

WIOA STATE PLAN FOR
THE STATE OF MAINE

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OVERVIEW

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Governor of each State must submit a Unified or Combined State Plan to the U.S. Secretary of Labor that outlines a four-year workforce development strategy for the State's workforce development system. The publicly-funded workforce system is a national network of Federal, State, regional, and local agencies and organizations that provide a range of employment, education, training, and related services and supports to help all jobseekers secure good jobs while providing businesses with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. States must have approved Unified or Combined State Plans in place to receive funding for core programs. WIOA reforms planning requirements, previously governed by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), to foster better alignment of Federal investments in job training, to integrate service delivery across programs and improve efficiency in service delivery, and to ensure that the workforce system is job-driven and matches employers with skilled individuals. One of WIOA's principal areas of reform is to require States to plan across core programs and include this planning process in the Unified or Combined State Plans. This reform promotes a shared understanding of the workforce needs within each State and fosters development of more comprehensive and integrated approaches, such as career pathways and sector strategies, for addressing the needs of businesses and workers. Successful implementation of many of these approaches called for within WIOA requires robust relationships across programs. WIOA requires States and local areas to enhance coordination and partnerships with local entities and supportive service agencies for strengthened service delivery, including through Unified or Combined State Plans.

OPTIONS FOR SUBMITTING A STATE PLAN

A State has two options for submitting a State Plan — a Unified State Plan or a Combined State Plan. At a minimum, a State must submit a Unified State Plan that meets the requirements described in this document and outlines a four-year strategy for the core programs. The six core programs are—

- the Adult Program (Title I of WIOA),
- the Dislocated Worker Program (Title I),
- the Youth Program (Title I),
- the Adult Education and Literacy Program (Title II),
- the Wagner-Peyser Act Program (Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III), and
- the Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV).

Alternatively, a State may submit a Combined State Plan that meets the requirements described in this document and outlines a four-year strategy for WIOA's core programs plus one or more of the Combined Plan partner programs. When a State includes a Combined State Plan partner program in its Combined State Plan, it need not submit a separate plan or application for that particular program. If included, Combined State Plan partner programs are subject to the "common planning elements" (Sections II and III of this document) where specified, as well as the program-specific requirements for that program. The Combined State Plan partner programs are—

- Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)
- Employment and Training Programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4)))
- Work programs authorized under section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(o))
- Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers Programs (Activities authorized under chapter 2 of Title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.))
- Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program (Programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et seq.)
- Unemployment Insurance Programs (Programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws in accordance with applicable Federal law)
- Senior Community Service Employment Program (Programs authorized under Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.))
- Employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Community Services Block Grant Program (Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.))*
- Reintegration of Ex-Offenders Program (Programs authorized under section 212 of the Second Chance Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. 17532))

* States that elect to include employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.) under a Combined State Plan would submit all other required elements of a complete CSBG State Plan directly to the Federal agency that administers the program. Similarly, States that elect to include employment and training activities carried by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) and 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 that are included would submit all other required elements of a complete State Plan for those programs directly to the Federal agency that administers the program.

HOW STATE PLAN REQUIREMENTS ARE ORGANIZED

The major content areas of the Unified or Combined State Plan include strategic and operational planning elements. WIOA separates the strategic and operational elements to facilitate cross-program strategic planning.

- The **Strategic Planning Elements** section includes analyses of the State's economic conditions, workforce characteristics, and workforce development activities. These analyses drive the required vision and goals for the State's workforce development system and alignment strategies for workforce development programs to support economic growth.
- The **Operational Planning Elements** section identifies the State's efforts to support the State's strategic vision and goals as identified in the Strategic Planning Elements section. This section ensures that the State has the necessary infrastructure, policies, and activities to meet its strategic goals, implement its alignment strategy, and support ongoing program development and coordination. Operational planning elements include:
 - State Strategy Implementation,
 - State Operating Systems and Policies,
 - Assurances, and
 - Program-Specific Requirements for the Core Programs, and
 - Program-Specific Requirements for the Combined State Plan partner programs.

When responding to Unified or Combined State Plan requirements, States must identify specific strategies for coordinating programs and services for target populations.* While discussion of and strategies for every target population is not expected, States must address as many as are applicable to their State's population and look beyond strategies for the general population.

* Target populations include individuals with barriers to employment, as defined in WIOA Sec. 3, as well as veterans, unemployed workers, and youth.

A copy of the State of Maine 2016–2020 Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act Unified Plan can be reviewed at

http://www.maine.gov/swb/wioa_unified_plan.shtml

OVERVIEW In December 2014, the State Workforce Development Board, under the direction of Governor Paul R. LePage, convened the core programs authorized under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)— Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth; Wagner–Peyser; Adult and Basic Education; and Vocational Rehabilitation programs—to assess the challenges confronting Maine's workforce development system (WDS) and identify measurable ways to align programs and activities to better serve residents and employers. Months later, the State Board convened a broader group of stakeholders for a three day workshop to create a vision for the WDS. In the months that followed, the core partners and other stake-holders forged a plan that will foster greater economic prosperity for job seekers, employers and residents. The plan begins and ends with the following premise: the success of Maine's economy will ultimately be determined by the strength and quality of its workforce and the ability of employers to fill their need for skilled labor. Human capital drives

productivity, innovation and economic competitiveness. Skilled and productive workers are more likely to find and remain in jobs, earn higher wages and incomes, and require reduced levels of public assistance. A high quality workforce will enable Maine to better retain existing businesses, draw new ones that bring good jobs, and attract new families and residents. Given the far-reaching benefits, the continuing development of Maine's workforce to meet the needs of employers is this plan's top priority, and this reflects Governor Paul R. LePage's mission to ensure that all Mainers have the skills necessary for quality jobs and to make Maine more business friendly. To compete regionally—and globally—Maine will develop a world-class talent pool and lead in technology and innovation. The state's workforce and economy will be fueled by an education and training system that is inclusive and meets the needs of diverse learners. Maine will build its workforce through a multi-faceted approach that includes developing career pathways that lead to in-demand jobs. To mitigate barriers to employment, the workforce development system will coordinate and align activities that build the foundational skills of workers and individuals, improve the transitions between education and employment, foster greater occupational awareness, define certifications and industry recognized credentials, and develop a systematic means for the state to measure, gather and aggregate data on credential attainment. Maine will also enhance and align its workforce development system to be more responsive to the needs of businesses. The plan focuses on the development and implementation of a systematic approach to engaging and responding to the workforce and business service needs of employers. The establishment of broader and deeper sector partnerships will enable the development of a pipeline of workers in high growth, high demand fields, thereby reducing apparent skill-gaps and the time needed to fill positions. Advancing a workforce development system that is more responsive to the needs of businesses will be essential to creating a more business friendly environment and developing a more competitive economy. To accomplish these goals Maine will:

- Increase the relevance of the workforce development system to employers. Developing better alignment between the supply and demand for labor will result in fewer 'difficult to fill' positions, more efficient use of resources and a greater number of Maine residents with quality jobs.
- Produce an educated and skilled workforce through the development of a comprehensive Career Pathways system. Maine's Career Pathways approach will focus on building the educational, employability and occupational skills of the population and articulating pathways that lead to in-demand credentials and jobs.
- Align the state's commitment and investment in its workforce. Developing a workforce that is globally competitive and continuously well prepared to succeed in current and future careers will require the commitment and alignment of resources that extend beyond the public workforce system; employers, policy makers, legislators and administrators must be invested in the process and outcome.
- Increase the operational effectiveness of the workforce development system. Aligning and integrating systems, services and operations to enhance customer services will result in critical efficiencies.
- Grow and diversify the workforce through the development of innovative strategies that result in more Mainers with jobs and a larger workforce. These actions will result in quality jobs for Maine residents; employers matched with skilled workers; and a more efficient workforce development system.

This plan will also be essential in navigating the economic and workforce challenges that threaten the state's economic vitality. A shrinking population and workforce, shortages of workers with the right qualifications and relatively low levels of educational attainment inhibit business expansion, constrain economic growth and result in median wages and incomes that are the lowest in New England. While the economic and educational challenges are significant, they are not insurmountable. Throughout this planning process the core partner agencies, business and industry, postsecondary institutions, one-stop partners, and a myriad of other stakeholders have demonstrated a willingness to engage in the development of solutions and strategies that lay the foundation for continued growth and economic prosperity for all Mainers. These strategies, detailed in the ensuing pages, will result in a workforce, education and training system that is responsive to the needs of both employers and consumers. Most important, all who participated in the creation of this State Unified Plan believe the time to address Maine's challenges is now. In summary, this Unified Plan will result in:

- Increased access to

employment and education services for thousands of Maine residents, including those with barriers to employment. • Better alignment of services and programs within the workforce development system. • Productive, career-ready, skilled workers. Key Action steps include: • Workforce partners will facilitate strategic relationships with employers, educators, one-stop centers and other potential sources of talent in order to connect businesses with skilled workers. • Local boards will engage employers in order to understand current and projected in-demand skills and credentials, human resource and other business needs. • Employers will be engaged with labor market information to identify where they may find the candidates for their specific and difficult to fill occupations. These analyses may provide employers with a better understanding of their potential labor supply and their wages. • Workforce partners will work with one-stop centers, community colleges, the university systems, adult education and other potential sources of talent to cultivate the supply of skilled workers and increase awareness of occupations, career pathways, internship opportunities and credentials that are in-demand. • Internships and apprenticeships will be utilized more aggressively to mitigate skill gaps. • Workforce partners will work with the community college, university system and other training providers to develop programs that align with employers' needs. • Industry-recognized credentials that are in-demand will be identified, quantified and used to guide the development of training programs. • MOUs with required educational partners to prioritize efforts will be developed. • A comprehensive Career Pathways System that aligns the efforts of education and training programs with current and projected in-demand occupations will be developed. • Statewide targets for credential attainment will be developed. • A comprehensive system for measuring and evaluating the pipeline of participants receiving training will be established. • Employment outcomes of program participants will be measured. • The state partnership will expand to include postsecondary education and training and will integrate better with the secondary system. • Core partners will implement a common process for initial triage, intake, assessment, services and individual plan development at one-stop centers. • Core partners will implement technologies to enable better communications between information systems. • A workforce component will be added to the Policy Leaders Academy. • Workforce stakeholders will generate funding for industry partnership initiatives described in MRSA Title 26. • Workforce partners will cultivate data sharing agreements between agencies. • System stakeholders will develop targets for tapping populations with untapped potential. • Program partners will implement principles for universal access (retrofit, redesign materials, etc.) medium-long term. • All stakeholders will identify strategies to draw business and workers to Maine.

I. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE

Unified or Combined State Plan. Select whether the State is submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan. At a minimum, a State must submit a Unified State Plan that covers the six core programs.

Unified State Plan. This plan includes the Adult Program, Dislocated Worker Program, Youth Program, Wagner-Peyser Act Program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program, and Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Yes

Combined State Plan. This plan includes the Adult Worker Program, Dislocated Worker Program, Youth Program, Wagner-Peyser Act Program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program, and Vocational Rehabilitation Program as well as one or more of the optional combined State Plan partner programs identified below. No

COMBINED PLAN PARTNER PROGRAM(S)

Indicate which Combined Plan partner program(s) the state is electing to include in the plan.

Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.) No

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) No

Employment and Training Programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4))) No

Work programs authorized under section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(o)) No

Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers Programs (Activities authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.)) No

Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program (programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et. seq.) No

Unemployment Insurance Programs (Programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws in accordance with applicable Federal law) No

Senior Community Service Employment Program (Programs authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.)) No

Employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development No

Community Services Block Grant Program (Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.)) No

Reintegration of Ex-Offenders Program (Programs authorized under section 212 of the Second Chance Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. 17532)) No

II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a Strategic Planning Elements section that analyzes the State's current economic environment and identifies the State's overall vision for its workforce development system. The required elements in this section allow the State to develop data-driven goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce and to identify successful strategies for aligning workforce development programs. Unless otherwise noted, all Strategic Planning Elements apply to Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan as well as to core programs.

A. ECONOMIC, WORKFORCE, AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the economic conditions, economic development strategies, and labor market in which the State's workforce system and programs will operate.

1. ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

A. ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the economic conditions and trends in the State, including sub-State regions and any specific economic areas identified by the State. This must include-

I. EXISTING DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS

Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which there is existing demand.

II. EMERGING INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATION

Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which demand is emerging.

III. EMPLOYERS' EMPLOYMENT NEEDS

With regard to the industry sectors and occupations identified in 1 and 2 above, provide an assessment of the employment needs of employers, including a description of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required, including credentials and licenses.

CURRENT JOB DEMAND AND OUTLOOK A recent survey of employer job vacancies provides a snapshot of demand for workers among industries. The survey found that 80 percent of job vacancies occurred in five sectors: healthcare and social assistance, retail trade, administrative and waste services, accommodation and food services, and construction. Sectors with above-average demand for workers (measured as vacancies relative to employment in the sector) were administrative and waste services, construction, healthcare and social assistance and transportation, warehousing and utilities. The survey also asked employers to indicate openings that were difficult to fill and the reason. Among sectors with above average demand, the share of difficult-to-fill vacancies ranged from 68 percent at healthcare and social assistance firms to 98 percent at construction firms. There was above-average demand is for workers in personal care and service, healthcare support, construction and extraction, food preparation and serving, building and grounds maintenance, transportation and material moving, and sales related occupational groups. Of these groups, the most difficult to fill were: construction and extraction (99 percent), personal care and service (85 percent), and building and grounds maintenance (82 percent) occupations. Other groups with lower demand but above-average shares of difficult-to-fill openings were: legal (100 percent), installation, maintenance and repair (90 percent), education, training and library (90 percent), business and financial (86 percent) and life, physical and social science occupations (81percent). Findings from the job vacancy survey largely mirror projections of job change among industries and occupations through 2022. Expected job openings and job growth are concentrated in two areas: human capital that requires intensive functions that generally offer above average earnings, and labor intensive functions that generally offer lower than average earnings. At the same time, middle income jobs that traditionally have had limited education or skill demands are either declining or rapidly changing as increasingly higher levels of technology competency are required. Many individuals displaced from production, administrative support, and similar jobs are finding their only options are low skill jobs with lower earnings because they lack the education or experience necessary for entry into higher paying human capital-intensive jobs or the technology competency for the new middle income jobs. Most net job growth through 2022 is expected in healthcare

FIGURE 6: PROJECTED NET JOB GROWTH—TOP INDUSTRIES The fastest job growth is expected in healthcare occupations that require a degree **FIGURE 7: OCCUPATIONS WITH HIGHEST PROJECTED JOB GROWTH** Healthcare is the largest sector in Maine, accounting for 17percent of jobs. Of the net job growth expected through 2022, most is expected in this sector. Large numbers of physicians, nurses, laboratory, and diagnostic technicians will be required. Healthcare practitioner and technician occupations require postsecondary education ranging from certifications to highly advanced degrees. Information technology (IT) is expected to continue to increase in importance across every sector of the economy, with IT related occupations continuing to be among the fastest growing. Many IT jobs not only require certification in certain applications, but the types of applications, systems, and platforms are fast changing requiring a flexible, adaptable workforce that is regularly pursuing continuing education. Additionally, technology competency will increasingly pervade most occupations, often in ways that cannot yet be anticipated. Other areas of projected job growth include hospitality industries, including food service and other associated occupations with mostly limited education and skill demands.

