of potentially new and existing providers that could be used in expanding IPS to those in unserved or underserved areas, as well as provide an evidenced based model of IPS SE to individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Voices of Hope was an agency that was mentioned by multiple experts, on separate occasions, for the expansion of IPS to single mothers with serious mental illness and/or substance use concerns. Life Skills was identified as a high-quality provider that could be used to expand IPS in to unserved or underserved areas. Communicare, Inc. and Build Inclusion are providers that were identified as high-quality providers that serve individuals with intellectual disabilities. The agencies successes in serving the ID population are the basis for their selection.

The OVR followed up with the KY IPS Implementation Team for discussion and approval. Finals steps included presenting information the OVR Executive Leadership Team for discussion and approval.

The primary purpose of this project is to expand the evidence-based model of IPS SE throughout this 4-year period to the greatest extent possible to individuals who do not have access to this type of service. A CSE needs assessment survey was sent to OVR field staff in fall of 2021 in effort to identify current need for customized SE services throughout the state. As expected, the results

illustrate an extensive need for CSE throughout the state. Eighty-five percent (85%) of the counselors polled, stated that they have a need for CSE in their area. Forty-six percent (46%) have identified at least 4 or more individuals on their caseload that could benefit from this service. Sixty-two percent (62%) state that CSE is not readily available to their consumers. Overall, this clearly illustrates that there are many job seekers throughout the state that need CSE services but do not have unrestricted access to it. In some areas, CSE may be available, but job seekers may spend long periods of time on a waiting list. In fall of 2021 there were only 11 CRPs statewide who participated in and completed some Marc Gold & Associates training gateways which allows a CRP to provide CSE in KY. CRPs across the state have provided feedback that training, and start-up costs are barriers to participation in this type of service.

OVR in partnership with UPS and a community rehabilitation provider established the UPS Transitional Learning Center (TLC) several years ago in order for individuals to obtain competitive integrated employment through hands-on training. The TLC offers a two-week training program that is staffed and operated by UPS training supervisors as well as the community rehabilitation providers. The program uses both classroom training and a simulated work environment to teach participants about job responsibilities, safety procedures and soft skills. This program has met a large need for the employer serving as a staffing solution for the company. Given the current workforce crisis, OVR is examining how this program can be replicated to meet the unmet staffing needs of employers in other areas of the state. This could be a potential area of expansion encompassing additional establishment projects with community rehabilitation providers.

A current barrier OVR identified through the statewide needs assessment is gaps in services for providing work experiences, job coaching, and job placement supports for specialized populations. There are not sufficient numbers of Community Rehabilitation Providers with the needed experience and expertise in serving job seekers who are visually impaired, blind, deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing.

In July of 2021, the Blind Services division was accepted into the Progressive Employment (PE) Development Project through Explore VR/Institute for Community Inclusion. OVR has implemented the Progressive Employment model for consumers served through the McDowell Center for the Blind. To fully implement the PE model, OVR's McDowell Center will provide work-based learning services, such as job shadowing, informational interviews, paid work experiences, and employer site tours. A core team meets biweekly inclusive of Blind Services staff and other stakeholders. The model depends upon having Community Rehabilitation Providers as a crucial partner in developing work experience sites and supporting consumers through the process (i.e. engaging with businesses, coordinating tours, and providing on-site supervision)

Successful implementation of this mode across the state requires CRPs to hire and train staff in the area of serving individuals with sensory impairments. Consumers served by OVR with vision impairments have varying needs based on their vision. They represent a range of educational attainment, work history and a diverse range in terms of blindness skills proficiency (i.e., assistive technology/computer & tech skills, cane skills, home management skills). CRP staff lack specific training and experience in working with individuals with sensory impairments and are unfamiliar with the assistive technology used in work settings.

CRP services are extremely scarce or non-existent in some areas of the state, making it more challenging to find businesses and support consumers in work experiences. OVR has identified a need for the establishment project with CRPs to focus on preparing and supporting individuals with sensory disabilities in competitive integrated employment. This would allow for higher numbers of

consumers engaging in , work readiness and career exploration services. if OVR were able to provide the type of funding and support needed for CRPs to focus preparing and supporting individuals with sensory disabilities for the workforce.

OVR State Owned and Operated Rehabilitation Centers

The Charles W. McDowell and Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Centers are the State-owned and operated comprehensive rehabilitation centers in Kentucky, a community rehabilitation program providing necessary vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities. In order to keep the center operational and ensure continuity of service provision, at times it is necessary for the State to repair or replace systems and equipment within the center, including, but not limited to electrical, plumbing and hot water, fire prevention, ventilation, sewage, etc., that go beyond ordinary repairs and maintenance. The State will submit requests for prior approval to RSA for related costs that exceed the capital expenditure threshold used by the State. " Master Agreements are in place for scheduled routine maintenance and inspection of the facility.

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Center, located in the rural Eastern Appalachian region, and the Charles W. McDowell Center for the Blind, in Louisville are the State-owned and operated comprehensive rehabilitation centers in Kentucky providing necessary vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities. The centers provide supports, training, and resources to the most unserved and underserved populations in Kentucky to maximize their opportunities to obtain competitive integrated employment. The centers serve individuals, largely from rural areas of the state, with significant, complex or multiple disabilities such as sensory impairments, criminal justice backgrounds and mental illness.

The Carl D. Perkins Rehabilitation Center

The Carl D Perkins Vocational Training Center at Thelma, KY is a multidisciplinary comprehensive residential rehabilitation and vocational training facility opened in 1973. The Perkins Center's mission is to assist Kentuckians with disabilities achieve suitable employment, maximize independence, and gain self-respect through individualized comprehensive services. The Perkins Center is the only comprehensive, post-acute residential rehabilitation facility within Kentucky and regularly provides services to rehabilitation consumers throughout the Commonwealth. OVR Counselors located throughout Kentucky make referrals to the Perkins Center for a variety of rehabilitation programs and services based on the needs of eligible persons.

Five programs of operation (Vocational Evaluation, Job Readiness Training, Vocational Skills Training, Assisted Living/Physical Restoration/Outpatient Rehabilitation and the Lifeskills Enhancement Program) comprise the majority of the Center's operation, and meet high standards for program quality. The Commission on Outpatient Rehabilitation Facilities (CORF) accredits the Outpatient Rehabilitation Program within the Assisted Living Branch. The Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) accredits the Evaluation and Training Units of the Perkins Center.

To maintain quality program services, retain CORF and CARF accreditation, while adequately serving individuals with the most significant disabilities the Perkins Center must have adequate technology, a sufficient number of staff, and be able to continue to make improvements to the facility which allows consumers, including those with the most significant disabilities to access the facility.

The following needs were identified by facilities and maintenance personnel:

1. Renovate Assisted Living Unit Restrooms and Replace all PTAC's- The need was identified in the Assisted Living Unit of the building interior on July 8, 2020, when facilities maintenance staff conducted a thorough assessment of the building. Renovation is needed to increase capacity in the assisted living unit by making the restrooms accessible. Many of these existing restrooms, built in 1973 are not accessible and require the use of a common shower area within the Unit. The work needed includes selective demolition, removal and replacement of plumbing systems, replacement of existing light fixtures, concrete slab replacement, doors/frames/hardware replacement, interior finishes including tile work (walls, floors and base), drywall, painting and restroom accessories. The Assisted Living Unit is joined structurally to the existing building and does not constitute a separate building and costs do not exceed the appraised value of the building. We currently have full capacity assigned to those 13 rooms and 24 consumers on the waiting list for vacancies as they are available. Completion of this project would increase room space to 14, allow consumers to use their own accessible restroom area, allowing the Perkins Center to meet consumer needs timely while increasing the numbers served due to our continuous waiting list for the Assisted Living Unit. The Perkins Center has 113 PTAC (Package Terminal Air Conditioner) units located in dorm rooms and offices. These units are 15 years old or older and have become costly to repair, if that is possible. The HVAC industry recommends such units be replaced if such units are more than 10 years old and functioning properly becomes an issue.
2. Industrial Truck/Forklift Training area- This program is designed to meet entry level workforce needs of any business that employs industrial truck/forklift operators. Perkins Center consumers enrolled in this program will have the opportunity to obtain a 3-year renewable OSHA approved Industrial Truck/Forklift Operator's license. Upon completion of this training, consumers typically go to work in a multitude of businesses including, but not limited to retail stores, manufacturing plants, warehouses, wholesalers, or distribution centers. The outdoor training area is a tennis court that was built more than 30 years ago and has an asphalt surface. The surface has deteriorated over time, allowing the program to only use about one half of the entire surface for training purposes currently. The program's Industrial Trucks are stored in a building on campus and require them to be driven to the training area. This program has grown tremendously in recent years and the following numbers will further explain our need for this project:

2017

- 20 completed
- 11 received license
- Units/hrs. of service total 2,834

2018

- 27 completed
- 19 received license
- Units/hrs. of service total 4,635

2019

- 28 completed
- 26 received license
- Units/hrs. of service total 6,024

2020 and 2021 have been difficult years for our programs due to COVID restrictions. However, this program has continued to serve consumers with over 1500 hours of training during 2021. Utilize old tennis court location to construct 5000 sq. ft. steel, engineered building to provide storage and training area for forklift operations program. Concrete building pad should be at least 10,000 sq. ft. to accommodate outdoor training area as well. Building would require minimum temperature control, supply air/ventilation system for exhaust from propane powered fork trucks. Building should be equipped with minimum of one, 10' roll up door, one 36" utility door for access. Lighting should be high bay LED style and be no lower than 12' above floor. One multi use bathroom should be included in the design. Suitable electrical, plumbing and internet systems should be included in the design. Completion of this project will allow the Perkins Center to train consumers timely, during all seasons and in an environment similar to the jobs available in this field.

1. Fire Panel System and HVAC BAS software/controls Renovation-A large part of our facility fire monitoring system continues to run on a decades old system that needs to be merged into one active panel. This upgrade would allow us to get all of our monitoring points up to code and eliminate the myriad of problems along with inconveniences of the old panel. The Center HVAC system controls in the main building are obsolete and operating on a system that cannot be upgraded or repaired if there is any major repair required. A new system with remote access, server operable, provides user interface for both graphics and logic operation while being capable of trending and data storage is needed. The system will need to interface with all building systems in use and sized for future needs. The system should also be capable of interfacing with multiple energy meters for the purpose of monitoring and data storage. Replace obsolete BAS controls in main building with current version equipment. New system must provide remote access, be server operable, provide for user interface for both graphics and logic operation, be capable of trending and point data storage. Any remote modules must be able to be downloaded from remote connection. Must be able to interface with all building systems presently in use and sized for future needs. System must be able to interface with multiple energy meters for the purpose of monitoring and data storage.
2. Site Access Security - The Perkins Center presently has two driveways onto the property and 22 doors allowing access into the building. The current layout is difficult for security to monitor and poses a safety threat for staff and students. The property is contained on three sides by fencing but is open to the road in the front. To further complicate the situation, the

security office and camera monitoring station is in the rear of the building with no easy access to the front of the property. In February of 2019, it was recommended by the Center Safety Committee that a single point of entry onto the property be established. This entrance will be gated and maintained by security guards. The project would involve rerouting the current primary driveway and extending it around the side of the building. A shelter will need to be constructed roadside for security staff to be housed. An automatic gate with key card and remote operation will also be necessary. The overall objective is to provide a secure and safe environment.