Manufacturing industries expected to lose the most jobs through 2022 **FIGURE 8: OUTLOOK: DECLINING INDUSTRIES** The fastest rates of job loss through 2022 are expected in occupations that do not require education beyond high school **FIGURE 9: OUTLOOK—DECLINING OCCUPATIONS** Manufacturing was the backbone that built many cities in Maine in the 19th and 20th centuries. Textile mills, shoe shops, paper and saw mills, and others provided middle income jobs for tens of thousands, especially those without postsecondary education. But the number of manufacturing jobs peaked in the late 1970s and has been declining ever since. That trend is projected to continue through, resulting in fewer jobs in production occupations. At the same time, the increasing capability and proliferation of office technology is expected to continue to eliminate large numbers of administrative support jobs.

REGIONAL TRENDS Economic performance across the state has been uneven. The recovery has been strongest in the south along the Interstate 95 and 295 corridors; there has been more limited recovery in the mid-coast region; and some counties along the northern rim of the state continue to decline.

Number of Jobs, Indexed to 2007

FIGURE 11: REGIONAL JOB TRENDS Number of Jobs, Indexed to 2007 **FIGURE 12: REGIONAL JOB TRENDS—MIDCOAST COUNTIES** **FIGURE 13: MAINE COUNTY MAP** There are a wide range of factors involved in the differing performance of regions. The economic structure of northern Maine is highly concentrated in forest products and agriculture. Advances in mechanization of harvesting of timber and crops, as well as other factors have displaced thousands of workers from those industries over the years. Much of the region has not found the economic development solutions to replace those industries. This has caused stagnation or decline in many communities as a large share of young people leave for southern Maine or other states in search of better job opportunities, leaving a generally older population behind. Several counties in Maine are among the oldest in the nation by median age. Jobs are increasingly concentrated in and around cities. This is primarily because the nature of stable and growing industries is to be in densely populated areas. Healthcare, the strongest growing industry in Maine, is mostly concentrated in and around hospitals, which are only found in places of population density. Law and accounting firms and other types of professional services, colleges, and other industries that comprise a rising share of jobs also are primarily found in cities.

Employer Needs; Employment has shifted towards industries with a greater share of educated workers. Over the last two decades, industries recording employment gains had a higher share of workers with a bachelor's degree than industries that shed jobs. The education, health, business, and professional services industries have a higher than average share of workers with a bachelor's degree level. Conversely, manufacturing and construction, which have shed thousands of jobs, have a lower than average share of workers with a bachelor's degree.

To a large degree, the changing educational needs of employers reflect the changing nature of work; that is, the shifting occupational structure of the workplace. Changes that have been taking place and are expected to continue include:

- Increase in higher level jobs and a decline in traditional manual occupations;
- Movement from skills associated with manual dexterity towards skills associated with understanding and monitoring complex systems;
- Shift away from routine processes toward coordination and collaboration;
- Increase of general work skills required in many jobs such as the ability to use computers;
- Expanded need for communication skills;
- Jobs include a broader range of responsibilities.

Even among production workers the demand for highly educated workers has grown. Since 1990 the share of production workers with some college or an associate's degree and a bachelors' degree rose by 15 percentage points and two percentage points, respectively, even as the number of workers fell by 52 percent.

Approximately 80 percent of Maine students graduate from high school in four years, placing Maine above the national average for high school completion. However, only 65 percent of them enroll in some form of postsecondary education. University of Maine data suggest that a substantial number of students who do matriculate fail to complete a college degree. Forty-eight percent of those who start a University of Maine System bachelor's degree program earn the credential. Just 26 percent of Maine students who start work on an associate's degree earn it within three years.

Occupational projections to 2022 indicate that 60 percent of net job growth is expected to occur in occupations requiring some form of postsecondary training or credential, including 35 of the 50 fastest growing occupations. Workers entering or returning to the job market with lower levels of education find a much more challenging environment to prosper in than was the case not many years ago.

Plan Revision;

Although the State Plan Deficiencies letter asked for more in this section, after a phone conversation with the Regional Office in Boston on 7/20/16, we were informed that this section does not need revision to the emerging sectors and occupations piece.

B. WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the current workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment, as defined in section 3 of WIOA.* This population must include individuals with disabilities among other groups** in the State and across regions identified by the State. This includes: Individuals with barriers to employment include displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 35-14); individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals. ** Veterans, unemployed workers, and youth, and others that the State may identify.

I. EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Provide an analysis of current employment and unemployment data, including labor force participation rates, and trends in the State.

II. LABOR MARKET TRENDS

Provide an analysis of key labor market trends, including across existing industries and occupations.

III. EDUCATION AND SKILL LEVELS OF THE WORKFORCE

Provide an analysis of the educational and skill levels of the workforce.

IV. SKILL GAPS

Describe apparent 'skill gaps'.

TRENDS IN EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT SLACK IN THE LABOR MARKET The unemployment rate is one of six measures of labor underutilization. It includes jobless people actively seeking and available for work. The broadest measure of underutilization, known as U-6, adds discouraged and other marginally attached workers who want a job but are not looking and those working part-time who prefer full-time work to the job seeking unemployed. Though the most commonly reported unemployment rates have returned to pre-recession levels, U-6 remains more elevated, a full two percentage points higher than in 2007.

The broadest measures of labor underutilization remain more elevated than the unemployment rate

FIGURE 4: LABOR UTILIZATION RATES, HISTORICAL TRENDS Accessibility link to the graph above:

www.maine.gov/labor/cwri/data/cps/Excel/Alternative_Measures_of_Labor_Underutilization.xls

Additionally, the 25 weeks average duration of unemployment in 2014 was significantly above the 2007 average of 15.1 weeks (Figure 5). While the number of long term unemployed (greater than 27 weeks) has fallen, levels still remain historically high. Indeed, several years in to the recovery, the share of long term unemployed still represents a higher share of the total unemployed than during

any previous recession. If not for the elevated share of long term unemployed, the unemployment rate in Maine would be even lower.

The share of long term unemployed remains elevated FIGURE 5: LONG TERM UNEMPLOYED AS A PERCENT OF TOTAL UNEMPLOYED, 2003–2014 In an environment in which the labor force is shrinking, Maine does not have the luxury of tens of thousands of people being less than fully engaged in the workforce. The State Board's committees for Older Workers, Women's Employment Issues, Younger Workers, Veteran's Employment, Apprenticeship and the Commission on Disability and Employment are charged with addressing many of these issues. Later in this plan, strategies to engage populations that tend to have lower labor participation rates including, but not limited to, people with disabilities, veterans, women, older workers, people without a high school diploma, ex-offenders, individuals with language barriers, female heads of households with dependent children and out of school youth are discussed. LABOR MARKET TRENDS Workforce conditions in Maine continue to improve, though there has been virtually no real economic growth for a decade. Underlying these seemingly contradictory statements is a rapidly advancing age structure of the population that is constraining growth and tightening the labor market at the same time. Through 2014, real gross domestic product (GDP) has been little changed since 2004, after relatively steady growth in previous decades. Meanwhile, the number of jobs is up since the 2010 post-recession low, but still nearly two percent short of the 2008 peak level. In the middle of 2015 the state has about the same number of jobs as in 2004. This situation is in stark contrast to the nation, which began reaching new highs in GDP in 2012 and in nonfarm payroll jobs in 2014.

Economic and job growth in Maine over the last decade has been constrained by declining working-age population FIGURE 1: GDP, JOBS GROWTH Though lagging from a net growth perspective, Maine is outperforming the nation in terms of employment and decreasing unemployment rates. As of November 2015, the 4.1 percent unemployment rate was back to pre-recession levels and below the 5.0 percent U.S. average. Unemployment rates have declined to pre-recession levels FIGURE 2: UNEMPLOYMENT RATES The reason the unemployment rate is lower, but labor force, GDP, and other measures of net growth are lagging is that growth is increasingly being constrained by the sharp decline in births since the 1990s. This leaves Maine with much smaller numbers of young people entering the labor force than baby boomers retiring. The 25 to 54 age cohort has the highest rates of labor force participation, nearly 85 percent, but it has been declining since 2000. The broader 16 to 69 population, which comprises nearly everyone in the workforce, peaked in 2008 and today is more than 30,000 lower. Maine has the lowest share of youths and highest share of people in their upper 50s and 60s in the nation. The imbalance between entrants and those retiring caused the labor force to begin declining in 2013. The Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI) forecasts the size of the labor force will continue to decline through 2022, dropping from the 2013 peak by 12,000. If fertility and migration trends do not become more positive, the situation will become worse after 2022. Recent estimates indicate the labor force is declining more rapidly than previously expected. The reason is that the rebound in labor force participation that normally occurs as conditions improve in post-recession recoveries has been much less than usual among age cohorts under 55, at least through 2014. If participation rates were as high in 2014 as in 2006 and 2007 among those age groups, there would be 50,000 more in the labor force. This has also been the case nationally. Labor force participation had not fully recovered by 2014 in most age groups 0 FIGURE 3: LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION There are many theories about why participation in the labor force has not rebounded as it typically has during previous economic recoveries. For people under 30, higher rates of enrollment in educational programs is a primary reason. For people in their 30s to 50s it is less clear. One likely explanation is that during the Great Recession many workers were displaced from production, construction, administrative support and other types of jobs that required physical labor or routinized functions. These occupations are not rebounding as

strongly as others. In fact, these functions represent a declining share of jobs today. Making matters worse, these displaced workers do not have the education or work experience to match the needs of hiring employers in growing sectors. Many individuals will require job training or educational intervention to gain marketable skills to reenter the workforce. Labor force participation rates for those above 65 years are much lower than for younger segments of the population. As individuals age beyond 65 many retire or make other age-related lifestyle changes.

EDUCATION OF THE WORKFORCE

A look at employment rates (the share of the population that is employed) of the working age population is illustrative of the very different outcomes those with limited education face compared to those with higher attainment. According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau, among the population age 25 to 64 in Maine, only 43 percent of those who do not have a high school diploma and 70 percent with only a high school diploma were employed. The situation contrasted significantly with those having higher educational attainment. Nearly 77 percent with some postsecondary education or an associate's degree were working, with rising employment rates for higher levels of attainment; 84 percent with a bachelor's; 84 percent with a master's; and 90 percent with a professional or doctoral degree. Employment has shifted towards industries with a greater share of educated workers. Over the last two decades, industries recording employment gains had a higher share of workers with a bachelor's degree than industries that shed jobs. The education, health, business, and professional services industries have a higher than average share of workers with a bachelor's degree level. Conversely, manufacturing and construction, which have shed thousands of jobs, have a lower than average share of workers with a bachelor's degree. To a large degree, the changing educational needs of employers reflect the changing nature of work; that is, the shifting occupational structure of the workplace. Changes that have been taking place and are expected to continue include:

- Increase in higher level jobs and a decline in traditional manual occupations;
- Movement from skills associated with manual dexterity towards skills associated with understanding and monitoring complex systems;
- Shift away from routine processes toward coordination and collaboration;
- Increase of general work skills required in many jobs such as the ability to use computers;
- Expanded need for communication skills;
- Jobs include a broader range of responsibilities.

Even among production workers the demand for highly educated workers has grown. Since 1990 the share of production workers with some college or an associate's degree and a bachelors' degree rose by 15 percentage points and two percentage points, respectively, even as the number of workers fell by 52 percent. Approximately 80 percent of Maine students graduate from high school in four years, placing Maine above the national average for high school completion. However, only 65 percent of them enroll in some form of postsecondary education. University of Maine data suggest that a substantial number of students who do matriculate fail to complete a college degree. Forty-eight percent of those who start a University of Maine System bachelor's degree program earn the credential. Just 26 percent of Maine students who start work on an associate's degree earn it within three years. Occupational projections to 2022 indicate that 60 percent of net job growth is expected to occur in occupations requiring some form of postsecondary training or credential, including 35 of the 50 fastest growing occupations. Workers entering or returning to the job market with lower levels of education find a much more challenging environment to prosper in than was the case not many years ago.

SKILLS GAP

There has been a great deal of discussion about a rising skills gap as the recovery has advanced and unemployment rates have reached very low levels. Many businesses and trade associations agree that the available labor supply lacks the knowledge and skills they need a fact that has been widely reported in the media. Quantifying the gaps between the skills that employers seek and those that job seekers possess is challenging. Skills are attributes of performance requirements, ranging from basic functions such as hand-eye coordination, repetitive machine feeding, and following instruction to advanced functions such as deductive reasoning, analytical thinking, and complex problem solving. At present, there is no way to catalog or inventory skills to determine who possesses what skills and to what level. Additionally, employer requirements for certain functions vary. Though we cannot broadly define or measure skill gaps, we can see indications of a mismatch between employer needs and the

available workforce in job trends over the last decade. High rates of displacement from manufacturing production, construction, office administrative support and certain other occupations during the recent downturn left many people, whose previous experience was in functions that valued physical labor, routine, and following direction, looking for work in an environment in which good paying job openings have been concentrated in the professional services, healthcare, and education sectors in managerial, professional, and technical occupations. High demand jobs that pay well in those sectors require skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, reading comprehension, social perceptiveness, and communication. The transition from operating a machine on a production line to operating a diagnostic imaging machine in a hospital or lab is complicated and involves learning entirely new skills in a very different environment. The recession accelerated the decline of middle income jobs that do not require education or training beyond high school, while the proliferation of technology into a much wider array of job functions has accelerated the rise of middle and high income jobs that require post-secondary education or training certification. This has caused a mismatch between the experience of many job seekers and the needs of employers. This mismatch is the primary reason for suppressed rates of labor force participation among prime-age workers, the high share of long term unemployed, and elevated rates of labor underutilization not measured by the unemployment rate.

2. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the workforce development activities, including education and training in the State, to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, as identified in *Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce* above, and the employment needs of employers, as identified in *Employers' Employment Needs* above. This must include an analysis of –

A. THE STATE'S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Provide an analysis of the State's workforce development activities, including education and training activities of the core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan, and required and optional one-stop delivery system partners.*

* Required one-stop partners: In addition to the core programs, the following partner programs are required to provide access through the one-stops: Career and Technical Education (Perkins), Community Services Block Grant, Indian and Native American programs, HUD Employment and Training programs, Job Corps, Local Veterans' Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program, National Farmworker Jobs program, Senior Community Service Employment program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) (unless the Governor determines TANF will not be a required partner), Trade Adjustment Assistance programs, Unemployment Compensation programs, and YouthBuild.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS Maine has a variety of programs and activities to address the skilled workforce needs of employers that focus on developing the skill, abilities and credentials of the population, including those with barriers to employment. The aggregate public investment in these activities is significant, totaling more than \$500 million. Developing greater levels of coordination and alignment among these programs is an integral component of this Unified Plan and essential to navigating Maine's many workforce development challenges. The following tables provide an analysis of Maine's workforce development, education and training activities that receive regular public funding. For the purposes of this analysis, programs and activities are grouped into four categories: WIOA core partner programs, other publicly funded employment & training programs, other publicly funded education programs, and additional programs.

WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA) CORE PARTNER PROGRAMS The WIOA core partner programs: adult, dislocated worker and youth programs; Wagner–Peyser; vocational rehabilitation, and adult and basic education served more than 90,000 participants and represented \$55.4 million in public investment (58 percent of which was federal, 24 percent state and 18 percent local funds) in fiscal year 2014. This information is displayed in Table 4, below. The Maine Department of Labor (MDOL) administers the adult, dislocated worker and youth programs. In program year 2013, 832 adults, 713 unemployed workers and 822 youth were served by these programs. On average, 82 percent found jobs. MDOL also provides employment services through the one–stop delivery system and job bank, which are part of the Wagner–Peyser funded programs. In the same year, more than 75,000 individuals registered with the Maine Job Bank and employers posted 52,146 job openings. Maine's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (VR) works to bring about full access to employment, independence and community integration for people with disabilities. While under the oversight of the U.S. Department of Education, Maine's Bureau operates within the offices of Maine Department of Labor. The co–

location of VR and employment services offers greater opportunities for aligning programs and services. In FY'14, VR served 4,591 new applicants and 6,118 individuals had employment plans for program enrollment. Maine Adult Education is part of the Maine Department of Education. Service providers are housed within 76 local school districts throughout the state allowing them to offer programming and services throughout the state. In FY15 over 14,000 individuals participated in academic programming, with more than 30 percent participating in multiple adult education programs: High School Completion, Workforce Training, and College Transitions. Of those, 5,730 participated in federal programs directly linked to high school equivalency completion, entering employment, and entering postsecondary. Over 35,000 people also participated in lifelong learning classes such as health and wellness, political awareness, personal finances, and other community enriching courses. Maine's Unified Plan emphasizes greater levels of integration, alignment and coordination among core programs and one-stop partners. As part of this initiative, Maine is currently piloting five integrated education and training (IET) pilots. IET is a proven training model that enhances learning comprehension by integrating classroom and occupation training and often compresses learning time frames. Based on identified local workforce needs, the pilot projects were developed with extensive employer engagement, as well as the involvement of support service providers and a variety of educational institutions. Maine Adult Education is playing the lead role in the delivery of these projects, but each partner has an appropriate role to play. Participants, many of whom are receiving public assistance, are being prepared for actual unfilled positions with local employers. Pilot projects are currently being delivered in northern Maine, Lewiston, St. John Valley, Western Maine and Bucksport/Ellsworth areas.

TABLE 5: STATE WORKFORCE CAPACITY—CORE PROGRAMS Maine's Public Sector Investment in Workforce Development WIOA Core Partner Programs

Program	SFY14 Funding (\$ mil-lions)	Overseeing Agency	Program Description	Workforce
Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I	\$9.1	MDOL	WIA served the training, education and employment needs of adults, dislocated workers and youth. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) supersedes WIA, and went into effect beginning July 2015. WIOA is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. In the state fiscal year (SFY) 2014, 832 adults, 713 unemployed workers and 822 youth were served; on average 82% found jobs.	Federal \$9.1
Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933	\$3.6	MDOL	The Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933 established a nationwide system of public employment offices known as the Employment Service. The Act was amended in 1998 to make the Employment Service part of the One-stop services delivery system. The One-stop delivery system provides universal access to an integrated array of labor exchange services so that workers, job seekers and businesses can find the services they need in one stop and frequently under one roof in easy-to-find locations. In SFY 2014, 75,057 individuals registered with the Maine Job Bank and employers posted 52,146 job openings.	Federal \$3.6
Rehabilitation Services	\$25.3	US DOE	but operates within MDOL offices	
The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services			provides a range of independent living and employment services for people with disabilities: The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation helps individuals with a range of disabling conditions to achieve or retain employment; The Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired provides services to individuals who are blind or have low vision; and the Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened assists individuals with hearing impairments. During FY 2014, VR served 4,591 new applicants and 6,118 individuals had employment plans for program enrollment.	Federal \$17.9
State	\$7.1			State \$7.1
Other	\$0.3			Other \$0.3
Adult Education	\$17.5	MDOE	Maine Adult Education promotes programs that help American adults get the foundational skills they need to be educated and productive workers, family members, and citizens. The major areas of instruction and support are Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Education (high school completion), English	\$17.5

Language Acquisition, College Transition and Workforce Training. These programs emphasize foundational skills such as reading, writing, math, English language competency, career awareness and exploration, workforce training, and problem-solving. In FY15, adult education served 14,208 adults in academic and workforce programs, including 5,730 participants in federal funded programs. An additional 36,461 adults participated in self-sustaining personal enrichment courses. Federal \$1.7 State \$6.1 Other \$9.7 Federal \$32.2 58% State \$13.2 24% Other \$10.0 18% Total Core Programs \$55.4 OTHER PUBLICLY FUNDED EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING PROGRAMS A wide range of employment and training activities in Maine occur outside the core programs, and many of these activities are described in Table 5, below. These programs are supported by \$34 million in public funding (see Table 5) and deliver employment and job training services to a variety of population groups including veterans, dislocated workers, youth, and individuals with skill deficiencies and other barriers to employment. Programs are accessible through Maine's One-stop Center Network administered by Local Boards in three regions. In addition to the programs displayed in Table 5, a variety of other employment and training activities are funded through discretionary grant awards to the State of Maine. Such grants include, but are not limited to H1B grants, Youth Build and Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College Training (TAACT) grants.

TABLE 6: OTHER PUBLICLY FUNDED EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING PROGRAMS Maine's Public Sector Investment in Workforce Development Other Publicly Funded Employment & Training Programs

Program	SFY14 Funding (\$ mil-lions)	Overseeing Agency	Program Description
Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG)	\$0.9	MDOL	Jobs for Veterans State Grant funds are allocated to State Workforce Agencies from the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) in direct proportion to the number of veterans seeking employment within their state. The grants support two principal staff positions: Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives. This grant provides funds to exclusively serve veterans, other eligible persons and, indirectly, employers.
Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)	\$2.8	Federal	The Trade Adjustment Assistance Program is a federal program that provides a path for employment growth and opportunity through aid to US workers who have lost their jobs as a result of foreign trade. The TAA program seeks to provide these trade-affected workers with opportunities to obtain the skills, resources, and support they need to become reemployed.
Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)	\$0.1	Federal	The Work Opportunity Tax Credit is a Federal tax credit available to employers for hiring individuals from certain target groups who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment.
Re-employment Services & Eligibility Assessment (RESEA)	\$1.5	MDOL	The Re-employment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) pro-gram assists unemployed workers to return to work more quickly by delivering and services to those claimants profiled as "most likely to exhaust" and all transitioning veterans receiving Unemployment compensation. Targeted claimants will be provided relevant reemployment services and Eligibility Review Interviews. Services will be delivered through group workshops and one-on-one meetings.
CareerCenter General Funds	\$0.5	MDOL	The Maine CareerCenter provides a variety of employment and training services at no charge for Maine workers and businesses.
Competitive Skills Scholarship Pro-gram (CSSP)	\$3.3	MDOL	The Competitive Skills Scholarship helps workers learn new skills and succeed in a changing economy. The program is open to all qualified Maine residents and pays for education and training for high wage jobs in demand in Maine. The number of new CSSP applicants accepted into the program each year is based on available funding and allocated by county.
Maine Apprenti-ship Program	\$0.5	MDOL	Helps mobilize Maine's workforce with structured, on-the-job learning in traditional industries such as construction and manufacturing, as well as new emerging industries such as health care, information technology, energy, telecommunications and more.

Registered Apprenticeship connects job seekers looking to learn new skills with employers looking for qualified workers, resulting in a workforce with industry-driven training and employers with a competitive edge. State \$0.5 National Emergency Grants (NEGs)* \$0.8 MDOL National Emergency Grants (NEGs) temporarily expand the service capacity of Workforce Investment Act Dislocated Worker training and employment programs at the state and local levels by providing funding assistance in response to large, unexpected economic events which cause significant job losses. NEGs generally provide resources to states and local workforce development boards to quickly reemploy laid-off workers by offering training to increase occupational skills. Federal \$0.8 Penobscot Job Corps Center \$9.4 Boston Regional Office of Job Corps Job Corps is a no-cost education and career technical training program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor that helps young people ages 16 through 24 improve the quality of their lives through career technical and academic training. The Job Corps program is authorized by Title I-C of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. The Penobscot Job Corps Center is operated by Career Systems Development Corporation for the U.S. Department of Labor. Federal \$9.4 Loring Job Corps \$9.5 Boston Regional Office of Job Corps Job Corps is a no-cost education and career technical training program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor that helps young people ages 16 through 24 improve the quality of their lives through career technical and academic training. The Job Corps program is authorized by Title I-C of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. The Loring Job Corps center is operated by Career Systems Development Corporation for the U.S. Department of Labor. Federal \$9.5 Maine Conservation Corps (MCC) \$1.0 Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry MCC's mission is to accomplish conservation projects, create conservation employment, provide conservation education, and engage conservation volunteers. The Community Leader Program harnesses and expands upon the skills of Maine veterans. The Environmental Steward Program matches individuals with non-profits, state or federal agencies to increase organizational volunteer capacity and aid in the development and implementation of host sites land management plans. The Field Team Program consists of trail crews that construct and rehabilitate sustainable trails. Federal \$0.2 State \$0.1 Other \$0.7 New Ventures Maine \$1.5 UMA/UMS New Ventures Maine is the only statewide organization offering skills development and support in the areas of career planning, entrepreneurship and financial management. For Mainers in both life and career transitions, it provides an empowering environment for participants to define and achieve their goals. New Ventures Maine helps individuals recognize strengths, overcome barriers, find resources, develop a plan, take action towards their goals: start a business, find a career, return to school, build assets, be active in the community. Federal \$0.3 State \$0.8 Other \$0.4 Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) \$2.0 USDOL Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is a community service and work based training program for unemployed, low-income persons over the age of 55 with significant barriers to employment. Authorized by the Older Americans Act (Title V), the program provides subsidized, service-based training by placing participants in non-profit and public facilities. Participants are also able to participate in workshops such as self-esteem improvement and resume writing. Individuals train for an average of 20 hours per week and receive a minimum wage level stipend. The community service training serves as a bridge to unsubsidized employment opportunities; SCSEP's goal is to place over 35 percent of its Maine participants into unsubsidized employment annually. Federal \$2.0 Federal \$27.5 State \$5.2 Other \$1.1 Total non-core E&T \$33.8 *Program funding is sporadic.

OTHER PUBLICLY FUNDED EDUCATION PROGRAMS In addition to the core partner programs and other employment and training programs, the University of Maine System, the Maine Community College System, Maine's Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Maine Quality Centers provide education programs to prepare participants for success in careers and the workforce. As shown in Table 6, below, these programs represent more than \$400 million in annual public funding, three fourths of which are state funds. With seven campuses and annual enrollment of more than 40,000, the University of Maine System represents a foundational component of the state's postsecondary education system. The University System offers associate, bachelor, master,

and doctoral degrees as well as a selection of specialized undergraduate and graduate certificates. Maine's network of seven community colleges has a combined enrollment of more than 18,000. The System offers certificate, diploma and associate degree programs directed at the educational, occupational and technical needs of Maine residents as well as the workforce needs of employers. The goals of the System are to create an educated, skilled and adaptable labor force responsive to the changing needs of the economy, and to promote local, regional and statewide economic development. The mission of Maine's CTE program is to ensure that students acquire the high-quality technical skills that will prepare them for postsecondary education, entry into an ever-changing workplace and society, and meet the rigorous academic standards of Maine's Learning Results. Students benefit from this integrated system of academic and applied learning. Maine Quality Centers (MQC) provide customized workforce training grants to employers who are either seeking to locate or expand their operations in Maine or who are interested in providing training to their incumbent workers. Training programs are coordinated and delivered through Maine's seven community colleges, and other service and training providers as needed. Addressing the workforce development challenges that confront Maine will require coordination and partnership across employment and training programs and education institutions, as well as a commitment to measuring the employment outcomes of program participants. Recognizing the need for greater levels of alignment, the University of Maine System, Maine Community College System and the Maine Department of Labor (MDOL) formed a data sharing partnership to evaluate the employment outcomes of college students. As part of this relationship, the university and community colleges send student records to MDOL where these records are matched with their corresponding wage records. MDOL then determines the employment and wage outcomes by credential and area of study and school. These efforts, which have been funded by grants from the U.S. DOL and Maine Department of Education, have resulted in the development of Maine's Workforce Longitudinal Data System. This system has since expanded to include Adult Education and Vocational Rehabilitation programs. Maine's Workforce Longitudinal Data System is expected to play an integral role in measuring and providing outcomes information that drives program evaluation and policy decisions.