3. Site Drainage and River Bank Erosion-The frontage property of the Perkins Center is lower than the main road and the buildings on the property. Drainage piping is there and has been for many years. The original drain leading to the rear of the property is compromised and causes water to pond in low lying areas of the site during wet weather. The original drain needs to be assessed to determine if all or part of it can be replaced/repared to allow water to drain from the property. Mowing and caring for this part of the Perkins Center property is often difficult and requires extra labor due to the condition of the ground. It also presents as a hazard to consumers on-site when there is standing water. Erosion/Slippage Area- There is significant erosion of property near the Big Sandy River, which joins the property. The goal of this project is to stabilize the erosion/slippage area at rear of property boundary. This section of the property is bordered by the Levisa Fork of the Big Sandy River. As the rivers water level rises and falls, it has eroded approximately 100 feet of shoreline at the rear of the property. This has left drain lines exposed and is undermining the security fence. It is a safety concern for those using the adjacent soccer field. This will require an engineering study to determine project scope.
4. Plumbing -Building Drain lines-Plumbing systems have been repaired and replaced as needed over the years. The manhole in our Courtyard area is central to the drain system of our kitchen and dormitory areas. An assessment of that drain to the sewer plant is needed along with those systems leading from the dormitory into it. Frequent repairs have been made to maintain the interior drain lines from inside the building, however these failures have steadily increased in recent years. A complete assessment of these plumbing/drain systems is needed to determine the extent of what is in need of repair/replacement.
5. Exterior Security Lighting-Areas around the main and perimeter buildings are adequate but should be updated to LED type to provide longer life and reduce energy costs. However there are issues with site perimeter lighting that need to be addressed. This includes repair parking lot lighting and additional lighting installed around the perimeter of the property. This will require removal of asphalt to repair the underground line, or another method of lighting such as solar be established. The front perimeter of the property, adjacent to main street does not have any lighting, making it very dark the entire 950' of frontage and 100' onto the property. The other area of concern is along the adjacent street (Riverview Drive), and it spans an area of 450' of property frontage by approximately 50' onto Perkins Center property. Correcting these concerns would provide a much safer and secure environment for consumers and alleviate issues security staff encounter when monitoring those areas by video and in person.
6. Renovation/Replacement of Store Front Windows - The glass "store front style" windows surrounding the interior of the main building and half of the physical therapy area, leaks whenever it rains. Towels must be kept throughout the building to catch the water from those windows when there is precipitation. There is rust and corrosion present. It is unclear

if new structure is needed or replacement glass and seals to resolve the issue. Most of the glass and structure is original to the building built in 1973. The interior glass measures 2,608 sq ft. and the physical therapy glass is 225 sq. ft.

7. Resurface Gymnasium Flooring - The current gym surface (73'5" long x 39'5" wide) is badly worn and in need of repair. It is original to the construction of the gym. It will need installation of a layer of Tarkolay over existing floor, then a 5+2 pad and pour system, game lines painted, vinyl base along walls, and a vinyl reducer along doorways and openings.
8. The Perkins Center front entrance- The main entrance to the Center needs a canopy constructed to allow those loading/unloading to safely do so without concern for snow, rain and other weather conditions that may occur. Often, consumers, family members and staff must load/unload vehicles packed with clothing, food items, electronics and other items at our front entrance where there is no cover from the elements. Using a wheelchair lift is also a task that often becomes difficult due to rain, snow or adverse conditions where the pavement may become slick or hazardous. A canopy has also been identified as a need on our Accessibility Plan performed by an Occupational Therapist.
9. Perkin's Center Hot Water Systems -Replacement of aging Hot Water Heaters throughout the Facility - The site currently operates its hot water supply by utilizing twenty separate hot water heating units, eleven of which are near specified end of life service for these types of units and are not performing at full capacity. A planned replacement schedule should be determined and implemented before a failure constitutes an emergency situation.
10. The Carl Perkins Center Rooftop HVAC Units – The facility operates heating and cooling for all areas except the student dormitory by means of RTU's (rooftop HVAC units) located on the rooftops of various sections of the buildings. There are 23 individual units, 21 of which are 2001 or older manufacture. These units are beyond the specified 15-20 year service life cycle and are expensive to operate and maintain. Many of the units are not performing at 100%. All units provide cooling utilizing R-22 freon which is now obsolete to manufacture. Several units are either non-operational or operating in a limited capacity at this time. Based on evaluations of all RTU units, a scope for replacement is being developed to provide a timeline and an accurate cost determination.
11. The Carl Perkin's Vocational Rehab Facility Waste Water Treatment Plant – The facility is served by an onsite Waste Water Treatment Plant that was installed in 2004/2005. This plant has a capacity to process up to 25k gallons of waste water per day. The primary tank structure typically has a lifespan of 25-30 years. The support structure and decking, piping, electrical controls, blowers, pumps and other hardware has a service life of 10-15 years. Based on an assessment completed by the original manufacturer, it is recommended that these system components and hardware be renovated and suspect parts be replaced. The goal of this renovation would be to make the Plant viable for another 8-10 years before full replacement would be required.

The Charles W. McDowell Center

The Charles W. McDowell Center is a rehabilitation facility serving individuals from across the Commonwealth, owned and operated by the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR). The facility housed the McDowell Center residential and training program for the blind and visually impaired; as well as office and meeting space for OVR Field Services Division

Staff. OVR's East Jefferson District staff and the Central Blind District field staff (i.e., VR counseling staff, assistants, assistive technology staff, community rehabilitation branch staff) are housed in the building. This greatly increases the foot traffic of VR participants and other stake holders in the building. The East Jefferson District served around 2,300 individuals in the current program year. The McDowell center training program receives referrals from all across the state. The number of staff housed at the Center is around 65 when fully staffed.

The McDowell Center, located in Louisville, is the only facility in the state of Kentucky which provides blindness skills training to adults, making it a singular and particularly important resource for individuals who are blind and visually impaired wishing to adjust to their vision loss and pursue competitive integrated employment. The McDowell Center offers training in vocational preparation, personal adjustment services, independent living skills, orientation and mobility, Braille, assistive technology, academic remediation, career assessment, vocational planning, work adjustment and work experience.

Master Agreements are in place for scheduled routine maintenance and inspection of the facility. On a monthly basis, elevator inspections and pest control occur. The HVAC system and backflow and pressure valve testing, water treatment is on a quarterly maintenance schedule. Semi-annually the kitchen equipment, grease traps and electrical systems for fire alarms are inspected and maintained. On an annual basis, maintenance and inspections of the sprinkler system and kitchen hood occur.

State facility staff performed an assessment of the facility needs in 2019 and 2020. In 2021, state facility staff engaged architecture and engineering consultants to provide further review of the building and mechanical systems.

The results are as follows:

1. Complete Building Renovation- (to include Interior Architectural and Mechanical, Electrical, Plumbing) All MEP systems must be evaluated for replacement based on current operating condition, equipment life expectancy, and energy usage. All systems should be evaluated to determine the most effective means of controlling building spaces to desired set points for humidity and temperature.
 - a. All Building automation systems (BAS) should be upgraded to current standards and must provide for remote access via internet, centralized served storage, and application software. User interface must allow access to logic programming, graphics, data logging, trend data, alarms, and self – diagnostics.
 - b. All building sanitary drain piping must be replaced due to systemic failure of current piping system materials. All proper engineering standards and Housing building Construction (HBC) plumbing codes must be followed. Architectural renovation to allow improved and expanded ability to serve consumers should also be included in this process, including but not limited to: lighting, tactile surfaces, training areas, safety, interior design improvements for visually impaired and ADA for mobility affected students.
 - c. This project may require completion in two phases based on work scope, building occupancy and timing of work.

2. Dormitory Restroom Accessibility and Safety-Three dorm rooms require renovation to accessible “ADA” shower areas. Wheelchair users cannot navigate into the shower for safe transfer, and controls for the shower are located outside the shower. Water from the shower is not contained and is a safety concern. Updates Needed: Recess concrete slab in order to lower the shower panel, which would prevent water from draining out into the main bathroom area. Renovation to showers allowing for transfer and access to controls.
3. Public Right of Way – Back of building lacks access to a public right of way from all emergencies exits. Campus grounds are not fully accessible. Updates needed: Paved access encircling facility. Paved access allowing safe exit from building and safe cane training for consumers. Create a walking path with various terrains that would allow for enhanced orientation and mobility training on campus.
4. Exterior Repairs-Student dorm patio roofing repair. Service dog outdoor enclosure.
5. IT updates to facilitate remote instruction and staff meetings
6. Replace all exterior lighting with LED upgrade to improve longevity and reduce energy consumption.
7. Renovate Consumer training kitchen to facilitate improved work space and layout to accommodate students using a wheelchair.

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. Vocational Rehabilitation plays a vital role in this complex process collaborating with local school districts in the provision of transition and pre- employment transition services.

The National Center for Education indicated in 2019-20, the number of students ages 3-21 who received special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was 7.3 million, or 14 percent of all public-school students. Among students receiving special education services, the most common category of disability (33 percent) was specific learning disabilities.

There are 173 school districts (including the School for the Deaf and the School for the Blind) statewide consisting of 1,477 schools inclusive of 26,675 students with IEP’s and 504 Plans that are potentially eligible.

For people with disabilities the employment rate for people with disabilities in Kentucky was 30.8% (2019 Disability Compendium State Reports). The employment rate for people without disabilities in Kentucky was 76.2%.

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 and 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).

Youth adults with disabilities face multiple challenges in obtaining successful post-school employment outcomes. In Kentucky for the 2019-2020 Post-School Outcomes were not met for competitive employment, enrolled in higher education or enrolled in other education or training.

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. Transition services were identified as an 'unmet need'.

In October 2020, OVR created the Transition Services Branch to engage with and provide Pre-Employment Transition Services and Transitions Services to students with disabilities. The branch consists of one (1) Branch Manager, three (3) Program Administrators, six (6) Pre-Employment Transition Services Coordinators, and one (1) Administrative Specialist.

The Branch Manager oversees all branch activities and represents the agency on inter-agency teams. The Program Administrators coordinate and monitor Pre-employment and Transition services throughout the state, including specific contracts with service providers. Each serve as a point of contact for their area and assure services are administered in keeping with the federal guidelines and in compliance with state and federal laws. They represent the agency on state and federal teams, boards and commissions for the area of transition and pre-employment transition services.

The Pre-ETS Coordinators are assigned to specific regions. They work directly with schools and providers to receive referrals, coordinate services, and monitor student progress to help determine when it is appropriate for a student to apply for OVR services.

The Administrative Specialist provides clerical support to the branch.

The Office partners with the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services. The current memorandum of Understanding with KDE is in legal review. Within this agreement are strategies for the two agencies to work collaboratively in evaluating, serving, and planning for a seamless transition from school for students with disabilities who are eligible or potentially eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation ("VR") services. The intended result of these collaborative strategies and activities is that students will achieve their post-secondary goals as they make the transition from school to adult education, competitive integrated employment (including customized employment and supported employment), continuing and adult education, independent living, and community participation. Signed agreements with the local educational agencies outline and identify the responsibilities of each public entity relating to the provision of services shall be in place. 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.

OVR has representation on the State Interagency Council (SIAC) for services and supports to

Children and Transition-age Youth. The (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 and OVR staff are involved in their local areas.

The Office participates with the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and other state agencies on the Kentucky Interagency Transition Council.

The Executive Director is a member of the State Advisory Panel for Exceptional Children (SAPEC) in Kentucky in the Department of Education. The advisory panel advises and assists the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) on special education and related services for children with disabilities.

OVR and Kentucky Department of Education continues to meet regularly with interested interagency partners and serve as the catalyst for development and implementation of an infrastructure which supports youth with disabilities to transition from high school to post-secondary school and employment.

Pre-Employment Transition Services will continue to represent the earliest set of services available under OVR for students with disabilities, which are short-term in nature and are designed to help students identify career interests.

K. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

Describe:

1. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE STATE WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES

According to data from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS), published in the annual Compendium of Disability Statistics, 17.8% of Kentucky civilians living in the community report having a disability. According to this resource, Kentucky's overall population is 4,384,951 people. Using the percentage in 2019 and applying it to the population numbers, there is an estimated 779,842 people in the state of Kentucky who have a disability. The overall rate of individuals with a disability in the United States is 12.7% for 2019. The rate in Kentucky is higher than the rate nationally by 5.1%.

The percentage of residents of working age (18-64) in Kentucky who are employed is 32.8% for 2019. The national average was 38.8% in 2015. 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 2022 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 2022 and it is inclusive of the carryover of consumers from the prior year. The information reflects the estimated numbers taking into consideration that OVR is serving all categories of service.

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.

Estimated number to be served in FY 2022 under the combined agency is 20,220 with 2,025 positive employment outcomes. The estimated number to be served in FY 2023 under the combined agency is 22,978 with 2,980 positive employment outcomes.

B. THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM; AND

OVR as a Combined Agency for FY 2022 estimates that it will serve around 2,250 individuals with a total estimated associated costs of around \$2,705,330. In FY 22 we estimate around 320 employment outcomes with an average estimate of around \$1,283,900. For FY 2023, OVR estimates that it will serve around 3,025 individuals with a total estimated associated costs of around \$3,637,166. In FY 23 we estimate around 340 employment outcomes with an average estimated costs of around \$1,364,144.

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 2020 and year to date 2021. 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 all Four Categories open. 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. These costs are reflective of the estimated direct service costs to consumers for the fiscal year October 1, 2021, through September 30, 2022. These estimates are based on historical costs taking into account the unpredictable effects of the pandemic.

The number below are for Fiscal Federal year October 1, 2021, through September 30, 2022. The total number estimated to be served is 20,220 with 2,025 employment outcomes.

Estimated number to serve under Category One is 16,478 with 1,634 successful employment outcomes.

The estimated number to serve under Category Two is 2,523 with 316 successful employment outcomes.

The estimated number to serve under Category Three is 1,213 with 73 successful employment outcomes.

The estimated number to serve under Category Four is 6 with 2 successful employment outcomes.

The numbers below are for Fiscal Federal year October 1, 2022, through September 30, 2023.

The total number estimated to be served is 22,978 with 2,980 positive employment outcomes.

Estimated number to serve under Category One is 18,842 with 2,294 successful employment outcomes.

The estimated number to serve under Category Two is 2,747 with 590 successful employment outcomes.

The estimated number to serve under Category Three is 1,383 with 94 successful employment outcomes.

The estimated number to serve under Category Four is 6 with 2 successful 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

OVR has all four Categories open and there are no individuals on the waiting list.

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.

These costs are reflective of the estimated direct service costs to consumers for the fiscal year October 1, 2021, through September 30, 2022, and the unpredictable effects of the pandemic. The total number estimated to be served is 20,220 with 2,025 positive employment outcomes.

FY 2022

Category One

- Estimated to be served — 16,478
- Total Estimated Associated Costs – \$16,547,443

- Average Estimated Costs per person per closure - \$3,140
- Estimated Employment Outcomes —1,634

Category Two

- Estimated to be served — 2,523
- Total Estimated Associated Costs - \$1,327,975
- Average Estimated Costs per person per closure-\$2,379
- Estimated Employment Outcomes - 316

Category Three

- Estimated to be served — 1,213
- Total Estimated Associated Costs - \$555,334
- Average Estimated Costs per person per closure - \$2,089
- Estimated Employment Outcomes -73

Category Four

- Estimated to be served - 6
- Total Estimated Associated Costs — \$25,396
- Average Estimated costs per closure: \$2,750
- Estimated Employment Outcomes: 2

FFY 2023

The costs are reflective of the estimated service cost to consumers for the fiscal year October 1, 2022, through September 30, 2023, and the unpredictable nature of the pandemic.

Estimated number served is 22,978 with 2,980 positive employment outcomes.

Category One

- Estimated to be served — 18,842
- Total Estimated Associated Costs – \$16,921,172
- Average Estimated Costs per closure -\$2,814
- Estimated Employment Outcomes - 2,294

Category Two

- Estimated to be served — 2,747
- Total Estimated Associated Costs - \$2,189, 500
- Average Estimated Costs per person per closure-\$2,854
- Estimated Employment Outcomes - 590

Category Three

- Estimated to be served — 1,383
- Total Estimated Associated Costs - \$590,900
- Average Estimated Costs per person per closure - \$2,072
- Estimated Employment Outcomes -94

Category Four

- Estimated to be served - 6
- Total Estimated Associated Costs — \$25,396
- Average Estimated costs per closure: \$2,750
- Estimated Employment Outcomes: 2

L. STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

The designated State unit must:

- 1. IDENTIFY IF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES WERE JOINTLY DEVELOPED AND AGREED TO BY THE STATE VR AGENCY AND THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, IF THE STATE HAS A COUNCIL, AND JOINTLY AGREED TO ANY REVISIONS**

The 2021 CSNA was conducted by OVR with input from the State Rehabilitation Council (SCVR). This plan contains goals and priorities based on the identified needs through the FFY 2021 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). The Council for the

Combined agency reviewed, gave input and approved the goals for this state plan.

- 2. IDENTIFY THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IN CARRYING OUT THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS**

The following goals are presented in priority order with estimated timeframes for completion by year:

Sound Fiscal Management

Goal 1: Implement sound fiscal management that aligns with federal and state regulations for accurate and consistent reporting and operations.

Objective 1.1: Develop internal controls that are embedded throughout service delivery. Strategies:

1. Conduct a risk analysis and identify needed procedures for internal controls. (2022)
2. OVR staff work closely with Cabinet-level fiscal staff (budget, procurement, and accounting) in the development and implementation of written procedures that adhere to state and federal requirements. (2022)
3. Develop needed policies and procedures. (2022)
4. Initial training of staff on established policies and procedures. (2022-2023) Measures:

Completion of the risk analysis

Completion of the development and implantation of written policies and procedures

Staff training Completed

Objective 1.2: Best practices and effective policies are embedded in day – to- day operations. Strategies:

Dedicated staff are assigned to quality assurance monitoring over the internal control processes. (2022-2023)

Development of a quality assurance plan. (2022)

Metrics are established for internal control processes. (2022) Measures:

Clean audit with no findings Reduction of Case Review Errors

Timely submission of required federal reports with no errors. Quality Assurance

Goal 2: Compliance with federal and state regulations in all areas to ensure continuous improvement and quality outcomes for consumers.

Objective 2.1: Enhance program compliance through the development and maintenance of policies and procedures

Strategies :

1. Identify an agency standard of accessibility. (2022)
2. Develop a structure to maintain, update, and review policy and procedures. (2022)

3. Train staff on process for policy and procedure. (2022-2023)

Measure:

Completion of a formal policy and procedure manual

Objective 2.2: Consistently analyze and use data to inform planning.

Strategies:

1. Implement a consistent development and review process to inform management and performance. (2022-2023)
2. Obtain input of leadership and management to identify outcome data needs. (2022- 2023)
3. Designate staff to develop a strong data process. (2022)
4. Partner with internal and external stakeholders in education and workforce data sources. (2022-2023).

Measure:

Executive Leadership Team and management utilize data driven information in the decision-making process to inform performance and management.

Staff Resources

Goal 3: Maximize technology and business processes to effectively support accessibility and the evolving needs of all stakeholders.

Objective 3.1: Expand opportunities for staff to provide virtual services

Strategies:

1. Acquire updated technology. (2022)
2. Purchase and implementation of a new case management system (2022- 2024)
3. Provide staff training in the latest technology (2023).

Measures:

100% of Staff are using Sara

Implementation of New Case Management System

Objective: 3.2: All forms and documents meet accessibility standards

Strategies:

1. Ensure staff use accessible forms and documents (2022 – 2023)

2. Designate staff responsible for creating forms that meet accessibility standards. (2022)
3. Policies and procedures are in place for compliance. (2023)
4. Train staff on accessibility and compliance. (2023) Measure:

Completion of accessibility polices and staff training.

Center Operations (The Charles McDowell Center and the Carl D. Perkins Center).

Goal 4: Improve facilities and expand programs to increase competitive, integrated employment outcomes. Carl D. Perkins Rehabilitation Training Center and McDowell Center for the Blind will operate at full capacity (occupancy), leading and maximizing the delivery of services to the unserved and undeserved population.

Objective: 4:1 Upgrade building facilities to provide a safe and accessible environment

Strategies:

1. Develop a formal plan for ongoing regular maintenance (2022).
2. Follow and adhere to all state and federal processes for prior approval and purchasing. (2022-2023).
3. Implement approved projects in the established Capital plan in a timely manner. (2022-2024)

Measure:

All facility projects are completed and operational as identified on the Capital Plan

Objective 4.2: Increase service capacity to offer statewide services that increase competitive, integrated employment outcomes.

Strategies:

1. Conduct a cost benefit analysis of both Perkins and McDowell to inform decisions regarding center operations (2023-2024) to determine the effectiveness of programs that lead to competitive integrated employment. Identification of areas of deficiency and the development of a plan to ensure centers offer programs that prepare individuals for careers that lead to self-sufficiency and higher quality employment outcomes.
2. Develop and implement a plan to ensure adequate resources for the learning format expansion (career pathways, post-secondary training). (2022)
3. Address hardware, software, and connectivity access barriers (2023)
4. Expand learning formats to include a variety of online and hybrid programs (2022- 2023).
5. Centers will increase outreach efforts to all 120 counties in the state in order to increase capacity. (2023).

Measures:

Cost benefit analysis completed, and plan implemented to address area of needed improvement by 2024.

Establish baseline measures in 2022 (number served, number placed, number of credentials).

Increase the number of training participants enrolled in career pathways by 25% in for both Centers annually in 2023 and 2024 that leads to employment in their field of study.

Increase competitive, integrative employment by 25% for both Centers annually in 2023 and 2024.

Objective 4.3: Maximize job readiness training and work experience opportunities.

Strategies:

1. Establish relationships to strengthen business engagement activities to provide work-based experiences expanding employment opportunities for individuals attending the Perkins Center. (2022-2023).
2. Expand job readiness training and work experience opportunities at the McDowell Center (2022-2023).