Table 7: Other Publicly Funded Education Programs
 Maine's Public Sector Investment in Workforce Development
 Other Publicly Funded Education Programs

Program	SFY14 Funding (\$ mil-lions)	Overseeing Agency	Program Description
Career and Technical Edu-cation (secondary)	\$21.0	MDOE	As part of the Maine Department of Education's ongoing commitment to support all learners, Maine Career and Technical Education (CTE) aims to ensure that students acquire the high-quality, industry-recognized technical skills and related academic standards that will prepare them for postsecondary education and entry into an ever-changing workplace and society.
Federal	\$2.0	State	\$19.0
University of Maine System (UMS)	\$314.2	UMS	The University of Maine System offers associates, bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees (including the JD degree) as well as a selection of specialized undergraduate and graduate certificates. The UMS features seven universities —some with multiple campuses—located across the state, as well as eight University College outreach centers, a law school, an additional 31 course sites, and Cooperative Extension. It has an annual enrollment of nearly 40,000 students and serves over 500,000 individuals annually through educational and cultural offerings.
Federal	\$54.5	State	\$230.9
Other	\$28.8	Maine Community College System (MCCS)	\$74.9
MCCS			The mission of the Maine Community College System is to provide associate degree, diploma and certificate programs directed at the educational, occupational and technical needs of the State's citizens and the workforce needs of the State's employers. The primary goals of the System are to create an educated, skilled and adaptable labor force which is responsive to the changing needs of the economy of the State and to promote local, regional and statewide economic development.
	18,164		enrolled in the fall of 2014.
Federal	\$8.6	State	\$62.9
Other	\$3.5	Maine Quality Centers	\$0.9
MCCS			The Maine Quality Centers (MQC) program funds customized workforce training delivered through Maine's seven community colleges. MQC grants are available to fund pre-hire, post-hire and

incumbent worker training. The program is designed to ensure that Maine businesses have the qualified workers they need to succeed. Grants limits for incumbent worker training are based on company size. Employers with 1–50 employees may apply for 100% funding. Employers with 51–100 employees may apply for 75% funding, with a 25% company match. Employers with 101+ employees may apply for 50% funding, with a 50% company match. Other customized training is provided at no cost to either the business or trainee. State \$0.9 Federal \$65 16% State \$314 76% Other \$32 8% Total Education \$411 ADDITIONAL PUBLICLY FUNDED PROGRAMS The State Correctional System, Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership, Additional Support for People in Retraining and Employment (ASPIRE) and Food Supplement Employment & Training programs provide workforce development activities to inmates, manufacturing employers and low income adults. Details of these programs are provided below. Please note that the following table does not represent all publicly funded DHHS programs for employment supports with individuals with significant disabilities. TABLE 8: ADDITIONALLY PUBLICLY FUNDED PROGRAMS Maine’s Public Sector Investment in Workforce Development Additional Publicly Funded Programs

Program	SFY14 Funding (\$ mil–ions)	Overseeing Agency	Program Description
State Correctional System	\$5.4	MDOC	Provides programs and services to reduce the likelihood of reoffending. Federal \$0.4 State \$3.5 Other \$1.5
Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership	\$1.2	U.S. Dept. of Commerce***	Leverages a vast array of public and private resources and services that are available to every manufacturing enterprise in Maine. The nationwide system of MEP centers is linked through the U.S. Department of Commerce – National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), with the common goal to strengthen the global competitiveness of U.S. manufacturers. MEP’s mission is to become the state’s premier provider of growth–based solutions for Maine’s small and medium sized manufacturers; and its vision is to create profitable growth opportunities for Maine’s small and medium sized manufacturers by helping them become more efficient, productive and globally competitive. Federal \$0.7 State \$0.4 Other \$0.1
Additional Support for People in Re–training and Employment (ASPIRE)	\$15.8	DHHS	Maine’s Department of Health and Human Services ASPIRE Program (Additional Support for People in Retraining and Employment) is the training and employment program that serves TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) adults in developing individualized employment plans and provides supports which lead to successful transition to employment. Federal \$8.2 State \$7.6
Food Supplement Employment & Training (FSET)	\$0.6	DHHS	Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) administers Maine’s Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), including SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) Activities. DHHS partners with Maine Department of Labor (MDOL), which conducts employment and training (E&T) activities at Career Centers. Maine’s E&T program is known as the Food Supplement Employment and Training (FSET) Program. Federal \$0.5 State \$0.1
Total	\$23		***NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STANDARDS AND TECHNOLOGY, HOLLINGS MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP (NIST MEP)

B. THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

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

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES Strengths and weaknesses of Maine's workforce development activities are discussed below. These attributes and characteristics reflect the views of the core partners and the WIOA Steering Committee. Strengths: • Commitment and willingness among the core partners and other stakeholders to build a better workforce development system—directors of the core programs have been meeting at least monthly throughout 2015 to collaborate on the development of an integrated, performance-based employment and training system. While the process has had many challenges, the partners have remained steadfast in their willingness to collaborate in creating solutions that benefit customers. This commitment to bring the shared vision to fruition is foundational to the repositioning of Maine's WDS. • Quality of service, programs and operations—following several years of each agency striving to improve its core services, the core programs are now soundly positioned to affect change. This is reflected in recent operational successes. The Adult Education and Workforce Systems both exceeded performance and were recently awarded an incentive grant award; while Vocational Rehabilitation has eliminated a persistent backlog of unserved participants through better planning and re-focusing on the fundamentals of the business. • Accessibility to stakeholders, business leaders and key decision makers—collaboration and partnering are core strengths of Maine's WDS activities. Maine's close-knit workforce development communities foster an environment where business relationships can be easily maintained, resources mobilized quickly and access to key decision makers is abundant. This is a state with relatively little bureaucracy, which fosters access to decision makers and resources. Weaknesses: • Maine's large geographic size and dispersed population present barriers to the efficient delivery of services. As noted in the economic analysis section of this plan, jobs that were once abundant in the state's outlying areas have disappeared, leaving many communities in a state of economic hardship, with above average unemployment rates and scores of individuals in need of retraining and employment services. Delivering services to these rural areas is a challenge. Moreover, limited public transportation networks make it difficult for many, including those with barriers, to access employment opportunities. • Lack of coordination, communication and alignment within the WDS. Maine has a variety of workforce development, education and training activities occurring within the state, but these programs and activities are typically governed by different federal agencies. This often results in a lack of coordination and alignment among workforce development programs. Maine is taking steps to better coordinate activities, starting with the creation of a statewide vision and goals for the WDS. • Data—virtually all stakeholders recognize the importance of using valid and reliable information to drive decision making, program evaluation and to support policy initiatives. Unfortunately, the core partners are currently working with three separate and discreet Management Information Systems. The realities of current financial constraints leave the state without the means to develop a system for integrating data. • Maine has limited financial resources to address its many workforce development challenges. Under WIA, and now WIOA, federal program funds are allocated to states based on population size. Within these federal funds the allowable allocation for program administration has always been capped at 5 percent of the total. As a result, less populous states such as Maine have substantially lower levels of funding to cover the fixed costs and required administrative activities in order to be in compliance.

C. STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY

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

STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY The range of workforce development programs and activities previously described represent a significant investment of both human and capital resources into Maine's workforce development system. Since 1998 when the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) was passed, the State has made concerted efforts to increase interagency collaboration to better coordinate federal employment services and training for adults, dislocated workers and youth, and adult education, as well as create additional access points for vocational rehabilitation services. These activities resulted in a developed network of physical assets, including strategically located one-stop affiliate centers; seven community colleges and seven University of Maine campuses. In addition, Maine's workforce development system includes 76 local Adult and Basic Education sites across the state. Though the workforce system has made improvements since the passage of WIA there is a recognized need to increase capacity. The goal over the next four years is to establish access to all workforce system services regardless of where the individual client or employer is located. To reach this goal, the following steps will be taken:

- Expand ability of all partners in the network to inform clients of workforce system services. This will be the result of extensive cross-training.
- Assess the ability to increase access. The Adult Education System will work with Local Boards in the three regions and the one-stop operators to assess the ability to increase access to the one-stop system. For example, a number of adult education programs may be made available as itinerant sites to provide basic career services. This action can greatly expand the number and proximity of access points of contact for both employers and clients.
- Expand the use of technology. Given Maine's vast geographic size, it cannot be assumed that all who need to travel to the current comprehensive and affiliate sites are able to do so. To address the barriers of geography, childcare, transportation and schedules that many people face, services will be available digitally. These services will include up-to-date and comprehensive employment and training websites with links to partner websites. In addition, resources will be accessible through the use of videoconferencing and live chat.

B. STATE STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS

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

1. VISION

Describe the State's strategic vision for its workforce development system.

STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS During May and June of 2015, a group of 60 workforce stakeholders, including administrators of the core programs, workforce developers, educators, advocates, and policy makers, convened for three full days to discuss the State's workforce development system (WDS) and to create a vision for a bright future. Discussion centered on what success will look like for Maine's WDS in five to ten years and what will need to occur in order to make the vision a reality. A broad range of ideas were shared; many were challenged and some honed. Ultimately, it was discovered that participants shared many of the same ideals. From this unity arose a vision for Maine's WDS. The resulting vision addresses the requirements of WIOA and creates a meaningful plan for the future. **MAINE'S STRATEGIC VISION FOR 2020** Maine leads in talent, technology and innovation, attracting investment from all over the world. We partner strategically to compete globally. Our renowned work ethic, culture, and innovative approach to learning and working meet the needs of the global economy; creating a strong sense of community and quality of life. As a result, Maine's economy and communities are thriving. Maine's economy is fueled by an education system which is inclusive and meets the needs of diverse learners. Through partnership with industries and the workforce development system, Maine workers are continuously well prepared with the skills necessary to succeed in current and future careers. The Maine workforce development system is a highly visible, easily-accessed network of programs and activities designed to increase the employment, retention and earnings of Maine workers. It is data and demand driven, providing multiple points of seamless entry and service for job seekers and workers requiring help to obtain, maintain and advance employment. It supports the attainment of recognized credentials, which result in an improved quality of the workforce, meets the skill requirements of employers, and enhances the productivity and competitiveness of Maine.

2. GOALS

Describe the goals for achieving this vision based on the above analysis of the State's economic conditions, workforce, and workforce development activities. This must include—

- Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including preparing youth and individuals with barriers of employment* and other populations.**
- Goals for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers.

* Individuals with barriers to employment include displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 35-14); individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals.

** Veterans, unemployed workers, and youth and any other populations identified by the State.

GOALS Maine will have an educated and skilled workforce that meets the needs of employers.

3. PERFORMANCE GOALS

Using the table provided in Appendix 1, include the State's expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA. (This Strategic Planning element only applies to core programs.)

Maine's federally required performance measures may be found in Appendix VI.

4. ASSESSMENT

Describe how the State will assess the overall effectiveness of the workforce development system in the State in relation to the strategic vision and goals stated above in sections (b)(1), (2), and (3) and how it will use the results of this assessment and other feedback to make continuous or quality improvements.

ASSESSMENT The Steering Committee will conduct an annual assessment regarding the state's progress in implementing this plan. The assessment will review progress, obstacles and necessary changes in course of action. In addition, the State will assess the overall effectiveness of the workforce development system as described below. Maine's Workforce Longitudinal Data System may play an integral role in measuring long-term participant outcomes and in providing information that drives program evaluation and policy decisions. The system is designed to measure wage and employment outcomes of program participants by credential and program. A range of programs are currently part of the data sharing partnership, and additional partners will be added. Current partners include Maine's Community Colleges, the University of Maine System, Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation programs and MDOL. Defining Industry Recognized Credentials and measuring the attainment of these credentials will also be an important aspect for assessing progress. Once credentials are defined and data sharing partnerships arranged, the Maine Workforce Longitudinal Data System may be used to measure the employment outcomes of participants earning these awards. Maine will also utilize control group studies to assess performance, as described below. Maine's economic analysis states that the majority of jobs that are projected to grow in Maine will require postsecondary education and training. Maine has utilized Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) to support WIA participant attainment of traditional two and four year college degrees. However, WIOA strongly emphasizes employer-based workforce preparation and promotes new education alliances intended to limit duplication of services and to increase the engagement of employers in developing standards and articulating pathways workers can take to attain entry to upper level skills. Selecting a pool of individuals who successfully completed training during PY15, the state will analyze and compare the long-term employment and earnings outcomes of participants enrolled in employer-based training, (On-the-Job Training, Registered Apprenticeship, Customized Training, or employer-funded certificate training) with the outcomes of participants enrolled in traditional two or four year college degree or certificate programs. Information used to evaluate the outcomes of each of the participant groups will include the costs borne by the WIOA programs, as follows:

- Full-cost of the formal component of participant training:
 - o For college bound trainees: tuition, fees, books, remedial or pre-requisite courses and other charges of the educational institution;
 - o For employer-based trainees: OJT wages, cost of any related classroom training or instruction, cost of customized training funded by WIOA;
 - o Full cost of supportive services funded for the full term of the training program.
 - o Percentage of staff time directly supporting the participant from the point of program entry to successful completion of training and including any follow-up services;
 - o Full amount and type of non-WIOA funds leveraged, such as: PELL, scholarships, individual contributions and employer wage and classroom cost match, including costs of employee benefits paid to participants while in training, if any.

Additional aspects that will be evaluated for each participant will include:

- Industry for which trainee was prepared;
- Length of time in formal training (program/OJT start to program/OJT end date);
- Length of time from completion of training to attainment of employment;
- Whether or not the training included both an experiential and academic component;
- Whether or not trainee attained a portable credential, degree, diploma, license or will attain a portable credential, such as a certificate of apprenticeship;
- Wages at second quarter after exit;
- Wages at sixth quarter after exit; and
- Wages at tenth quarter after exit.

In addition to participant analysis, employers offering the work-based training will be surveyed regarding their perspectives on the value and effectiveness of this approach. Employers will be asked to provide

their input regarding the overall success of employees they hire just out of college with those they have hired and trained through WIOA supported work-based training. This input will be used to inform service providers who are developing work-based training programs for employers and participants. Participants with similar socio-economic backgrounds and academic levels at entry will be randomly selected from across the state, using data captured through formal intake and assessment. Because it is assumed that the number of employer-based training approaches will increase under WIOA, additional comparison cohort groups will be selected each year through PY17. Data accumulated will be analyzed at the end of each program year and in total at the end of PY20. A report comparing the long-term employment and earnings outcomes of each of the two participant cohorts of the study will be produced. Results of the evaluation will be used to inform workforce development service providers and employers about the benefits and/or pitfalls of each of the approaches and to improve the practices involved with each of the approaches, including the following:

- Initial and ongoing involvement of the employer or industry for which employees from both cohorts are being educated and trained;
- Processes used to prepare and support participants throughout their preparation for training, training, and subsequent employment;
- Formulas for greatest return on investment and cost efficiencies identified;
- Level of relevance to the employer for each training approach;
- Level of skill quality produced as identified in earnings and employment of each approach
- Amount of non-WIOA funds leveraged with each approach;
- Overall lessons learned based on the findings including strengths and weaknesses of each approach for both the employer and the worker.

C. STATE STRATEGY

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

1. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT, INCLUDING INDUSTRY OR SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS RELATED TO IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS AND CAREER PATHWAYS, AS REQUIRED BY WIOA SECTION 101(D)(3)(B), (D). "CAREER PATHWAY" IS DEFINED AT WIOA SECTION 3(7). "IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTOR OR OCCUPATION" IS DEFINED AT WIOA SECTION 3(23).