Measures:

Establish baseline measures in 2022 (number of employers, number of work-based experiences, number leading to employment).

75% of McDowell Center participants enrolled in services annually will complete a work experience annually.

The McDowell Center will expand employer relations by six annually.

Perkins Center will expand work-based experiences by 25% annually in 2023 and 2024. Students completing job readiness training at Perkins will increase by 25% in 2023 and 2024. Consumer Services

Goal 5: Implement innovative practices to improve quality outcomes. Objective 5.1: Increase the number vendors with credentials.

Strategies:

1. Incorporate vendor recruitment as a part of the marketing plan (2023)
2. Train staff on new vendor processes for vetting and credentialing (2022)
3. Recruit new vendors for increased consumer choice. (2022-2023)
4. Maintain a strong application/recruitment/retention vendor process (2022- 2023).
Measure: All vendors are credentialed

Objective 5.2: Consumers have access to industry-driven training, career, and other resources.

Strategies:

1. Develop a list and expand the list of agency-approved vendors. (2022)
2. Develop a plan for consumers to have access to technology and virtual services. (2022)
3. Counselors will place an emphasis on informed choice in the guidance and counseling process. (2023)
4. Training of staff on informed choice (2023)
5. Increase the timeliness of high-tech driver evaluations through the purchase of an agency owned vehicle.

Measure:

Increase the number of consumers completing training by 10%

Objective 5.3: Strengthen existing workforce partnerships, develop new partnerships, and expand learning opportunities.

Strategies:

1. Employer Services Branch will develop and implement a plan to partner with employers who offer jobs in targeted sectors. (2023)
2. Increase work-based learning opportunities in targeted sectors. (2023)
3. Train staff using career pathways strategy guides. (2022)

Measures:

10% increase in competitive, integrated employment outcomes in targeted sectors

Objective 5.4: Counselors implement a career pathways approach to increase quality employment outcomes.

Strategies:

1. Expand types of employment placements into higher paying, lower turnover jobs. (2023)
2. Increased use of Labor Market Information in employment goal development through guidance and counseling. (2022)
3. Increase consumer engagement in the VR process through guidance and counseling. (2023)
4. Implement policies and procedures that guide the implementation of the career pathway approach through team-based, early intervention strategies. (2023)

5. Add measures to the counselor performance evaluation to reflect expectations. (2023)

Measure:

Annual increases in the required federal common measures in order to meet set goals.

Public Awareness

Goal 6: Implement an ongoing, flexible marketing plan and process to improve public awareness of VR programs, services, and agency employment.

Objective 6.1: Implement a comprehensive marketing plan for OVR.

Strategies:

1. Create a marketing plan for consumers and vendors (2022)
2. Develop marketing materials that reflect current information and are engaging and in accessible formats. (2023-2024)
3. Marketing materials are made available to staff and consumers. (2023-2024).

Measures:

Marketing plan is developed.

Materials are developed, easily accessible and distributed.

Social media presence on most popular accessible sites Objective 6.2:

Recruit Talent

Strategies:

1. Identify a staff liaison to work with Cabinet and Personnel Cabinet on issues related to talent recruitment. (2022)
2. Expand the quantity and types of internship programs with university programs. (2023)
3. Develop and implement an internship agreement. (2022)
4. Leverage social media as a tool for recruitment. (2023)

Measure:

Open positions are filled with qualified candidates and OVR Retention Rate increases.

The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation set the following goals for the distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds. Kentucky has set the following goals to assist with increase employment outcomes for adults and youth with a significant disability.

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

Objective 1.1: Recruit more providers for supported employment for unserved and underserved areas.

Strategies:

1. Create a strategic planning team to analyze and develop a viable and comprehensive payment system to community rehabilitation providers. (2022)
2. Create Establishment Projects to replicate the UPS Transitional Learning Center model and expansion of the IPS and Customized employment models to increase a network of services providers. (2022-2023)
3. Increase Capacity in customized employment through participation in the Leadership Series through the University of Kentucky's Human Development Institute. (2023)
4. Hold outreach opportunities for potential providers. (2023)
5. Provide training on new polices related to customized employment, ISP and person-centered planning (2022-2023).

Measures:

Increase the number of providers by 5%. Implementation of new service fees Implementation of Establishment projects # Of Trainings Provided

Increase in the number of competitive integrated outcomes for individuals Goal 2: Monitor Service Quality of Providers

Objective 2.1: Develop strategies for continuous quality improvement in collaboration with the Program Policy and Support Branch.

Strategies:

1. Ensure agency compliance to WIOA requirements of Section 511 (annually)
2. Ensure CRP compliance with the terms of their signed service agreements through annual audits and monitoring (annually).

Measures:

Annual Audits of Services Corrective Action Plans Scorecard

Goal 3: Seek alternative strategies for providing and funding Extended Services

Objective 3.1: Provide another source of extended services is available so there will be no interruption of services for individuals with significant disabilities.

Strategies:

1. Seek input from staff and other stakeholders such as education, service providers and individuals with disabilities on extended services. (2022)
2. Identify potential strategies for the provision of services. (2023)
3. Identify potential funding sources. (2023)
4. Update the Supported Employment Service Fee Memorandum to include extended services to youth. (2022).

Measure:

Additional funding secured.

3. ENSURE THAT THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES ARE BASED ON AN ANALYSIS OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

A. THE MOST RECENT COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT, INCLUDING ANY UPDATES;

The 2021 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 of Vocational Rehabilitation worked collaboratively to assess the needs of individuals with disabilities.

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.

OVR contracted with the University of Kentucky Center for Excellence, The Human Development Institute (HDI) to conduct a needs assessment as a part of its statewide CSNA. OVR utilized the following information: 1) the HDI CSNA assessment results; 2) strategic planning; 3), the RSA monitoring process and draft report; 4) the satisfaction survey; 5) facilities assessment; 6) RSA performance data sets and 7) data from the OVR case management system. The information was used to identify services gaps, challenges and set goals and priorities for the VR agency.

B. THE STATE'S PERFORMANCE UNDER THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES OF SECTION 116 OF WIOA; AND

OVR submits the annual Performance Report annually, the first of October along with the other workforce system partners.

The RSA team has reviewed with Kentucky the quarterly data dashboards as well the comparative

Performance for PY 2020. For the Median Earnings PY 20 OVR is in the 1st Quartile at \$5,540. OVR is in the 4th Quartile for the 2nd Quarter Employment rate at 25.8% the 4th quarter Employment Rate at 23.0% and Credential Attainment Rate at 13.2%. For Measurable Skill Gains for PY20, OVR is in the 3rd Quartile at 35.6%.

OVR is seeking Technical Assistance from the VRTAC-QE for employment and the VRTAC-QM for quality management. OVR has established the following goals that includes strategies that address OVR's performance on the WIOA accountability measures.

Quality Assurance

Goal 2: Compliance with federal and state regulations in all areas to ensure continuous improvement and quality outcomes for consumers.

Center Operations

Goal 4: Improve facilities and expand programs to increase competitive, integrated employment outcomes.

Consumer Services

Goal 5: Implement innovative practices to improve quality outcomes.

Kentucky is committed to acquiring systems 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 over 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 leadership 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) The 2021 RSA Draft Monitoring Report

The RSA Data Dashboards Caseload Statistics Metrics Reports.

RSA conducted an offsite review of OVR during the COVID-19 pandemic. The review activities were held from July 16 through August 20, 2021 and consisted of information, documents and data submitted by OVR. RSA assessed the performance of and reviewed the financial management of the VR and Supported Employment programs. The RSA Team provided technical assistance during the review as well as made recommendations for additional TA through the technical assistance centers.

The RSA Monitoring Process and Performance Data will be utilized to develop a plan of action. OVR received their draft monitoring report on January 22, 2022. OVR received off site monitoring during the time period of July 16, 2021, through August 20, 2021. During the time OVR received technical assistance from RSA for multiple topical areas. RSA conducted a

thorough review and discussion of the performance data with OVR staff. OVR, after a thorough review of the recommendations, findings and corrective actions will utilize the information in formulating a plan of corrective action to address the following issues identified by RSA regarding the Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment Programs.

Performance

Insufficient Internal Controls for Management of the Federal Award. Non-Compliant and Outdated State Education Agreement

Financial Management Missing/Insufficient Internal Controls Financial Management Deficiencies

Throughout the year, RSA has conducted quarterly performance data reviews that has assisted OVR in identifying areas of concern from the RSA data dashboards. This allowed for comprehensive discussions and RSA provided technical assistance during the sessions. During the monitoring visit RSA shared ten performance tables as well as an additional six tables regarding Other Measures that Matter for review and discussion.

One area of need identified where there are clear gaps in services was the area of engagement of individuals with disabilities throughout the VR process as evidenced by the significant numbers of individuals existing the program as applicants.

Another area was performance related issues due to inaccurate data reporting. Through the monitoring process, RSA and OVR identified the need to look at how the Executive Leadership and managers use Data to inform performance and management of the agency operations of the VR and Supported Employment Programs inclusive the states owned and operated centers. There is a need for the agency to implement sufficient internal controls for both financial and performance management. OVR has identified the need to purchase a new case management system to meet the

growing needs of the agency.

Given the monitoring process was completed in September of 2021 and the report was just received, OVR has just begun the process of reviewing the plan and identifying needed corrective actions in response to the report. This will be a work in progress over the next several months.

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

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 the need to close categories.

According to data from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS), published in the annual Compendium of Disability Statistics, 17.8% of Kentucky civilians living in the community report having a disability. According to this resource, Kentucky's overall population is 4,384,951 people. Using the percentage in 2019 and applying it to the population numbers, there is an estimated 779,842 people in the state of Kentucky who have a disability. The overall rate of individuals with a disability in the United States is 12.7% for 2019. The rate in Kentucky is higher than the rate nationally by 5.1%. The percentage of residents of working age (18-64) in Kentucky who are employed is 32.8% for 2019. The national average was 38.8% in 2015. In this instance of employment, the rate in Kentucky is lower than the rate nationally.

In FFY 2020, 2021 and year to date FY 2022, agency staff along with fiscal and the State Council of Vocational Rehabilitation reviewed on a quarterly and often monthly basis data on numbers served 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.

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 FY 2020, 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, 2020 and year to date in 2021 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.

Effective April 1, 2020, OVR opened all Priority Categories.

C. THE SERVICE AND OUTCOME GOALS

The numbers below outline the current service population numbers and costs. Service Numbers and costs for 2022 and 2023 and are estimated based on historical data and 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.

The estimated year end actual outcomes and costs are reflective of the program year for July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021, in order to match the federal program year under WIOA for quarterly reporting. The following FY 2022—2023 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.

The complexity of the COVID-19 pandemic on the workforce is not fully known. Employment is a struggle for all populations. If you are an individual with a disability the difficulty can be magnified. Individuals with disabilities are impacted by the lack of technology to learn or access services remotely. Many individuals with disabilities are at high risk due to different health conditions even with the availability of vaccinations. Public transportation has been interrupted or individuals do not feel safe accessing rides. Social distancing has created isolation, loneliness increasing the occurrence of mental health conditions.

OVR conducted a comparison of services metrics from 2019 through 2021 and identified the following trends. Cases served decreased by 18%. The number of individuals that were in job ready status decreased by 28%. OVR found that cases in training status stayed level and actually increased in 2020 which is reasonable given individuals could participate in remote learning in secondary settings. The number of successful closures for competitive integrated employment decreased by 21%.

FY 2022 SERVICE GOALS and OUTCOMES:

Priority Category I Active Cases GOAL: 16,478 Outcomes GOAL: 1,634 Priority Category 2 Active Cases GOAL: 2,523 Outcomes GOAL: 316 Priority Category 3 Active Cases GOAL: 1,123

Outcomes GOAL: 73

Priority Category 4 Active Cases GOAL: 6 Closed Outcomes GOAL: 2 TOTAL Active Cases GOAL: 20,220 Outcomes GOAL: 2,025

SERVICE COSTS ESTIMATE FY 2022: \$18,456,148 *Includes Case Service, Guidance and Counseling, Public Community Rehabilitation Programs and Placement Costs.

FY 2023 SERVICE GOALS:

Priority Category I Active Cases GOAL: 18,842 Outcomes GOAL: 2,294 Priority Category 2 Active Cases GOAL: 2,747 Outcomes GOAL: 590 Priority Category 3 Active Cases GOAL: 1,383 Outcomes GOAL: 94 Priority Category 4 Active Cases GOAL: 6 Closed Outcomes GOAL: 4 TOTAL Active Cases GOAL: 22,978 Outcomes GOAL: 2,980

SERVICE COSTS ESTIMATE FY 2023: \$20,973,559 * Includes Case Service, Guidance and Counseling, Public Community Rehabilitation Programs and Placement Costs

D. TIME WITHIN WHICH THESE GOALS MAY BE ACHIEVED FOR INDIVIDUALS IN EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY WITHIN THE ORDER; AND

FY 2022 YEAR END ESTIMATED OUTCOMES TIMEFRAMES 10/1/21 THROUGH 9/30/22 YEAR END ESTIMATED OUTCOMES

Priority Category One - # served 16,478 and 1,634 positive employment outcomes (2 years from

application to closure)

Priority Category Two - # served 2,523 and 316 positive employment outcomes (3.5 - 4 years from application to closure)

Priority Category Three - # served 1,213 and 73 positive employment outcomes (4 - 4.5 years from application to closure).

Priority Category Four - #6 served and 2 positive employment outcomes (2 years and less from application to closure).

FY 2023 YEAR END ESTIMATED OUTCOMES TIMEFRAMES

10/1/22 through 9/30/23

Priority Category One - # served 18,842 and 2,294 positive employment outcomes (2 years from application to closure)

Priority Category Two - # served 2,747 and 590 positive employment outcomes (3.5 - 4 years from application to closure)

Priority Category Three - # served 1,383 and 94 positive employment outcomes (4.5 - 5 years from application to closure).

Priority Category Four = # served 6 and 2 positive employment outcomes (2 - 2.5 from application to closure)

E. HOW INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES ARE SELECTED FOR SERVICES BEFORE ALL OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

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.

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 and/or staff resources 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 with 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 integrated employment, 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 with most significant disabilities through supported employment.

Based on the information gathered and analyzed from the comprehensive statewide needs assessment conducted in FFY 2021, the Agency's performance, the monitoring report, real time data from the case management system, the Strategic planning process, process and other sources of information the following goals for the distribution of Title V, 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 Community Rehabilitation Branch Staff, consisting of one Branch Manager and four Supported Employment Consultants. The CRP branch collaborates with the Program Policy and Support Grant Specialist staff and Cabinet legal staff. OVR, through the Community Rehabilitation Branch, will assure choice and quality services for its consumers served in supported employment by: 1) thoroughly reviewing all vendor applications for Supported Employment, 2) monitoring extended supports provided by each agency, 3) verifying the provider's ability to fund ongoing supports using funds other than VR, 4) conducting annual reviews of each vendor and 5) 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:

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

2. Utilizing local teams (where appropriate) to evaluate services and plan for technical assistance.
3. Presenting Basics of Supported Employment regularly for agency staff orientation training (Skills Enhancement Training); and h. developing and keeping updated policy and procedural and CRP manuals on supported employment for staff via OVR docushare drive , 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

Objective 1.1: Recruit more providers for supported employment for unserved and underserved areas.

Strategies:

1. Create a strategic planning team to analyze and develop a viable and comprehensive payment system to community rehabilitation providers. (2022)
2. Create Establishment Projects for to replicate the UPS Transitional Learning Center model and expansion of the IPS and Customized employment models to increase a network of services providers. (2022-2023)
3. Increase Capacity in customized employment through participation in the Leadership Series through the University of Kentucky's Human Development Institute. (2023)
4. Hold outreach opportunities for potential providers. (2023)
5. Provide training on new polices related to customized employment, ISP and person-centered planning (2022-2023).

Measures:

Increase the number of providers by 5%. Implementation of new service fees Implementation of Establishment projects # Of Trainings Provided

Increase in the number of competitive integrated outcomes for individuals Goal 2: Monitor Service Quality of Providers

Objective 2.1: Develop strategies for continuous quality improvement in collaboration with the Program Policy and Support Branch.

Strategies:

1. Ensure agency compliance to WIOA requirements of Section 511 (annually)
2. Ensure CRP compliance with the terms of their signed service agreements through annual

audits and monitoring (annually).

Measures:

Annual Audits of Services Corrective Action Plans Scorecard

Goal 3: Seek alternative strategies for providing and funding extended Services.

Objective 3.1: Provide another source of extended services is available so there will be no interruption of services for individuals with significant disabilities.

Strategies:

1. Seek input from staff and other stakeholders such as education, service providers and individuals with disabilities on extended services. (2022)
2. Identify potential strategies for the provision of services. (2023)
3. Identify potential funding sources. (2023)
4. Update the Supported Employment Service Fee Memorandum to include extended services to youth. (2022).

Measure:

Additional funding secured.

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 unserved and underserved groups, as well as youth with most significant disabilities without delay.

1. 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.
2. 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
3. Utilization of interagency workgroups to develop better understanding and expand awareness of work incentives (such as in SCL Waiver, Social Security, etc.).
4. 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 unserved and underserved counties as well as unserved 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 services. OVR will continue to maximize existing dollars for extended 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. Additionally, customized employment processes under the Marc Gold & Associates model have been incorporated into the current Service Fee structure. These processes consist of Planning Meeting, Visual Resume, Needs Analysis and Job Analysis.

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

In order to provide some context to our analysis of the needs of individuals with disabilities, 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.

The goals and strategies listed in this plan were developed for the established goals and priorities with the input of the State Vocational Rehabilitation Council. The focus areas and goals are as follows:

Sound Fiscal Management

Goal 1: Implement sound fiscal management that aligns with federal and state regulations for accurate and consistent reporting and operations.

Quality Assurance

Goal 2: Compliance with federal and state regulations in all areas to ensure continuous improvement and quality outcomes for consumers.

Staff Resources

Goal 3: Maximize technology and business processes to effectively support accessibility and the evolving needs of all stakeholders.

Center Operations

Goal 4: Improve facilities and expand programs to increase competitive, integrated employment outcomes.

Consumer Services

Goal 5: Implement innovative practices to improve quality outcomes.

Public Awareness

Goal 6: Implement an ongoing, flexible marketing plan and process to improve public awareness of VR programs, services, and agency employment.

Supported Employment

Goal 1: Increase the number of CRP's providing Supported Employment Services Goal 2: Monitor Service Quality of Providers

Goal 3: Seek alternative strategies for providing and funding Extended Services

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.

Retain Kentucky is a U.S. Department of Labor grant focused on assisting individuals who have a non-work-related injury or illness continue to work. The Department of Workforce, Vocational Rehabilitation and other workforce partners administer the grant. Through immediate customized intervention and supports, RETAIN KY helps employers keep valuable staff, and helps employees keep their worker identify. OVR staff refer individuals to RETAIN and RETAIN staff refer individuals to OVR. All enrolled participants in RETAIN have support of a Return-to- Work Coordinator. This is a strategy OVR will use for individuals in work re-entry.

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 eleven Assistive Technology Specialists, one Vehicle Modification Specialist, one Accessibility Coordinator, two assistants, one branch manager who provide a full spectrum of Assistive Technology (AT) services throughout the Commonwealth. Six of the ten staff serve consumers who are blind and visually impaired. The agency is in the process of hiring one additional Assistive Technology Specialist. The AT Branch provides a comprehensive array of services including, but not limited to, the following: assessment, referral, and consultations on vehicle modifications, home modifications, workplace accommodations consultation, etc. The Accessibility Coordinator assists the agency with providing accessible documentation for employees, consumers, and the public. The availability of full- time staff allows 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, Window Eyes) 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.

In 2021, OVR created a diversity committee to address diversity and inclusion inequities within OVR. The OVR Diversity Committee team is made up of OVR staff, Office of Employer Apprenticeship Services (OEAS) and representation from the state Office of Diversity, Equity and Training and the State Employee Assistance. An agency-wide survey was distributed in September of 2021. OVR's main purpose is to lead the way in moving from a culture of talk to one of action. Representatives of ODET from the Personnel Board provide feedback and share their expertise to keep the committee focused and aware of state level initiatives. OEAS is taking the knowledge they are learning from OVR to bring back to their agency to replicate best practices. The committee created a strategic plan with the following goals to address this area:

Staff Diversity

Goal: Recruit, hire and retain a diverse and inclusive staff to provide high quality services to Kentuckians with Disabilities.

Objective 1: Increase recruitment and hiring to fill vacant positions with staff who are representative of the population we serve.

Objective 2: Increase staff retention to ensure continuity of high quality of services to Kentuckians with disabilities and to increase diversity at all agency levels.

Consumer Diversity

Goal: Ensure equitable service provision to all Kentuckians with disabilities through outreach, training, and data analysis.

Objective 1: Develop a system to periodically review data regarding consumer diversity as well as policies, and practices that impact service provision.

Objective 2: Raise awareness of OVR services in underserved communities through targeted outreach.

Objective 3: Create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for all VR stakeholders.

The OVR Executive Director is a member of the CSAVR Diversity, Equity and Inclusion professional Network. This allows for OVR to participate in a national workgroup addressing racial disparities specific to the field of vocational rehabilitation.

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.

Individuals who are minorities have equal access to vocational rehabilitation services. OVR is committed in its effort to build the capacity to effectively service individuals with most significant disabilities who are minorities. OVR will provide vocational rehabilitation services to all individuals who have visual disabilities who are eligible for services regardless of gender, race, national origin, religion, color, sexual orientation, disability or age. The Agency assures the provision of services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the state to the same extent as it provides services to other significant populations or individuals residing in the state. The following outlines the actions in OVR's outreach plan for 2021 - 2022:

Management and staff shall focus on the agency mission, which is 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 provide leadership in implementation of the Career Center Systems throughout the Commonwealth. Staff shall ensure that persons with the most significant disabilities who are minorities will receive the same employment related services than non-minorities and individuals with disabilities receive.