STATE STRATEGIES Stakeholders of the WDS and state agencies with responsibility for the administration of core programs developed six strategic objectives to achieve the state's vision and goals. These strategies reflect Maine's unique economic, workforce, and workforce development characteristics; focus on delivering greater value to customers of the WDS; and target opportunities for greater alignment among programs and increased system-wide efficiencies. Maine's strategic objectives are discussed below and more fully elaborated on in the operating plan section of this document.

1. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: INCREASE THE RELEVANCE OF THE WDS TO EMPLOYERS Creating a demand driven WDS is central to achieving Maine's vision of developing a more productive and competitive economy. For the economy to flourish, employers must have a ready supply of capable and skilled workers. To this end, Maine's strategic objectives begin with the recognition that the system must do a better job of assessing—and satisfying—the workforce and skill needs of businesses. Developing and sustaining close relationships with employers is essential to increasing the value-add that the workforce system provides. Maine's Unified Plan focuses on developing and implementing a systematic approach to 1) engaging employers; 2) identifying and prioritizing employer needs, including current and projected skilled workforce needs by region; 3) responding to employers with the appropriate resources and strategies; and 4) creating a continuous feedback loop to ensure existing needs have been met and/or if new needs have emerged. The establishment of broader and deeper sector partnerships will enable the WDS to develop a pipeline of workers in high growth, high demand fields, thereby reducing apparent skill-gaps and the time to fill positions.

2. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: PRODUCE AN EDUCATED AND SKILLED WORKFORCE The success of Maine's economy will ultimately be determined by the strength and quality of its workforce. As part of this Unified Plan, Maine will build its workforce through a multi-faceted approach that includes developing career pathways that lead to in-demand jobs. To mitigate barriers to employment, the WDS will coordinate and align activities that will build the foundational skills of workers and individuals; improve the transitions between education and employment; foster greater occupational awareness; define certifications and industry recognized credentials; and develop a systematic means for the state to measure, gather and aggregate credential attainment and skill development.

3. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: ALIGN THE STATE'S COMMITMENT AND INVESTMENT IN MAINE'S WORKFORCE Developing a high quality workforce—one that is globally competitive and continuously well prepared to succeed in current and future careers—will require the commitment and alignment of resources that extend beyond the public workforce system. For Maine to lead in talent, technology and innovation, all stakeholders—employers, policy makers, legislators, and a myriad of other stakeholders—must be invested in the process and outcome. Maine's Plan solidifies and aligns these resources and investments. Maine's State Board, which is comprised of all system partners and stakeholders, is focused on aligning resources to create a world-class workforce. The Board will work closely with policy makers to ensure that workforce development is the express priority in language and deed of the executive and legislative branches during the first session of the 128th legislature and each succeeding. Employers will be proactively engaged to more fully participate in and support workforce development. A Maine grant and resource collaborative will be established to leverage resources on behalf of shared customers and goals.

4. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: INCREASE WDS OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS Creating a workforce development system that is accessible, data and demand driven, and focused on enhancing the skills and credentials of Maine workers will require a more streamlined way of doing

business. As a large geographic state with unique demographics and very limited resources, the workforce development system must be nimble, efficient and effective to meet the needs of current and future employers. Working together, the core partners are committed to aligning and integrating their systems to ensure optimal access for Maine's workforce and employers. Initiatives will be pursued that improve customer navigation, data sharing, and continuous improvement through evaluation, accountability, and data driven decision making. To achieve this objective, the core programs will employ a range of strategies that focus on alignment and integration of systems, services and operations. Specifically, Maine will:

- Seek to create a free exchange of data among workforce development programs and core partners. Removing barriers to interagency data sharing will create enhanced opportunities for program evaluation, a key element in creating an environment of continuous improvement through evaluation, accountability, identification of best practices and data driven decision making.
- Focus on increased integration of core partner services at one-stop centers—Core partners have agreed on principles for assessment, common intake and individual service plans. An investment in front-end software will be made to accommodate common intake registration and universal access.
- Make participant navigation easier—Programs will be aligned so that they are more user friendly and accessible to all participants.
- Invest in professional development—Across the core programs and workforce development system.
- Integrate and align systems to create universal design to ensure optimal access for all.

5. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: GROW AND DIVERSIFY MAINE'S WORKFORCE THROUGH IMPROVED ACCESS AND ENGAGEMENT Following decades of expansion, Maine's population and workforce is no longer growing. A contracting workforce acts as a drag on economic growth—it impacts how fast the economy can grow, the number of new jobs created, the ability of businesses to find and hire workers, and the attractiveness of Maine to businesses looking to expand operations. Ultimately, a declining population reduces the state's economic competitiveness. It also highlights the importance of ensuring younger workers have the skills and credentials necessary to replace those who are retiring. To arrest declines in the workforce, Maine is developing practical solutions to reversing these demographic trends. Strategies will target disenfranchised populations, discouraged workers and previously untapped labor pools. The credentialing of foreign trained workers will be streamlined and outreach programs to service members and veterans will be extended. Pathways to quality, in-demand jobs will be created for all Mainers. Maine will also more aggressively seek to attract educated and trained workers to the state.

6. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: CREATE AND ALIGN OUR OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS TO ACHIEVE THE VISION Achieving Maine's vision and goals will require buy-in from employers, residents and stakeholders of the workforce development, education and training systems. As such, the state plan includes the development of a comprehensive communications strategy to ensure that the vision and goals are communicated in a coordinated fashion—both internally and externally. Outreach and communications will include promotion of Maine's talent, technology and innovation to attract new business; ensure awareness of available services and how to access them; quickly bring new legislators and administrators up-to-date on the WDS; build and maintain active outreach to employers; and increase outreach to underserved communities.

2. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL USE TO ALIGN THE CORE PROGRAMS, ANY COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN, REQUIRED AND OPTIONAL ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS, AND ANY OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THE STATE TO ACHIEVE FULLY INTEGRATED CUSTOMER SERVICES CONSISTENT WITH THE STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS DESCRIBED ABOVE. ALSO DESCRIBE STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN REGARD TO WEAKNESSES IDENTIFIED IN SECTION II(A)(2).

STRATEGIES USED TO ALIGN THE CORE PROGRAMS AND STRENGTHEN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES In December 2014, Maine's core partners began meeting to discuss the alignment of programs under WIOA. At the outset, all partners were 'at the table' and committed to the process of rethinking how the delivery of WDS services could be improved through integration and realignment of resources. One year and countless meetings later, the commitment among Maine's core partners to system improvement has remained steadfast. Underlying the strategies that Maine has and is utilizing to align programs and achieve integrated customer services is:

- The recognition by core partners and system administrators that effective workforce development is critical to Maine's economic vitality;
- The recognition that for realignment to be effective, the process must be inclusive and result in greater coordination and alignment of workforce development, education and training activities.

Accordingly, the State's core programs adopted a three-fold strategy for aligning programs: Stage 1: Convene stakeholders and establish a vision, goals and strategies— During Spring 2015, the State Board convened a broad group of workforce stakeholders, including administrators of the core programs, workforce developers, educators, policy makers, and representatives from State Board committees and councils for three full days to discuss the workforce development system and to create a vision for a bright Maine future. Participants discussed the economic, demographic and system challenges that may impede system realignment as well as potential solutions. Stage 2: Hone the strategies and projects to support the vision and goals—Once the vision was established, the WIOA Steering Committee met regularly and often to hone strategies that would help Maine achieve its vision and goals. Stage 3: Operationalize the plan—Once the vision, goals, strategies and projects were finalized, the Steering Committee and core partners focused on how the strategic objectives could be operationalized in light of Maine's unique needs and challenges and WIOA's requirements. During these processes, the WIOA Steering Committee established guiding principles that served to inform the process of system realignment and integration.

CORE PROGRAM AND STEERING COMMITTEE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Create a customer centric approach (no wrong door) with universal access
- Strive for continuous improvement
- Utilize regular communication
- Eliminate unnecessary duplication
- Look for redundancies
- Analyze the functions
- Align staff resources
- Cross train

III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

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

A. STATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include—

1. STATE BOARD FUNCTIONS

Describe how the State board will implement its functions under section 101(d) of WIOA (i.e. provide a description of Board operational structures and decision making processes to ensure such functions are carried out).

OPERATING PLANNING ELEMENTS STATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION STATE BOARD FUNCTIONS Maine's State Workforce Development Board (hereafter referred to as the State Board) meets the WIOA state board composition requirements and will implement the functions under section 101 (d) of WIOA. The State Board will assist the Governor in: 1) The development, implementation and modification of the state plan; 2) The review of state policies and programs and recommendations on actions to align programs to support a streamlined system, including the review and provision of comments on the State Plans, if any, for programs and activities of one-stop partners that are not core programs; 3) The development and continuous improvement of the workforce system, including: a. The identification of barriers and means to remove them to better coordinate, align and avoid duplication among programs and activities carried out through the system; b. The development of strategies to support use of career pathways for the purpose of providing individuals, including low-skilled adults, youth, and individuals with barriers to employment, with workforce investment activities, education and supportive services to enter or retain employment; c. The development of strategies for providing effective outreach to and improved access for individuals and employers who could benefit from services provided through the workforce development system; d. The development and expansion of strategies for meeting the needs of employers, workers and jobseekers, particularly through industry or sector partnerships related to in-demand industry sectors and occupations; e. The identification of regions, including planning regions, for the purposes of sec 106(a) and the designation of local areas under section 106, after consultation with local boards and chief elected officials; f. The development and continuous improvement of the one-stop delivery system in local areas, including providing assistance to local boards, one-stop operators, partners, and providers with planning and delivering services, including training services and supportive services, to support effective delivery of services to workers, jobseekers, and employers; and g. The development of strategies to support staff training and awareness across programs supported under the workforce development system; 4) The development and updating of comprehensive State performance accountability measures, including state adjusted levels of performance, to assess effectiveness of core programs in the State as required under section 116(b); 5) The identification and dissemination of information on best practices, including best practices for: a. The effective operation of one-stop centers, relating to the use of business outreach, partnerships and service delivery strategies, including strategies for serving individuals with barriers to employment; b. The development of effective local boards, which may include information on factors that contribute to enabling local boards to exceed negotiated local levels of performance, sustain fiscal integrity, and achieve other measures of effectiveness; and c. Effective training programs that respond to real time labor market analysis, that effectively use direct assessment and prior learning assessment to measure an individual's prior knowledge, skills, competencies and experiences, and that evaluate such skills and competencies for adaptability, to support efficient placement into employment or career pathways; 6) The development and review of statewide policies affecting the coordinated provision of services through the State's one-stop system described in sec 121(e), including the development of: a. Objective criteria and procedures for use by local boards in assessing the effectiveness and continuous improvement of one-stop centers; b. Guidance for the allocation of one-stop center infrastructure funds under sec 121(h); and c. Policies relating to the appropriate roles and contributions of entities carrying out one-stop partner programs within the one-stop delivery system, including approaches to facilitating equitable and efficient cost allocation of such system; 7) The development of strategies for technological

improvements to facilitate access to and improve the quality of services and activities provided through the one-stop system, including improvements to: a. Enhance digital literacy skills (as defined in sec 202 of the Museum and Library Services Act (20 U.S.C. 9101); referred to in this Act as “digital literacy skills”); b. Accelerate the acquisition of skills and recognized postsecondary credentials by participants; c. Strengthen the professional development of providers and workforce professionals; and d. Ensure such technology is accessible to individuals with disabilities and individuals residing in remote areas; 8) The development of strategies for aligning technology and data systems across one-stop partner programs to enhance service delivery and improve efficiencies in reporting on performance accountability measures (including the design and implementation of common intake, data collection, case management information and performance accountability measurement, and reporting processes, and the incorporation of local input into such design and implementation, to improve coordination of services across one-stop partner programs); 9) The development of allocation formulas for the distribution of funds for employment and training activities for adults and youth workforce investment activities to local areas as permitted under sections 128(b)(3) and 133(b)(3); 10) The preparation of annual reports described in paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 116(d); 11) The development of the statewide workforce and labor market information system described in section 15(e) of the Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 491-2(e)); and 12) The development of such other policies as may promote statewide objectives for, and enhance the performance of, the workforce development system in the State.

Plan Revision;

In the summer of 2015 the WIA State Workforce Investment Board was transitioned into the WIOA State Workforce Development Board (SWDB). Board membership was adjusted to comply with WIOA required percentages of business representatives, workforce representatives, government and state agency representatives and representatives from community based organizations.

(See membership roster – please note SWB Director is not a voting member of the Board.)

The SWDB benefits from additional input from the Commissioners of Economic & Community Development, Health & Human Services, Corrections, and Transportation, as well as the President of the Community College System and the Chancellor of the University of Maine system. This advisory group in collaboration with the SWDB comprises the State Workforce Board.

The SWDB meets every other month (six times annually) and uses Roberts Rules of Order to assist in the decision making process as articulated in the SWDB By Laws. Also contained in the By Laws is a quorum requirement for the Board to take action - 50% of the appointed members and at least 50% of the quorum being business representatives.
(<http://www.maine.gov/swb/documents/index.shtml>)

The SWDB is housed at the Maine Department of Labor and is currently staffed by a Director, a workforce development Program Coordinator and a Labor Program Specialist (3 FTEs).

The SWDB has six constituent committees that make recommendations to the Board about service delivery or policy related to the cohort group they represent – Apprenticeship, Commission on Disability & Employment, Older Workers, Veterans, Women’s Employment Issues and Younger Workers. These committees meet four to eight times annually.

The SWDB and the State Workforce Agency (SWA - Maine Department of Labor) will work together to establish and convene workgroups that focus on required implementation and service delivery

components of WIOA. Some groups will complete their work and be dissolved while other will need to be on going for the foreseeable future. Service Providers and Local Workforce Development Board staff will be included on each workgroup as appropriate. The workgroups include;

- Program Policy Committee (Ongoing)
- WIOA State Plan Steering Committee
- State Plan Implementation Committee
- Staff Development / Cross Training
- America's Job Link Alliance (New database implementation)
- One Stop Certification
- Memorandums of Understanding
- Priority of Service
- Accessibility
- Employer Outreach
- Youth Service Delivery
- Integrated Intake
- Unemployment Insurance Linkages
- Eligible Training Provider List

As other needs are identified additional workgroups may be required.