Recruit and hire Rehabilitation Counselors from minority and culturally diverse groups. Improve system linkages with the Department of Workforce in order to reach more minorities across the state. Collaboration with other entities will allow for effective coordination of services and referrals.

Integrate internal controls through quality assurance to identify areas where there is successful outreach and best practices and identify areas needing additional outreach.

Develop outreach activities to minorities to facilitate increased consumer referrals to OVR. OVR supports staff in making linkages with community leaders and minority organizations to facilitate outreach.

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

Provide cultural diversity training to staff in order to develop a better understanding of different cultures and value systems.

Utilize service demographic and population data to determine the number of minorities in regions and develop strategies to increase percentages.

Encourage minorities to play an active role in the State Rehabilitation Council, participating forums and the provision of input into policies and procedures.

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)

In Kentucky there are 171 school districts consisting of 1,477 schools. There are a total number of approximately 26,000 students with IEPs that are potentially eligible in the state according to the Kentucky Department of Education. Currently, the Department of Education has no way to count the number of students with 504 plans or those who would qualify as a student with a disability that do not have an IEP or 504 plan. The number of students in private or home schools that would qualify as students with disabilities is also not readily available.

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, 107 Monitoring, the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA and the Strategic Planning Process.

As stated earlier in this section, 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.

OVR uses the strategic planning process as one of its methods to ensure the effective implementation of 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.

OVR continues to receive technical support from the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative (NTACT:C). A KY NTACT team has been formed to develop an Intensive Technical Assistance Plan to achieve goals related to data-sharing and quality transition services. This is collaborative effort between KY OVR and KY Department of Education and with other community partners providing services to transition age youth.

OVR created the Transition Services Branch in October 2020 to engage with and provide Pre-Employment Transition Services and Transition services to students with disabilities. The branch consists of one (1) Branch Manager, three (3) Program Administrators, one (1) Administrative Specialist, and six (6) Pre-ETS Coordinators. The Branch Manager oversees all branch activities and represents the agency on inter-agency teams. The Program Administrators coordinate and monitor Pre-ETS and Transition services throughout the state, including specific contracts with service providers. The Administrative Specialist provides clerical support to the branch. The Pre-ETS Coordinators work with Potentially Eligible students in their specific regions. They collaborate directly with schools and providers to receive referrals, coordinate Pre-Employment Transition Services, and monitor the progress of Potentially Eligible students to help determine if/when it is appropriate for a student to apply for OVR services. The Pre-ETS Coordinators transfer the

Potentially Eligible students' cases to VR Counselors who determine eligibility for services and develop Individualized Plans for Employment. Pre-ETS Coordinators do not determine eligibility or develop IPEs. They only work with Potentially Eligible students.

This Branch will be responsible for:

Formulates, develops and interprets policies, standards and procedures.

Maintains a comprehensive knowledge of and assures that OVR adheres to all Federal and State Regulations, administrative rules and policies for transition and

pre- employment transition services.

Assists in the evaluation of the effectiveness of agency transition policies and procedures. Coordinates the activities of transition/Section 511.

Coordinates the activities of Pre – Employment Transition Services.

Facilitates the development and maintenance of agency fee schedules and cooperative agreements.

Collaborates regularly with partners by participating in workforce partner meetings, community rehabilitation, OVR team meetings, vendors/contractors and Department of Education staff.

Facilitates effective communication with the Executive Leadership, Field Services Management and field staff to assure the attainment of agency goals.

Represents the agency by participation and representation on Transition Related events and Councils.

The Transition Services Branch has the following goals for the next three years:

1. Develop and implement strategies to increase the number of students applying for VR service through engagement.
2. Implement a system for approving new Pre-ETS provider to ensure high quality services are provided statewide.
3. Launch Pre-VR data system to facilitate referral and monitoring process.
4. Develop a process to implement a data sharing agreement with partner agencies.
5. Identify underserved populations by partnering with community agencies and KDE.
6. Evaluate service efficacy through SWOT analyses.
7. Seek feedback from providers and OVR staff to facilitate continuous improvement.
8. Build provider capacity.

OVR receives technical assistance from the NTACT: C to ensure that OVR is meeting RSA requirements. Transition Services Branch staff participate in webinars and communities of practice

to learn about different ways to deliver services and complying with the latest guidance from NTACT: C.

The Transition Services Branch continues to refine ways to do outreach to identify more students, to ensure that providers are following established guidelines, and to ensure students receive high quality transition services. Technical assistance will be sought out from NTACT: as needed.

To assure the coordination of services to facilitate the transition students from school to postsecondary life (including the receipt of VR services, post-secondary education, competitive integrated employment, and Pre-Employment Transition Services) OVR utilizes the following process. The Pre-ETS Coordinator and VR Counselor is responsible for the schools located in their assigned region. Pre-ETS Coordinators and VR Counselor work with school staff and service providers 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 Pre-ETS Coordinator and VR Counselor work with school staff to ensure that student receives the needed services to aid in the transition to post-secondary life. The Pre-ETS Coordinators will work with Potentially Eligible students who only require Pre-ETS. These Coordinators will monitor students' progress and will transfer the students to a VR Counselor for application when they require other VR services. The VR Counselor will then take applications, determine eligibility and determine appropriate services to help students achieve Competitive, Integrated Employment.

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.

As stated in other sections of the plan, OVR has representation and involvement in several organizations and councils as follows:

OVR was appointed to serve as a voting member of the State Interagency Council (SIAC) for Services and Supports to Children and Transition-Age Youth.

Regional OVR representation has been established for the Regional Interagency Councils (RIAC) for the system of care to have consistent OVR representation.

OVR and Kentucky Department of Education continues to meet quarterly with

interested interagency partners and serve as the catalyst for development and implementation of an infrastructure which supports youth with disabilities to transition from high school to post-secondary school and employment.

OVR has a draft agreement with the KDE for transition planning and service delivery for secondary students with disabilities.

5. IF APPLICABLE, PLANS FOR ESTABLISHING, DEVELOPING, OR IMPROVING COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE

OVR continues to encourage CRP involvement as it relates to student and youth services through the implementation of Pre-Employment Transition Services, with a primary focus of Work Based Learning Experience services. In 2020, OVR had agreements with 32 CRPs for the implementation and provision of Pre-employment transition services.

OVR has a goal to create establishment projects for expansion of the IPS and Customized employment models to increase a network of services providers in the next two years. (2022-2023).

OVR has set the following goal area:

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

Objective 1.1: Recruit more providers for supported employment for unserved and underserved areas.

Strategies:

1. Create a strategic planning team to analyze and develop a viable and comprehensive payment system to community rehabilitation providers. (2022)
2. Create Establishment Projects that replicate the UPS Transitional Learning Center model and for expansion of the IPS and Customized employment models to increase a network of services providers. (2022-2023)
3. Increase Capacity in customized employment through participation in the Leadership Series through the University of Kentucky's Human Development Institute. (2023)
4. Hold outreach opportunities for potential providers. (2023)
5. Provide training on new polices related to customized employment, ISP and person-centered planning (2022-2023).

In 2019, the OVR implemented agreements with four CRPs 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 that indicated a need for customized employment services for individuals requiring supporting employment. There were only four CRPs 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, OVR increased CRP participation and the number of employment services provided CSE by 200%. Ongoing efforts continue in effort to assist in building capacity for this much needed service centered around customized employment.

A needs assessment survey was sent to OVR field staff in fall of 2021 in effort to identify current need for customized SE services throughout the state. As expected, the results illustrate an extensive need for CSE throughout the state. Eighty-five percent (85%) of the counselors polled, stated that they have a need for CSE in their area. Forty-six percent (46%) have identified at least 4

or more individuals on their caseload that could benefit from this service. Sixty-two percent (62%) state that CSE is not readily available to their consumers. Overall, this clearly illustrates that there are many job seekers throughout the state that need CSE services but do not have unrestricted access to it. In some areas, CSE may be available, but job seekers may spend long periods of time on a waiting list. In fall of 2021 there were only 11 CRPs statewide who participated in and completed some Marc Gold & Associates training gateways which allows a CRP to provide CSE in KY. CRPs across the state have provided feedback that training, and start-up costs are barriers to participation in this type of service.

All CRPs who specialize in customized employment must complete the Marc Gold & Associates training as provided by the University of Kentucky's Human Development Institute. This training is made available through a long-standing contract between OVR and UK-

HDI. Participants must complete 4 gateways: Social Role Valorization, Discovery, Job Development, and Systematic Instruction. All, but Social Role Valorization, offer certification opportunities.

OVR has a goal to create establishment projects for expansion of the IPS and Customized employment models to increase a network of services providers in the next two years. (2022-2023).

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 77 counties having access to this service. This is an increase of 3 counties over the prior year. The CRP Branch of the KY OVR continues to meet regularly with partners to ensure quality IPS services are readily available.

The OVR is an active partner of the statewide IPS Implementation Team that provides oversight of the development and implementation of IPS programs throughout the state. KY has been an active member of the International IPS Learning Community since 2010 and provides information to the community regarding effective strategies being utilized in KY that aides in the expansion and effectiveness of IPS. KY seeks to initiate innovative ideas, such as utilizing IPS for individuals with intellectual disabilities. This is not a common practice but has been utilized by other states. KY seeks to utilize this evidenced based model for individuals with intellectual disabilities and provide comparative data specific to other models to members of the learning collaborative. The DBH has been the primary partner in the development and implementation of IPS programs throughout the state. Additional funds to CRPs from this partner are limited, which has stifled the growth of IPS SE in KY. Therefore, the OVR seeks parallel DBHs long standing commitment by implementing Establishment Projects to further IPS expansion efforts.

A thorough review of existing and prospective agencies was conducted by OVR. OVR conducted several meetings with Department of Behavioral Health staff throughout the state to obtain information of existing agencies that have longitudinally strong relationships with DBH, and that also exemplifies high quality service delivery. The purpose of such a selection process is to increase the likelihood of success among programs. This process aided in the identification of potentially new and existing providers that could be used in expanding IPS to those in unserved or underserved areas, as well as provide an evidenced based model of IPS SE to individuals with intellectual disabilities. Voices of Hope was an agency that was mentioned by multiple experts, on separate occasions, for the expansion of IPS to single mothers with serious mental illness and/or substance use concerns. Life Skills was identified as a high-quality provider that could be used to

expand IPS in to unserved or underserved areas. Communicare, Inc. and Build Inclusion are providers that were identified as high-quality providers that serve individuals with intellectual disabilities. The agencies successes in serving the ID population are the basis for their selection. The OVR followed up with the KY IPS Implementation Team for discussion and approval. Finals steps included presenting information the OVR Executive Leadership Team for discussion and approval.

It is intended to discontinue contractual agreements specific to IPS expansion after year 4, with the expectation that each CRP will be sustainable. Year one of the agreement would be July 2022 to June 2023, with plans to continue yearly until completion of the project which would be June 2026.

The primary purpose of this project is to expand the evidence-based model of IPS SE throughout this 4-year period to the greatest extent possible to individuals who do not have access to this type of service. Currently, IPS is in 70 of the 120 counties in KY and it's the goal of VR and the IPS Implementation Team to strive to make IPS SE available in all 120 counties as well as other disability groups. Information gathered will be compiled and shared nationally with members of the IPS International Learning Community. Specifically, the goal of implementing IPS SE to individuals with intellectual disabilities is of great importance.

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. OVR also made changes to the SFM to incorporate specific processes related to customized employment.

Another potential area for expansion would be the establishment of pilot projects in other areas of the staff that replicate the transitional learning center at UPS Worldport to expand competitive integrated employment opportunities for individuals. UPS Worldport is the worldwide air hub for the United Parcel Service.

State Owned Rehabilitation Centers

The Charles W. McDowell and Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Centers are the State-owned and operated comprehensive rehabilitation centers in Kentucky, a community rehabilitation program providing necessary vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities. In order to keep the center operational and ensure continuity of service provision, at times it is necessary for the State to repair or replace systems and equipment within the center, including, but not limited to electrical, plumbing and hot water, fire prevention, ventilation, sewage, etc., that go beyond ordinary repairs and maintenance. The State will submit requests for prior approval to RSA for related costs that exceed the capital expenditure threshold used by the State." Master Agreements are in place for scheduled routine maintenance and inspection of the facility.

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Center, located in the rural Eastern Appalachian region, and the Charles W. McDowell Center for the Blind, in Louisville are the State-owned and operated comprehensive rehabilitation centers in Kentucky providing necessary vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities. The centers provide supports, training, and resources to the most unserved and underserved populations in Kentucky to maximize their opportunities to obtain competitive integrated employment. The centers serve individuals, largely from rural areas of the state, with significant, complex or multiple disabilities such as sensory impairments, criminal justice backgrounds and mental illness.

OVR has put in place the following Goal areas for Center Operations to address the needs identified in the CSNA.

Goal 4: Improve facilities and expand programs to increase competitive, integrated employment outcomes.

Objective: 4:1 Upgrade building facilities to provide a safe and accessible environment

Objective 4.2: Increase capacity to offer statewide services that increase competitive, integrated employment outcomes.

Objective 4.3: Maximize job readiness training and work experience opportunities.

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. WIOA Section 116 (b) (2) (A) and its implementing regulations 34 CFR 361.155 (a) (1) establish the six primary indicators of performance. They are as follows:

1. Employment Rate in the 2nd Quarter After Exit
2. Employment Rate in the 4th Quarter After Exit
3. Median Earnings in the 2nd Quarter After Exit
4. Credential Attainment rate
5. Measurable Skill gains (MSG)
6. Rate Effectiveness in Serving Employers (Statewide)

Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS) and state agencies work with the Kentucky Workforce Investment board to ensure required reports for the performance accountability are completed to the best of the state's ability. KYSTATS collects and integrates education and workforce data so that policymakers, practitioners and the public can make the best-informed decisions possible.

Kentucky assesses the overall effectiveness of the workforce investment system in relation to the strategic vision and goals of the KWIB 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 (42U.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.

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. KYSTATS has a variety of tools on their website to access. OVR staff had a training on the various tools surrounding Labor Market information, Career explorer and the Family Resource Simulator.

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 the workforce 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 workflow 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.

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.

As already stated, Kentucky is committed to acquiring systems 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. 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.

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 for the Rehabilitation Services Administration and common measures reporting.

OVR is seeking Technical Assistance from the VRTAC-QE for employment and the VRTAC-QM for quality management. OVR has established the following goals that includes strategies that address OVR's performance on the WIOA accountability measures.

The RSA team has reviewed with Kentucky the quarterly data dashboards as well the comparative Performance for PY 2020. For the Median Earnings PY 20 OVR is in the 1st Quartile at \$5,540. OVR is in the 4th Quartile for the 2nd Quarter Employment rate at 25.8% the 4th quarter Employment Rate at 23.0% and Credential Attainment Rate at 13.2%. For Measurable Skill Gains for PY20, OVR is in the 3rd Quartile at 35.6%.

Quality Assurance

Goal 2: Compliance with federal and state regulations in all areas to ensure continuous improvement and quality outcomes for consumers.

Center Operations

Goal 4: Improve facilities and expand programs to increase competitive, integrated employment outcomes.

Consumer Services

Goal 5: Implement innovative practices to improve quality outcomes.

7. STRATEGIES FOR ASSISTING OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM IN ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

The Kentucky Workforce Investment Board 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 to adopt a plan to move Kentucky forward through workforce and training and development.

The OVR Executive Director is appointed to serve on the KWIB representing vocational rehabilitation. By serving on the board the Executive Director can work collaboratively with other workforce partners in ensuring Kentucky's Workforce system is inclusive and accessible to individuals with disabilities in the Commonwealth.

The Executive Director and management staff participated in stakeholder State Plan meetings across the state to develop strategies for the combined section of the 2022 Kentucky State Plan.

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.

Based on the information gathered and analyzed from the comprehensive statewide needs assessment conducted in FFY 2021, the Agency's performance, the monitoring offsite visit and draft report, stakeholder meetings with workforce partners, RSA data dashboards and comparative studies, real time data from the case management system, the Strategic Planning process and other sources of information. OVR set specific strategies for the priority areas of 1) Financial Management, 2) Quality Assurance, 3) Consumer, 4) Center Operations, 5) Staff Resources, 6) Public Awareness and for the area of Supported Employment.

OVR will follow the process as outlined in this section in monitoring the progress of carrying out the strategies set for the state goals and priorities in this state plan. 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.

The strategies are outlined below:

Conduct a risk analysis and identify needed procedures for internal controls. (2022)

OVR staff work closely with Cabinet-level fiscal staff (budget, procurement, and accounting) in the development and implementation of written procedures that adhere to state and federal requirements. (2022)

Develop needed policies and procedures. (2022)

Initial training of staff on established policies and procedures (2022-2023)

Dedicated staff are assigned to quality assurance monitoring over the internal control processes. (2022-2023)

Development of a quality assurance plan. (2022)

Metrics are established for internal control processes (2022) Identify an agency standard of accessibility. (2022)

Develop a structure to maintain, update, and review policy and procedures. (2022) Train staff on process for policy and procedure. (2022-2023)

Implement a consistent development and review process to inform management and performance. (2022-2023)

Obtain input of leadership and management to identify outcome data needs. (2022-2023) Designate staff to develop a strong data process. (2022)

Partner with internal and external stakeholders in education and workforce data sources. (2022-2023).

Acquire updated technology. (2022)

Purchase and implementation of a new case management system (2022- 2024) Provide staff training in the latest technology (2023).

Ensure staff use accessible forms and documents (2022 – 2023)

Designate staff responsible for creating forms that meet accessibility standards. (2022) Policies and procedures are in place for compliance. (2023)

Train staff on accessibility and compliance. (2023)

Develop a formal plan for ongoing regular maintenance (2022).

Follow and adhere to all state and federal processes for prior approval and purchasing. (2022-2023).

Implement approved projects in the established Capital plan in a timely manner. (2022- 2024)

Conduct a cost benefit analysis to inform decisions (2023-2024).

Develop and implement a plan to ensure adequate resources for the learning format expansion. (2022)

Address hardware, software, and connectivity access barriers (2023)

Expand learning formats to include a variety of online and hybrid programs (2022- 2023). Centers will increase outreach efforts to all 120 counties in the state. (2023).

Establish relationships to provide work-based experiences at the Perkins Center. (2022-2023).

Expand job readiness training and work experience opportunities at the McDowell Center (2022-2023).

Incorporate vendor recruitment as a part of the marketing plan (2023) Train staff on new vendor processes for vetting and credentialing (2022) Recruit new vendors for increased consumer choice. (2022-2023)

Maintain a strong application/recruitment/retention vendor process (2022- 2023). Develop a list and expand the list of agency-approved vendors. (2022)

Develop a plan for consumers to have access to technology and virtual services. (2022)

Counselors will place an emphasis on informed choice in the guidance and counseling process. (2023)

Training of staff on informed choice (2023)

Employer Services Branch will develop and implement a plan to partner with employers who offer jobs in targeted sectors. (2023)

Increase work-based learning opportunities in targeted sectors. (2023) Train staff using career pathways strategy guides. (2022)

Expand types of employment placements into higher paying, lower turnover jobs. (2023)

Increase use of Labor Market Information in employment goal development through guidance and counseling. (2022)

Increase consumer engagement in the VR process through guidance and counseling. (2023)

Implement policies and procedures that guide the implementation of the career pathway approach through team-based, early intervention strategies. (2023)

Add measures to the counselor performance evaluation to reflect expectations. (2023) Create a marketing plan for consumers and vendors (2022)

Develop marketing materials that reflect current information and are engaging and in accessible formats. (2023-2024)

Marketing materials are made available to staff and consumers. (2023-2024).

Identify a staff liaison to work with Cabinet and Personnel Cabinet on issues related to talent recruitment. (2022)

Expand the quantity and types of internship programs with university programs. (2023) Develop and implement an internship agreement. (2022)

Leverage social media as a tool for recruitment. (2023)

Create a strategic planning team to analyze and develop a viable and comprehensive payment system to community rehabilitation providers. (2022)

Create Establishment Projects for expansion of the IPS and Customized employment models to increase a network of services providers. (2022-2023)

Increase Capacity in customized employment through participation in the Leadership Series through the University of Kentucky's Human Development Institute. (2023)

Hold outreach opportunities for potential providers. (2023)

Provide training on new policies related to customized employment, ISP and person-centered planning (2022-2023).

Ensure agency compliance to WIOA requirements of Section 511 (annually)

Ensure CRP compliance with the terms of their signed service agreements through annual audits and monitoring (annually).

Seek input from staff and other stakeholders such as education, service providers and individuals with disabilities on extended services. (2022)

Identify potential strategies for the provision of services. (2023) Identify potential funding sources. (2023)

Update the Supported Employment Service Fee Memorandum to include extended services to youth. (2022).

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 the comprehensive statewide needs assessment. OVR currently provides funding in the amount of \$65,000 annually in support of the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC). Currently there is proposed legislation that would appoint the Department of Workforce, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation as the administrator of the Employment First Initiative as well as the Advisory Council attached to that project.

Other activities are:

It is anticipated the tasks identified in the current plan would provide expansion and innovation related to Supported Employment and the state owned and operated facilities and public community rehabilitation programs.

The plan will also focus on innovation related to counselor training, staff recruitment, and quality assurance.

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.

In 2021, OVR created a diversity committee to address diversity and inclusion inequities within OVR. The OVR Diversity Committee team is made up of OVR staff, Office of Employer Apprenticeship Services (OEAS) and representation from the state Office of Diversity, Equity and Training and the State Employee Assistance. An agency-wide survey was distributed in September of 2021. OVR's main purpose is to lead the way in moving from a culture of talk to one of action. Representatives of ODET from the Personnel Board provide feedback and share their expertise to keep the committee focused and aware of state level initiatives. OEAS is taking the knowledge they are learning from OVR to bring back to their agency to replicate best practices.

OVR has an accessibility workgroup that focuses on ensuring all materials and electronic communications are accessible to VR participants. Information is provided to individuals participating in services in their preferred language. OVR is committed to assuring that all individuals with disabilities have equal access to participate in services using the provision of reasonable accommodations and assistive technology and other available auxiliary aids and services.