Working closely with the SWA, Core Program staff and the workgroups, the SWDB will fulfill its responsibilities assisting the Governor with all the required functions in section 101(d) of WIOA.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGY

Describe how the lead State agency with responsibility for the administration of each core program or a Combined Plan partner program included in this plan will implement the State's Strategies identified in Section II(c). above. This must include a description of—

A. CORE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES TO IMPLEMENT THE STATE'S STRATEGY

Describe the activities the entities carrying out the respective core programs will fund to implement the State's strategies. Also describe how such activities will be aligned across the core programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan and among the entities administering the programs, including using co-enrollment and other strategies.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGY The core partners spent numerous meetings discussing the implementation of the strategic objectives. To facilitate the discussion, the WIOA Steering Committee utilized specialized software to capture and organize the activities that core programs would participate in and fund as it pertained to the WIOA requirements for Unified Plan operating elements. This process was instrumental in identifying areas where efforts were being duplicated or could be improved to result in a more integrated delivery of services to customers. Combined with the work produced by other committees and groups, the following strategic objectives were developed.

1. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: INCREASE THE RELEVANCE OF THE WDS TO EMPLOYERS

Creating a demand driven WDS is central to achieving Maine's vision of developing a more productive workforce and competitive economy. For workers and the economy to flourish, employers must have a ready supply of skilled workers. Yet the message from employers is that many businesses have open positions that are persistently difficult to fill. These occupational/skill gaps constrain business growth and threaten mission critical operations. Moreover, given the projections for a shrinking population and workforce, the situation may become worse in the years ahead. Maine's workforce system must be more responsive to the rapidly changing job market and the skilled workforce needs of employers. Cultivating and connecting pools of trained workers with employers is a strategic priority. The following strategies will be used to mitigate near and long term workforce shortages and skills gaps. Strategies to mitigate shortages of skilled workers: Immediate action steps: o Workforce partners will facilitate strategic relationships with employers, educators, one-stop centers and other potential sources of talent in order to connect businesses with skilled workers. Employers are best positioned to identify their skilled workforce needs; local workforce board staff will work with companies in targeted sectors to understand current and projected in-demand skills and credentials, human resource and other business needs. The partnership will engage postsecondary and other training providers to develop programs that align with demand. Local boards will assign the primary workforce contacts within the region for businesses. o Employers will be engaged with labor market information to identify where they may find the candidates for their specific and difficult to fill occupations. These analyses may provide employers with a better understanding of their potential labor supply and their wages. o Comprehensive business support and integrated service strategies will be offered when appropriate. o Internships will be utilized more aggressively to mitigate skill gaps. o Workforce partners will work with adult education, community college and university systems to cultivate the supply of skilled workers and increase awareness of occupations, career pathways, internship opportunities and credentials that are in-demand. o Educate employers on the variety of state and federal hiring incentives. Ongoing action steps: o Local boards will work with employers to develop the optimal role for local business representatives and the Local Workforce Board in executing employer engagement strategies and

sector partnerships. o Strategic partnerships will work with the community college, university system and other training providers to develop programs that align with employers' needs. o Develop MOUs with required educational partners to prioritize efforts. o Information generated from sector partnerships regarding skilled worker demand (current and projected) will be combined with occupational projections available at MDOL and other labor market information to develop a hierarchy of in-demand skills and occupations. This information will be used to inform and guide employment and training programs as well as prospective students and program participants. o Further develop industry-recognized credentials that are in-demand. Quantify the current and long term need. o Establish a system for measuring and evaluating the pipeline of participants receiving training. o Measure skill gains of those receiving training. o Develop a comprehensive Career Pathways System that aligns the efforts of education and training programs with current and projected in-demand occupations. o State Board will develop innovative strategies to encourage the in-migration of skilled workers to Maine. The development and implementation of a systematic framework for engaging and responding to employers will also facilitate the alignment between the demand and supply for labor. Developing and sustaining close relationships with employers is essential to increasing the value-add that the workforce system provides. Maine's Unified Plan focuses on developing and implementing a systematic approach to 1) engaging employers; 2) identifying and prioritizing employer needs, including current and projected skilled workforce needs by region; 3) responding to employers with the appropriate resources and strategies; and 4) creating a continuous feedback loop to ensure existing needs have been met and/or if new needs have emerged. Increasing the Relevance of the WDS to Employers

ENGAGE EMPLOYERS: Employers will be engaged in a variety of ways, including industry partnerships, direct contact, job vacancy surveys (JVS), and through utilization and implementation of ongoing Employer Assistance initiatives already in practice and being implemented by core and other partners of Maine's one-stop system. The workforce system will also engage employers and postsecondary institutions in order to facilitate broader use of internships to foster better connections between employers and trained workers. Industry/sector partnerships are central to Maine's employer engagement strategies. Broader and deeper regional sector partnerships will enable the WDS to develop a pipeline of workers in high-growth, high-demand fields, thereby reducing apparent skill-gaps and the time it takes to fill positions. The Industry Partnership Approach emphasizes promotion and alignment of workforce training resources on behalf of high-growth industries, such as health care, professional services and tourism, yet stresses the importance of sustainment of mature industries that offer high-wage, high-skill jobs such as precision manufacturing and natural resource-based sectors, including: forestry, agriculture and aquaculture, as well as their value-added derivatives, such as food and lumber processing, paper manufacturing and wood renewable energy enterprises. Direct contact with employers will also add value. Over 90 percent of Maine's employers are small businesses with 25 or fewer employees. These companies are the lifeblood of the economy and create a majority of jobs. Owner/operators of these establishments often wear multiple hats and have limited resources to navigate the gamut of services and programs available to them. Though all may not be able to participate in formal industry sector partnerships, they will be engaged through direct contact by the Governor's Account Executives, the Local Boards or one of the Business Services Representatives working within Maine's one-stop system. Employers will continue to be engaged directly through: • Local Board sponsored events • CTE Industry Advisory Committees • Postsecondary Industry Advisory Committees • Business and Trade Associations • Chambers of Commerce and Business Leadership Networks • Job Fairs and direct recruiting at One-stop centers • Industry specific Regional Project Advisory Groups (RPAG)

NEEDS ASSESSMENT Properly assessing an employer's workforce and business service needs is essential to developing and providing effective solutions. To meet this higher standard of effectiveness, partners in the workforce development system will work together to assess and address the needs of Maine businesses. This collaborative approach will: eliminate duplication of efforts; ensure the distribution of needs assessments developed from an employer perspective rather than a program-centric view; and enable assessment results to be shared with partner agencies. An essential understanding of the available menu of economic and workforce resources that the partners can coordinate and package to jointly meet the needs of business and workforce customers will be addressed through cross training and professional development. Pending funding, the Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI) will annually survey businesses statewide and across regions to identify and quantify unfilled positions by occupation. The survey will ask employers to identify the qualifications necessary to fill open positions. This information will inform education and training activities regarding skill development needs of Maine's businesses and will assist local workforce boards and core partners in prioritizing training resources to assist the employers to address these needs. It is imperative that each service agency assessing the employer's need has an awareness of resources outside of traditional workforce system to deliver services in a way that address all of the challenges the company is facing, much the same way our system does now for workers.

RESPONDING TO EMPLOYERS' NEEDS Once the business needs are assessed, the workforce system will respond by providing the necessary business services (contacts, referrals) and/or allocating training resources to help fill the unmet skill need.

FOLLOW-UP A systematic process for following-up with employers will be developed and implemented to ensure the workforce system is meeting employers' needs and to identify changing skill requirements.

INCREASE THE RELEVANCE OF THE WDS TO EMPLOYERS—CORE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES TO IMPLEMENT THE STATE'S STRATEGY Core programs will develop a coordinated approach to engaging employers and responding to their needs. In order to make the WDS more relevant to the employer, the WDS will work as a system and not as an army of separate service agencies each seeking to fill a particular need. Local areas and individual one-stop centers are partnering with in-house and outside agencies to package and provide a vast range of services to employers. The following is an abbreviated list of some of these core program services:

- Referrals to services provided by small business and economic development districts, including the Department of Economic and Community Development, the Small Business Administration, Maine Small Business Development Centers, Coastal Enterprises, Inc., Councils of Government, Development Commissions and Corporations, and Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership to name a few;
- Provision of services by the Maine Department of Labor, including: labor market information provided by CWRI, prevailing wage and workplace safety information and training provided by the Bureau of Labor Standards, employer tax information provided by the Bureau of Unemployment Compensation, and the full range of services provided by Wagner-Peyser staff and WIOA formula funded programs;
- The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), which also falls under the auspices of MDOL, provides a full menu of informational services and training to businesses regarding the benefits of and supports available for employing individuals with disabilities. BRS has been instrumental in connecting Maine employers to the national Business Leadership Network, a network of employers taking the lead in disability inclusion through their hiring practices;
- The Migrant Seasonal Farmworker program provides the farming industry with access to migrant and seasonal farm workers and advocates for safe and clean living and working environments for the workers who are hired through the H2B program.

Systems partners will continue to collaborate to engage employers in identified growth-industries. The State has received two job-driven National Emergency Grants (NEGs), the JD (Job Driven) NEG and the SP (Sector Partnership) NEG; these grants both enable Local Workforce Boards to focus on addressing the specific skill needs of growth industries/companies in Maine and/or the workforce preparation needs of Maine workers. The NEG resources will augment core program partner funds to provide work-based training opportunities to unemployed adults. A key focus of the SP NEG is to implement a

significant employer outreach campaign using a statewide, multi-media approach designed to inform employers about how they can partner with workforce development system stakeholders to address their workforce needs. The outreach campaign will include a blast of informational announcements designed to provide Maine employers with information and points of contact for a variety of workforce development services and resources. The outreach campaign will also involve development and delivery of oral presentations, and a series of industry-focused workshops about the following service packages:

- **Upskill Backfill.** This approach begins with an analysis of the specific skills current employees need to move up or laterally into their company's hard to fill job vacancies. Once the needed skills are identified, and with employer input, the appropriate core partners and other agencies will collaborate to design and deliver the required education and skills training.
- **Registered Apprenticeship (RA).** This industry-led employee training mechanism provides businesses with a formal, long-term method for ensuring new hires and existing employees will attain necessary skills. WIOA resources can now be more readily used to support Registered Apprenticeship. This will enable Maine to establish apprenticeship as a targeted outcome for WIOA participants and to expand the apprenticeship services presently available through State general funds. These services include assistance with developing skill standards and programs of related instruction for existing and emerging occupations, recruiting and screening applicants from Maine's one-stop system, and complying with complex affirmative action and EEO requirements of sponsors of registered apprenticeship. As part of the outreach campaign, more employers will be made familiar with the benefits of Registered Apprenticeship. Currently apprenticeship works jointly with the Maine Community College System to package training and education resources for some of Maine's major industry sectors, including precision manufacturing (battleship, submarine, aerospace and more), and partners with Adult Education for the healthcare industry.
- **Staff Development for core partners.** The core partners will work together to develop professional staff development, including specific trainings for business services and business outreach staff of the core partner programs on how to assess and package services to business clients. The design for the technical assistance will include consideration and agreement on how best to coordinate the specific resources each core partner can bring to the table. Input will also be sought from economic and small business development professionals, as well as industry and business leads from Maine's Community College and Career and Technical Education systems. The cross training approach will ensure that each partner receives the same message and information regarding resources. The training will also provide the partners with a shared toolbox of resources and will formalize relationships on behalf of employers in much the same way as MOUs currently formalize relationships between WDS partners on behalf of worker clients. As this training is expanded to workforce development system partners throughout the state, it will result in the ability of multiple partners across agencies to collaborate to provide individual employers with an Integrated Service Strategy (ISS) that documents steps the employer and various providers will take and resources the employer and various providers will bring to support the strategy.
- **Addressing Skills Gaps.** Participant training resources of each core program will be packaged to address skill gaps identified by industry partnerships and individual employers. One-stop partners currently arrange WIOA formula-funded worker services to meet employer needs, such as on-the-job (OJT) and customized training (CT) and, in partnership with adult education, industry-specific, work-ready courses.
- **Promoting the use of Vocational Rehabilitation resources.** Professional development specific to training, placing and retaining individuals with disabilities.
- **Community Block Grants.** Educate municipalities on how to maximize their Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) to train low-income individuals for specific job vacancies. Additional workforce system services include:
- **Early engagement with youth and pre-employment career development activities.**
- **Educating employers on Labor Exchange Services.** These services include the Maine Job Bank serving over 20,000 active registrants at any one time, hosting industry specific job fairs, assisting employers in creating job task statements and job vacancy listings, and participating in specialized recruitment strategies such as the recent Hire a Vet campaign.

INCREASE THE RELEVANCE OF THE WDS TO EMPLOYERS—ALIGNMENT WITH ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF THE PLAN CWRI will annually conduct a Job Vacancy Survey (JVS) to help identify and quantify skill gaps in the workforce. This information will be instrumental in guiding local training efforts to match the unfilled skilled workforce needs of employers. CWRI will also play a critical role in providing labor market information to local areas and industry partners. The information will inform case managers and participants about jobs that are in high-demand, about the employers hiring for those jobs, and the wages, benefits and types of education those jobs require. The Maine Apprenticeship Program (MAP) will work with core partners to engage employers interested in assuring a future workforce. It will also focus on placing youth participants into pre-apprenticeship programs designed to prepare them to enter and succeed in registered apprenticeship programs and the related postsecondary education and training that make up industry-sponsored apprenticeship training. Cross-agency partnerships will result in layoff aversion strategies employing skills gap analyses and effecting multi-agency collaboration for early intervention that will link struggling employers to business assistance programs and technical assistance on a just-in-time basis. WIOA, Rapid Response and set-aside funds may be used to train existing employees at risk of losing their jobs to better utilize new technologies through Incumbent Worker Training programs and delivered in partnership with Adult Education and Maine's Community College and University of Maine Systems. In January 2013, the State Board implemented a policy establishing Chambers of Commerce as required partners of Maine's workforce development system. With the goal of increasing collaboration and fostering stronger partnerships between workforce development partners and employers, local areas look to the Chambers as vital resources for business inclusion and a means to convene and educate local businesses about the many opportunities for collaboration in developing a skilled workforce. Local boards entered into agreements with Chambers that articulated the relationship and the ways in which chamber members could elicit input from employers regarding labor force needs, including skill needs, local hiring trends and more. The Bureau of Unemployment Compensation (BUC) allows workers enrolled in qualifying workforce training programs to forego the required job search while they are in training. Currently, the one-stop partners that provide the WIOA formula funded training and Registered Apprenticeship may approve a waiver for an enrolled participant. This practice will continue going forward but may be expanded to other partners offering approved training not funded by WIOA.