The OVR Executive Director is a member of the CSAVR Diversity, Equity and Inclusion professional Network. This allows for OVR to participate in a national workgroup addressing racial disparities specific to the field of vocational rehabilitation.

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. Executive Leadership members along with Human Resources at a Cabinet Level submitted a plan to State Personnel for salary increases. At the writing of this plan, there is no formal approval of the plan. OVR staff are reviewing 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.

Turnover rates for all organizational units within OVR in 2020 ranged from 15.38% to 44.44% and we expect turnover rates for 2021 to be equal to the 2020 rates or higher. OVR has found it increasingly difficult to retain current employees, the majority of whom are in positions that have specialized education and skill requirements, due to significantly higher recruitment salaries offered by other employers. The higher recruitment salaries offered by other employers have also resulted in OVR being unable to attract new talent. Due to the resulting low staffing level, caseload weights are exceptionally high, which impacts services to consumers.

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. This has however created inequity in salaries across the agency.

The Kentucky Center for Economic Policy recently released a report regarding the state workforce crisis. OVR is struggling to hire and retain employees and the COVID -19 Pandemic has contributed to the severity of the issue.

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 were conducted as well as a variety of zoom trainings on policy. New employees are mandated to attend a face-to-face training for onboarding. As part of the orientation process, the agency utilizes subject matter experts from within the agency to deliver the training. The subject matter experts include the Division of Field Services Director, Division of Field Services Assistant Directors, Division of Field Services Regional Managers, Employer Services Branch Manager, Assessment Technology Branch Manager, Social Security

Administrator and members of the counselor mentoring program. The topics covered are: 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, assistive technology (based on the Assistive Technology Act of 1998), 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 occurred during the calendar year for new hires. In June 2020 the agency was selected to participate in the Center for Innovative Training in Vocational Rehabilitation (CIT-VR) along with nine other state agencies. Through this program the staff have been participants in training developed through CIT-VR and their partnership programs such as VR Development Group and San Diego State University Interworks. In 2022 the Interworks program will have completed an individualized training program for Kentucky OVR. This development has been a work in progress for 5 months. OVR distributes available training resources that are applicable to partners in the workforce system.

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 was set as a result of the Reorganization and the combining of the blind and general agency in 2018. Completion of the manual occurred. All performance plans for Counselors have been updated to reflect goals for common measures. Service Fee Memorandum revisions and updates have occurred to reflect the combined agency but there is still work to be done in this area. An administrative operations manual to assure OVR has sufficient internal controls has not been completed.

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 as well technical assistance from the Quality Technical Assistance Center. The Quality Technical Assistance Center team provided a training for Executive Leadership and managers on documenting reasonable and allowable expenditures. 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.

OVR has all four priority categories open.

The KATLC website offers online financial education and empowerment resources 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.

B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

The following factors impeded the achievement of the Goals and priorities.

OVR had a decrease in the number of individuals applying for services. Over the past three years individuals determined eligible for OVR services often did not remain engaged through the entire VR process.

Issues related to inaccurate data reporting. Timely and accurate entry of the required data fields in the case management system by staff remains an ongoing training issue. OVR is in process of procuring and replacing its current legacy system. The new system although it won't solve the issue completely will assist with more efficient and accurate data reporting.

OVR faced challenges in the recruitment, hiring and retention of qualified professional staff. OVR is

experiencing high turnover rates that effect VR service delivery. There is a lot of stress for hiring managers that are investing a lot of the time covering vacant positions and training new employees. This is an issue that impacts consumers receiving services as well.

The combining of the two agencies into a combined agency in 2018 had an impact on the achievement of the goals and priorities for the current state plan. 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 organization's employees. Over the past two years, OVR made progress in this area; however, the impacts of COVID during the second half of 2020 until the present time have created other barriers that have impeded the accomplishment of goals.

Given there also two reorganizations of the fiscal operations in Kentucky in the past 3 years, turnover increased and 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.

In August of 2020, there was an additional reorganization for the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet that shifted the unemployment insurance and other workforce programs to the Labor Cabinet that had an affect on operations. At this time there is a planned reorganization of the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet and the Labor Cabinet that would combine the two Cabinets into the Labor and Education Cabinet.

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 ensure 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. There are now 93 CRPs throughout Kentucky that provide SE services. The increase in the number of SE providers, although small is still significant given the impact of COVID-19.

The team explored the development and implementation of a CRP Qualitative Assessment scale. The CRP Qualitative Survey was distributed in October of 2020. 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

At the beginning of 2018, Kentucky went through a merger of the two VR agencies. As with any merger or reorganization there is major work associated with the combining of policies, procedural operations. The process was good in many respects because OVR has had to closely examine operations that benefited the organization. However, change on any level brings resistance from staff. During this time staff were required to make adjustments and this was difficult for many of them. The COVID -19 pandemic has impacted the delivery of services for this area. Many individuals chose to shelter at home during the early onset of the pandemic when vaccinations were not available and that has continued to be the mindset of some individuals. From March 17, 2020, until June 11, 2021, OVR staff worked remotely at home as an alternate location. At first, for some staff technology was an issue slowing processes for service delivery. OVR leadership and management worked hard to solve issues surrounding remote service delivery. Individuals with disabilities have historically been underrepresented in the workforce and the pandemic has exacerbated the issues surrounding employment. Community Rehabilitation Providers experienced staff shortages and high turnover during the time people. A lack of referrals for the providers impacted their line item budgets and funding. In Kentucky there were some providers that stopped providing supported employment due to budget issues.

3. THE VR PROGRAM'S PERFORMANCE ON THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA

WIOA Section 116 (b) (2) (A) and its implementing regulations 34 CFR 361.155 (a) (1) establish the

six primary indicators of performance. They are as follows:

Employment Rate in the 2nd Quarter After Exit Employment Rate in the 4th Quarter After Exit
Median Earnings in the 2nd Quarter After Exit Credential Attainment rate.

Measurable Skill gains (MSG) Rate Effectiveness in Serving Employers (Statewide)

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.

OVR is seeking Technical Assistance from the VRTAC-QE for employment and the VRTAC-QM for quality management. OVR has established the following goals that includes strategies that address OVR's performance on the WIOA accountability measures.

The RSA team has reviewed with Kentucky the quarterly data dashboards as well the comparative Performance for PY 2020. For the Median Earnings PY 20 OVR is in the 1st Quartile at \$5,540. OVR is in the 4th Quartile for the 2nd Quarter Employment rate at 25.8% the 4th quarter Employment Rate at 23.0% and Credential Attainment Rate at 13.2%. For Measurable Skill Gains for PY20, OVR is in the 3rd Quartile at 35.6%.

The current Kentucky OVR VR Case Management System (CMS); a web-based system used to collect required data, enforce workflow 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.

The current CMS system has reached its useful life expectancy. OVR is in process of procurement of a new system. 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.

4. HOW THE FUNDS RESERVED FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION (I&E) ACTIVITIES WERE UTILIZED

OVR will use innovation and expansion funds 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).

The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) will provide the amount of \$65,000 each year for a grant total of \$130,000 for innovation and expansion activities from Basic Support Grant Funds for 2021 and 2022. The SILC will provide OVR a resource plan that outlines the funding allowable under 34 CFR 361.35 Innovation and Expansion Activities Resource Plans for Statewide Independent Living Councils. The funds will be utilized for the support of the salary of the SILC

Coordinator and expenses of the Council. The Division Director of Blind services represents the agency on the Council. The SILC is housed under the Department of Aging and Independent Living (DAIL) in Kentucky.

Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation Annual Report

The recommended theme for the 2021 Annual Report was Diligently Flexible signifying the amount of change and flexibility the COVID 19- Pandemic had imposed upon agency services, staff, partners and consumers. The council was supportive of the agency and the challenges we were facing during the pandemic. The annual report contained a summary of agency statistics, consumer stories and an overview of the agency programs and successes throughout the year.

OVR Satisfaction Survey

Since 1996, the Human Development Institute (HDI) at the University of Kentucky has coordinated the annual Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Consumer Satisfaction Survey at the request of the Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation. As part of the federal requirements, OVR collaborated with the University of Kentucky Human Development Institute (HDI) to conduct the most recent survey of closed cases between October 2019 and September 2020. Participants were randomly selected. The Evaluation Unit at HDI emailed and/or telephoned consumers to request participation in the survey between January 17 – May 8, 2021. HDI compiled the results, and the final report was reviewed by the SCVR Consumer Services and Program Evaluation Committee prior to HDI presenting to the entire council during the July 2021 quarterly meeting. A total of 539 individuals participated in the survey with responses received from each of the 17 regional districts. The overall statewide consumer satisfaction was 87.5% while the highest satisfaction was reported from the West Blind District (100% satisfaction). For access to the full report visit <https://bit.ly/3B62kLr>.

Highlights from the report include the following:

Regardless of closure status, 87.3% of respondents indicated that services were good or very good.

Overall rating was the highest for those who closed with a Positive Employment Outcome, 95.3% indicated good or very good.

Almost three-fourths of respondents whose cases were closed successfully felt that OVR helped prepare them for their current job.

92% of consumers said they would return to OVR in the future.

91.2% of consumers who were employed indicated they are satisfied with the kind of work they do.

83.1% reported being satisfied with the salary they receive.

87.3% reported overall satisfaction with the quality of services as good to very good.

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 93 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 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 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 Supports for Community Living Waiver 2 (SCL2) effective in 2014 calendar year 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 services for these two groups. Individuals with other disabilities are served if funding for extended services 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.

Currently there are 18 providers in KY that provide IPS supported employment services, which serves 70 of the 120 counties in Kentucky. OVR has implemented an agreement with the University of Kentucky for the purpose of increasing technical and fidelity monitoring to support new IPS providers. OVR is planning establishment projects for prospective expansion initiatives with community rehabilitation providers.

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 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 to individuals with the most significant disabilities who have a documented need for supported employment services, including extended 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 services 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 all priority categories of services. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation will be able to provide supported employment services through approved vendors and/or individual providers.

These services include:

1. Development of a Person-Centered Employment Plan (PCEP). Vocational Profile, or Career Profile with recommendations for job- development.
2. Individually designed job development services, including assistance with customization, job carving, reasonable accommodation, technology and/or other support strategies.
3. Intensive on-the-job skills training and other support services provided by supported employment specialists and/or co-workers and employers.
4. Time-unlimited follow-up services (including regular contact with employer, trainee, parent, guardian, or others deemed appropriate).

5. Other services needed to support the individual, such as travel, training, employment advocacy, non-employment advocacy, and counseling.
6. Development of a Long-Term Support Plan, which includes an outline of the extended services 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 services for individuals not considered as youth 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 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-two percent (52%) stated that there are Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) providers in their area that provide CSE. However, 62% also stated that it's not readily available due to limited staff or oversized caseloads. Around 93% 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, 85% stated that there was a need. Over 46% stated that they have at least 4 or more consumers on their caseloads that could benefit from CSE. Over 17% 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, as indicated from the data retrieved from a recent survey. OVR is also exploring the implementation of a customized employment fidelity scale.

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 90-days post-placement in the job. The transition to extended services funding is completed (generally) after 90 days on the job. Monitoring of services continues for a minimum of 90 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.

2. THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES

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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 youth are available so there will be no interruption of services for individuals with significant disabilities.