INCREASE THE RELEVANCE OF THE WDS TO EMPLOYERS—COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS Participants to be referred to and placed in On-the-Job or Customized Training, Pre- or regular apprenticeship, Ready2Work and other programs will be assessed and case managed by the various core partners involved. Recruitment of participants from each of the core partners and/or outside partners will involve assessment of work history and work readiness skills required by the employer and required to succeed in the specific OJT, CT, apprenticeship or integrated education and employment activity. Recognition of the learning styles and needs for supports of the individuals participating in such work-based training options will also be assessed and addressed and follow-up services and activities to ensure ongoing success will be built into the case management process.

INCREASE THE RELEVANCE OF THE WDS TO EMPLOYERS—COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS Outreach to new businesses is also critical to development of long term relationships; this can be accomplished by providing a Services Welcome Package that explains the basics of becoming a workforce system partner, surveys immediate workforce needs and underscores information and services specific to their requirements. Such guides can apprise them of staff-assisted and online tools and resources that can help with everything from Development of Job Task Statements and information about Job Design and Reengineering, to resources that help address Human Resource and Succession Planning

challenges and that ultimately enable them to analyze their workforce training needs. Each Local Workforce Board has implemented a business service approaches that identifies the plethora of resources that can be accessed to assist expanding businesses with hiring, training and other needs and explains how one-stop staff partner with outside agencies to share and receive information on business needs, creating a no-wrong-door approach. Local Workforce Boards and service providers collaborate with economic development partners to package resources for companies that are locating or expanding in Maine. Local Boards promote formal Business Services strategies that are implemented by staff in one-stops and outside partners, including the resources for preparing program participants for specific employer hiring opportunities. These tools include a brief questionnaire that guides the business representatives' initial discussions with businesses and assess their needs.

INCREASE THE RELEVANCE OF THE WDS TO EMPLOYERS—PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS The State's secondary and postsecondary institutions are committed to expanding services offered to meet the needs of current and developing industries for skilled workers. Examples of how this will be accomplished are outlined below. Educational institutions will align training and education resources to address the skill needs of Maine industries. Each layer of the State funded educational system utilizes industry advisory groups to continuously inform them about the ongoing skill needs of Maine's industry members, including the Career and Technical Education Centers (CTEs), Maine's Community College System (MCCS) and the University of Maine System (UMS). All three institutional levels currently partner with the workforce development system to assess and address the workforce needs of individual companies to varying degrees. Career and Technical Education programs develop and teach to specific industry standards and representatives from both secondary and postsecondary Carl Perkins-funded programs have participated on projects for upskilling incumbent and new workers. Internships will be utilized more aggressively to connect individuals in postsecondary training with employers. Internships can benefit employers seeking candidates with specific skills and credentials and are an effective strategy for keeping graduates in-state for employment. Internships provide students with first-hand knowledge of the opportunities available to them in Maine, and give employers access to new graduates with the skills and credentials they seek. The State Board is investigating strategies and policy actions to encourage the use of internships in order to bolster growth in the workforce. The Maine Community College System's Business and Industry Program works to develop and deliver industry-specific training to businesses across Maine and New England. One of the programs offered is the Maine Quality Centers (MQC). The MQC program funds the cost of customized classroom training for new hires and/or incumbents whose positions will be backfilled once their skills have been upgraded. The MQC program is often packaged with WIOA funded OJT resources and the Bureau of Employment Services division of the Maine Department of Labor provides specialized recruitment services to the MQC to identify participants to fill the training slots. The Maine Community College System has been a three-time recipient of TAA-CCT grants offered by the USDOL. Funds from these grants have been used by the system to develop new, employer-led training programs that are targeted to workers laid off from trade assistance certified firms. The Adult Education program in Maine has developed and delivered numerous industry-recognized credential and certificate programs to participants of WIOA Title I and IV programs. Their use of a recent State Incentive award to initiate and fund a series of employer-based training programs that include an integrated education component (contextual and academic learning in a work-based environment) is modeling the ways in which WIOA programs will partner on behalf of employers and participants going forward. They have conducted similar programs for many years as key participants in Maine's Health Care Sector strategy, which supported interaction between industry members and all levels of Maine's educational institutions to address significant skill gaps facing that industry. To meet Maine's need for credentialed workers, some system partners may allocate resources to expand college transition services and the use of college navigators. Navigators, or

mentors, have proven to be an important support to both adults and youth transitioning to post-secondary education. Maine's one-stop centers and Adult Education Programs have developed WorkReady programs designed to provide participants with the pre-employment competencies and soft skills required by employers. Some areas of the state are packaging WorkReady with academic skill training that has been customized for the employer. This training is funded and delivered through collaborations between these two partners. Local workforce areas are partnering with Career and Technical Education Centers and high schools to offer a bridge program to the community college. This program allows CTE students to take college level classes while in the secondary program and earn credits toward a college degree. This practice introduces students to college level course requirements and alleviates the perception that college is beyond their reach. Maine's Competitive Skills Scholarship Program (CSSP) rules have been revised to include the funding of college level classes for eligible high school students during their senior year. With the help of a program sponsored by the Maine Chamber of Commerce and some industry associations, internship opportunities are being identified and filled by college students, a method which further solidifies the connection between theoretical and hands on application of new learning. Supports provided by WIOA service providers and school districts will improve the odds that at-risk youth will complete high school. Additional supports and systems will also be directed toward youth who have already left school to prepare them with the education and job skills they require to engage in a career pathway.

INCREASE THE RELEVANCE OF THE WDS TO EMPLOYERS—LEVERAGING RESOURCES TO INCREASE EDUCATIONAL ACCESS Most new grant opportunities now require collaborative approaches for accessing and utilizing the funds being offered. The grant opportunities also require that resources between and among disparate partners be leveraged to the fullest extent. Of critical importance in this approach are the new conversations between industry and members of the workforce and education fields. For example, new partnerships are being formed involving the Maine Departments of Transportation; Energy; Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry; and Marine Resources to address issues facing their sectors. One strategy that is explained in detail under Aligning the State's Commitment and Investment in Maine's Workforce, is the establishment of a Maine Grant and Resource Collaborative (MGRC). The purpose of the collaborative is to share information about new resources and grant opportunities and to implement a warehouse of ready-to-use data to support writing and facilitating grants and grant collaboration.

INCREASE THE RELEVANCE OF THE WDS TO EMPLOYERS— IMPROVING ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS Training and education resources will be aligned to training needs based on data extrapolated from the Job Vacancy Survey. Direct involvement with Regional Project Advisory Groups (resulting from SP-NEG and other initiatives) will inform system partners about the immediate skills needs of key Maine industries. The RPAGs will also be involved in identifying and endorsing new industry recognized credentials being developed and offered by Maine's educational institutions. Newly trained employer resource/ business services representatives will be able to promote industry-led training initiatives, like the Registered Apprenticeship, Maine Quality Centers, and Discretionary Grant training initiatives that assist with the cost of tuition and wages and allow workers to achieve industry recognized credentials. New articulation agreements between educational institutions will be developed and implemented to create career pathways that allow Maine workers and students to progress in skill and credential attainment in specific career trajectories. **INCREASE THE RELEVANCE OF THE WDS TO EMPLOYERS—COORDINATING WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES** Workforce development strategies at the regional and local level are an integrated component of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) of the Economic Development Districts. Workforce development resources are promoted by the Maine Department of Economic and

Community Development by Account Executives who work hand-in-hand with workforce development partners across the State to address the workforce needs of Maine's employers. Local Workforce Development Boards engage local and regional economic development partners in their local and regional planning efforts. The Bureau of Employment Services works in partnership with the Governor's office and other entities to articulate the menu of workforce services that companies considering moving to Maine can take advantage of.

2. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: PRODUCE AN EDUCATED AND SKILLED WORKFORCE Large proportions of adults in the United States and Maine have poor literacy, numeracy and problem solving skills. The October 2013, International Survey of Adult Skills pointed out that in the areas of cognitive and workplace skills needed for success in the 21st century economy, the United States ranked 11th of the 13 countries (listed in order: Japan, Finland, Netherlands, Germany, Australia, Canada, Korea, England/North Ireland, Poland, France, United States, Italy, Spain) surveyed in math. In literacy, the United States ranked 9th (listed in order: Japan, Finland, Netherlands, Australia, Canada, Korea, England/North Ireland, Germany, United States, Poland, France, Spain, Italy). These low skills are linked not only to employment outcomes, but also to personal and social well-being. Across the United States, for example, the odds of being in poor health are four times greater for low-skilled adults than for those with the highest proficiency – double the average across other industrialized countries. The skills and abilities of the workforce also play a critical role in economic outcomes. Human capital drives productivity, business investment and economic competitiveness. Skilled and productive workers are more likely to find and remain in jobs, earn higher wages and incomes, and ultimately require lower levels of public assistance. A skilled and productive workforce will foster greater economic competitiveness, enabling Maine to better retain existing businesses—and draw in new ones that bring good jobs and attract new families. These actions will also help address Maine's aging population, lack of population growth and contracting workforce problems. Given the far reaching benefits to Maine's people and economy, the development of Maine's human capital is a strategic imperative. The current landscape suggests much work needs to be accomplished in developing Maine's current and future workforce—

- One third of high school graduates do not pursue any training beyond high school;
- Of those that pursue postsecondary training, many require academic remediation;
- Of those that enroll in postsecondary training, many do not finish—just 26 percent of those that started an associate degree program finished within three years and forty-eight percent of those who started a University of Maine System bachelor's degree program earned the credential;
- Overall levels of educational attainment in Maine are below that of the New England region.

To facilitate the development of a high performance workforce, Maine will establish a comprehensive Career Pathways system that results in seamless transitions from the K-12, adult, postsecondary and workforce systems. As defined by WIOA, this Career Pathways system will be built on the integration of high quality and rigorous education (from foundational skills to credentials to advanced degrees) and training that align the efforts of education, employer groups, and workforce and training agencies with the employment needs of business and industry. A State Team for Education Pathways (STEP) will be essential to successful Career Pathways implementation. In collaboration with the State Board, key players at the Department of Education, the Maine Community College System, and the University of Maine System, employer associations, Local Workforce Development Boards, Educate Maine, Maine Development Foundation and others will meet regularly to design, craft, and implement the shared vision. Increased postsecondary educational attainment aligned with current and future workforce needs will be a critical focus of these efforts. Maine's Career Pathways approach will focus on building the educational, employability and occupational skills of the population and developing pathways that lead to in-demand credentials, marketable skills and jobs. These pathways will align education, training and employment services delivery systems to create more seamless paths for individuals to attain credentials and find in-demand jobs.

PRODUCE AN EDUCATED AND SKILLED WORKFORCE—CORE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES TO IMPLEMENT THE STATE’S STRATEGY Action steps—the STEP will :

- Adopt and articulate a shared vision of the career pathway system in Maine that clearly delineates each partner’s roles and responsibilities (e.g., through memoranda of understanding);
- Demonstrate leadership and commitment to institutionalizing career pathways through collaborative leadership and a commitment to building, sustaining, and scaling up career pathways. This approach becomes the way business is done on a regular basis;
- Ensure that career pathways are demand-driven, with a focus on needed workforce credentials within key sectors as identified by employers. The career pathway system is responsive to the specific, dynamic contexts of the regional labor market and significantly engages multiple employers within a sector or occupational area in an interactive, ongoing working relationship with Local Workforce Development Boards and their partners;
- Ensure that career pathways provide the knowledge and skills necessary for employability;
- Align policies, measures, and funding: Partners align related policies, performance and accountability measures, and funding for career pathways, including through the use of aligned and braided funding across funding streams;
- Provide equal access to opportunities through the implementation of universal design;
- Use and promote data and continuous improvement strategies: Partners are data-driven and focus on continuously improving efforts by measuring participants’ interim and ultimate outcomes as well as process indicators;
- Support professional development: Partners support robust and ongoing professional development for career pathways practitioners and administrators;
- Support local team efforts to form, design, pilot, launch, and grow a local or regional career pathway system. The state team (STEP) supports the local team with consistent messaging, administrative policies and legislation that aids local implementation and statewide growth or replication;
- Ensure senior or political leaders as well as other stakeholders in the state/region/ local areas are kept well informed and actively support the initiative;
- Develop a statewide goal for postsecondary credential attainment;
- Collaborate with the K–12 education system to promote awareness of in-demand occupations ;
- Research and identify industry recognized credentials relative to Maine. In order to ensure equal participant access to career pathways, state and local practitioners will mindfully reduce any barriers to the pathways and improve transition to education and employment through the use of accessible on ramps. These “on ramps” can take the shape of remedial education through foundational skill development, as well as multiple entry and exit points toward career goals. Pathways will also be characterized by multiple points of entry, flexible formats and competency based programming that focuses on learning outcomes and in-demand skills. Foundational skills provide an individual with essential knowledge, skills and understanding that enable them to operate confidently, effectively and independently in life and work. The skills taught help students to participate and progress in education, training and employment. Working on foundational skills helps develop and secure the broader range of aptitudes, attitudes and behaviors that enable students to make a positive contribution to the communities in which they live and work. The core programs will emphasize the development of foundational skills to ensure that individuals are properly prepared for entry and success in the workplace. Examples of core partner projects to support that preparation include WorkReady training; pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship; integrated education and training (IET), which combines targeted classroom instruction with the development of a lattice of required occupational skills; employment services; as well as foundational skills education in the areas of reading, numeracy and literacy. The core partners will also engage in robust dropout prevention efforts and the development of coordinated educational, employment and support services for populations with barriers. Activities such as intensive academic and career exploration and advising by adult education and vocational rehabilitation, and career pathway awareness by employment services will be aligned.

PRODUCE AN EDUCATED AND SKILLED WORKFORCE –ALIGNMENT WITH ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE PLAN In order to develop a Career Pathway system that is characterized by multiple entry and exit points, supportive and navigation services; activities provided through the core

programs will be aligned with programs and activities outside the Unified Plan whenever feasible. These will include, but not be limited to, registered apprenticeship, TANF, Jobs Corp, Department of Corrections, FSET and other one-stop partners. The State Team for Education Pathways (STEP) will take the lead on the development of articulation agreements and MOUs that delineate roles and responsibilities amongst educational and training providers. Additional agreements on methods of skills assessment and academic or technical standards will be vetted among education and training agencies, particularly with industry recognized credentials, in order to successfully measure skill attainment. As a result of MOUs developed to govern these relationships, partners will be able to bundle a variety of programs and services that best meet client goals. Co-location of services at one-stop centers whenever possible will help facilitate access to career pathway services and information on foundational skills training programs.

PRODUCE AN EDUCATED AND SKILLED WORKFORCE –COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS As part of this Unified Plan, the core partners will strive for a statewide universal design approach that eliminates barriers to facilities, materials and services. Coordinated activities and resources will provide high quality, customer centered services to individuals. These activities will include: • Learner-centered approaches to instruction and occupational training; • Appropriate and meaningful assessments of participants' educational and occupational skills (including prior learning assessments) and needs (including accessibility needs for participants with disabilities); • Supportive services, including academic supports (e.g., tutoring and advising); nonacademic supports (e.g., child care, transportation, and financial assistance); career exploration; and navigation assistance through the career pathway program and, ideally, into retained employment; • Accessible buildings; • Expanding the use of technology to increase access to workforce development services; • Quality work experiences, including job placement assistance and, ideally, quality sector/occupation specific pre-employment work experiences (e.g., apprenticeships, internships). The Career Pathways approach will also encourage the use of flexible formats and competency based programming. The STEP will also investigate and incorporate best practices in the use of technology to extend Pathways and online learning opportunities to individuals in remote locations or with limited ability to access physical locations.

PRODUCE AN EDUCATED AND SKILLED WORKFORCE –COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS Maine's core partners believe that developing the skills and credentials of the workforce will benefit employers, as skilled and productive workers are the lifeblood of any business. Through deeper and broader Industry Partnerships (discussed under "Increase the relevance of the workforce development system (WDS) to employers"), STEP will engage with employers to identify in-demand skills and qualifications and build a systematic structure for receiving feedback regarding employer's skilled workforce needs. This engagement will result in education and training programs that are aligned with employer input, and as a result, relevant and directly applicable to Maine industries. In addition, by funding and aligning activities that develop the general skill levels of the population (numeracy, literacy, technology, etc.), the core programs and WDS will be increasing the long term value add of the workforce. STEP will also encourage expansion of the number of registered apprenticeships and on-the-job opportunities, and incumbent worker training opportunities to advance to higher level positions, and expand pre-employment training to reduce costs of onboarding new employees.

PRODUCE AN EDUCATED AND SKILLED WORKFORCE—PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS The United States is facing a workforce crisis due to the increasing numbers of adults with low levels in their foundational skills. Nationally, one in six has low literacy skills, one in three has low numeracy skills, and one-third of those with low foundational skills are immigrants (Making Skills Everyone's Business, February 2015, Figures 3–4). Maine businesses cite the need for highly skilled workers. Yet census data shows that the postsecondary degree attainment rate is substantially lower

here compared to New England, a fact which lowers Maine's competitiveness in attracting and retaining employers. Coupled with a decreasing number of young people entering the workforce, Maine must take appropriate steps to educate and upskill adults. Due to current funding limitations, Maine Adult Education programs are able to serve only 25,000 of the out-of-school youth and working aged adults in need of secondary credentials, postsecondary preparation programs, English as a Second Language instruction, and job skills acquisition assistance. Under the direction of the State Board, Maine Adult Education will convene the STEP. The STEP will then work with other educational agencies, workforce system partners, and industry stakeholders on strategies to address low levels of foundational skills and credential attainment that are barriers to employment. Included in the work of the STEP will be the development of opportunities for the development of career pathways. Only by working together will the downward trend from secondary to postsecondary in credential attainment be reversed. Outcomes will include:

- Establishment of MOUs amongst educational providers (such as the community college system, the university system, private postsecondary institutions, proprietary schools and others) that include processes for referring clients to the most appropriate service provider to address the issue of foundational skills attainment;
- Engagement with employers to develop Career Pathways to serve the needs of area employers that progress from foundational skills curricula to higher level degree and certifications attainment;
- Expansion of English Language Acquisition offerings;
- Increased referrals between programs and services;
- Improved communication and knowledge sharing among programs and services;
- Initiation of a public communications plan regarding availability of services;
- Establishment of a continuum of educational and employment skills services and certifications along a workers career pathway;
- Improvement of transition services for adults and youth from education to employment;
- Increased educational attainment.

PRODUCE AN EDUCATED AND SKILLED WORKFORCE—LEVERAGING RESOURCES TO INCREASE EDUCATIONAL ACCESS The issue of producing an educated and skilled workforce in Maine is not solely a foundational skills issue. Occupational projections to 2022 indicate that 60 percent of net job growth is expected to occur in positions requiring postsecondary education. There are currently an estimated 230,000 adults who have some college experience, but no degree (Adult Baccalaureate Completion/Distance Education Report, June 2013, UMS). Taking steps to reengage these adults in a Career Pathway must be another priority of Maine's workforce development system. No one core partner, external agency or employer has the resources to address all of the concerns related to creating a skilled workforce. To address this reality, Maine is committed to the development of a thorough understanding of the resources that each participant brings to the system, as well as the requirements for their use. The core partners also recognize that only by leveraging the system's resources as a whole will the State be able to produce and maintain a highly educated and skilled workforce. Educate Maine and Maine Development Foundation (MDF) is valuable educational and workforce system resources. The vision of Educate Maine, that "Maine's students and workers will be the best educated and highly skilled in the world," closely parallels that of Maine's workforce development system as outlined in this Unified Plan. This business led organization is committed to the areas of college and career readiness and increased educational attainment. Maine Development Foundation is a membership organization with a strategic focus on the State's long-term economic growth. An important MDF program is Next Step Maine. Next Step Maine is collaborating with business, community members and educational partners to increase the educational attainment of Maine's employees. As members of STEP, both Educate Maine and MDF have agreed to actively participate with Maine's workforce system to attain the state's goal of developing an educated and skilled workforce. The work these agencies are already doing in convening stakeholders from business, industry, education and training will be invaluable as all partners collaborate to leverage resources toward common workforce goals. To address that common goal, the following need to occur:

- Adult Education will continue to receive the state funds needed to offer Maine College Transitions, a cost effective and successful college readiness

program; • Institutions of higher education will acknowledge that, whenever possible, referrals to adult education should be the first choice for the delivery of developmental courses • Co-location of adult education programs on college campuses and the offering of college credit bearing classes at adult education sites will increase; • Collaboration and MOUs with STEP partners to develop and align strategies to leverage resources; • Employers will receive financial benefits for supporting educational opportunities for entry-level and incumbent workers; • Joint professional development for intake and advising staff of educational and workforce system partners to improve integration of services and the ability to engage any and all appropriate providers to best meet client needs; • Elimination of barriers for evaluation of foreign secondary and postsecondary credentials; • Articulation agreements between core partners and educational institutions, which make optimal use of the resources available to produce an educated and skilled workforce; • Establish and work toward a statewide postsecondary credential attainment goal.

PRODUCE AN EDUCATED AND SKILLED WORKFORCE—IMPROVING ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS The accomplishment of this strategy begins when the client first enters into the educational and workforce development systems. Effective strategies, including intake, career and academic assessments, advising, and the identification of any needed support services, must occur to help a client identify their career goals. Timeliness is also a critical factor to address when aiding a student on their Career Pathway. To accelerate a student's credential attainment, Maine will implement Integrated Education and Training (IET) whenever feasible. This approach provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities for a specific occupation or credential. As a result of MOUs developed to govern these relationships, the following services have been identified as essential to student persistence and success in reaching their career goals. Improved and equal access to postsecondary credentials will result from: • Clearly articulated Career Pathways established by educational institutions and employers that provide the step-by-steps to career attainment and advancement; • Co-location of basic skills instruction at appropriate core partner facilities and institutions of higher education; • Raised rigor of adult education instructional practices as a result of implementing research-based best practices and implementation of College and Career Readiness Standards for Adults; • Establishment of interventions to help students avoid developmental education and move forward to degree attainment courses; • Combining contextualized foundational skills with occupational and/or college coursework; • Lowered costs to assess prior learning experiences for awarding of credit; • Forgiveness of financial obligations to postsecondary institutions that may prevent readmission; • Integration of foundational skills into credit-bearing classes to accelerate path to certificates and credentials through IET; • Flexed schedules of educational and training offerings to reduce scheduling conflicts for working students; • Expansion and promotion of use of technology and reasonable accommodations to broaden student access to educational offerings.

PRODUCE AN EDUCATED AND SKILLED WORKFORCE—COORDINATING WITH ECONOMIC STRATEGIES Reaching the vision of a prosperous Maine economy depends upon the alignment and coordination of the efforts of state and local government, employers, and the workforce development and educational systems. This coordination and alignment will include: • Workforce and employer data driven decision making; • Labor Market Information and data trends shared amidst all Core Partners; • Promotion of Maine's education and training capacity; • Development of a Workforce Development Directory that provides names and contact information for subject matter experts; • Intentional education and training efforts aligned with sector needs; • Open lines of informed communication between state and local economic development agencies, the workforce development system, education institutions, programs and partners to ensure employer awareness of workforce development system assets to employers.

3. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: ALIGN THE STATE'S COMMITMENT AND INVESTMENT IN MAINE'S WORKFORCE Developing a high quality workforce—one that is globally competitive and continuously well prepared to succeed in current and future careers—requires the commitment and alignment of resources that extend beyond the public workforce system. For Maine to lead in talent, technology and innovation, all stakeholders—employers, policy makers, and legislators must be invested in the process and outcome.

ALIGN THE STATE'S COMMITMENT AND INVESTMENT IN MAINE'S WORKFORCE – CORE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES TO IMPLEMENT THE STATE'S STRATEGY Commissioners of the core program are represented on the State Board. This ensures a level of equal representation and collaboration to initiate state level system changes. The State Board has also established a Program Policy Committee. This committee is made up of the program directors of the core partner agencies and other stakeholders. This group addresses and engages in deliberate discussions regarding alignment of core (and other) program policies, activities and resources on an on-going basis. The outcomes of this group are presented to the State Board for consideration and implementation.

ALIGN THE STATE'S COMMITMENT AND INVESTMENT IN MAINE'S WORKFORCE —ALIGN WITH ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE CORE PROGRAMS As authorized by WIOA, the State Board is also comprised of non-required WIOA partners. Their expertise, knowledge and resources in the areas of educating and training a skilled workforce will be of great benefit. The State Board will make use of every opportunity to educate the entire legislature about workforce development activities, challenges, and infrastructure. The State Board is required to submit an annual report to the governor and legislature regarding workforce development activity on each January 1. To create an additional opportunity to educate the legislature regarding the challenges and opportunities related to workforce development, the State Board will request time on the Labor Commerce Research & Economic Development Committee meeting agenda to present the annual report and answer questions. The State Board will work with the Maine Development Foundation (MDF) to ensure that workforce development is addressed as part of the Maine Policy Leaders Academy program curriculum and to provide opportunities for legislators to learn about workforce development activity happening across the state. The MDF administers the Maine Policy Leaders Academy, a non-partisan educational program for Legislators that focuses on the Maine economy. The program goal is better-informed decision-making by Maine's legislators who learn about Maine's dynamic economy and the drivers of long-term growth and what it takes to achieve job creation. The program also focuses on Maine's regional economies and the interdependence and differences among these regions, as well as how business operates and how investment decisions are made, so policy makers are aware of the impact of public policy decisions on businesses and regional economies.

ALIGN THE STATE'S COMMITMENT AND INVESTMENT IN MAINE'S WORKFORCE — COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS AND EMPLOYERS The State Board, core partners and one-stop partner agencies will work toward funding for the implementation of Title 26, Chapter 39, Maine Industry Partnerships, Sections 3301 – 3401 (this title may be accessed at, http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/26/title_26sec3301.html). This statute establishes a cooperative approach to ensuring that Maine offers and fills high-skill, high-demand, and livable-wage jobs required by Maine's industries. It provides clarity on the benefits of such a partnership, identifies roles and responsibilities, delineates action steps to be taken and articulates objectives to be met. The Statute explains how, at a minimum, agency stakeholders can and should collaborate, and how they may measure and evaluate success and develop and adopt rules. The Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI), the labor market information organization within the State Workforce Agency, will annually conduct a job vacancy survey that will be used to foster greater alignment between the supply and demand for labor. The survey currently provides valuable information on unfilled positions by occupation and region. Going forward, CWRI will enhance the questionnaire to identify the skills that employers are seeking but find in short supply. To date, this information has been unavailable, which has made aligning supply and demand for labor challenging. Understanding both job positions and skills in demand will be instrumental in allocating

training and education resources. This will result in more efficient delivery of services to both individuals and employers. **ALIGN THE STATE'S COMMITMENT AND INVESTMENT IN MAINE'S WORKFORCE — PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS** Maine will establish a grant and resource collaborative to strengthen the state's ability to compete for workforce system grants. The collaborative will establish relationships between state, regional and local agencies, nonprofits, private and public sector entities and other stakeholders. The collaborative will increase the capacity of the stakeholders to nimbly compete for grants and/or resources in a manner that ensures alignment, prioritization and appropriate leveraging of shared investments. The collaborative will establish criteria for measuring success.

An effective grant and resource collaborative requires: – A broad representation of stakeholders; – A forum for information exchange and strategic planning regarding how, when and with whom we collaborate to compete for, or support attainment of, grants or philanthropic resources; – An up-to-date clearing house of grant and resource opportunities; – An up-to-date warehouse of ready-to-use information required by most grants (i.e.: stakeholder descriptions, stakeholder qualifications, state, regional, and local data pertaining to needs or capacity and/or where to access such data, etc.); – Identification and clarity on the mission of the collaborative and development of by-laws, policies and procedures on how the collaborative will function; – Education of collaborative members regarding successfully competing for resources; – Talent/staff or access to talent/staff capable of facilitating information exchange and stakeholder collaboration to complete for specific grant opportunities; and – Establishment of a resource exchange (one person's junk is another's treasure).

The State will bring together providers of adult education, postsecondary education, training, career and technical education, eligible providers, libraries, and workforce partners to work with employers, and office of economic development to identify educational and training elements that will be necessary to establish appropriate pathways to employment. It is critical that these groups meet to develop programs and services that are in alignment with available employment opportunities. In addition to the State Employment Partners (STEP), meetings will be held regularly with one-stop partners and the local workforce boards to prioritize needs and identify resources that can be brought to bear to address these needs.

With the establishment of a career pathways approach, educational and training providers will work with employers to identify sectors and identify the role various providers can play in aiding adults to pursue their career pathway for employment within that sector.

ALIGN THE STATE'S COMMITMENT AND INVESTMENT IN MAINE'S WORKFORCE — LEVERAGING RESOURCES TO INCREASE EDUCATIONAL ACCESS All levels of Maine's education community will be represented on the State Board. The Commissioner of the Department of Education, the Chancellor of the University of Maine system and the President of the Community College system will all be voting members of the State Board. Education representatives will participate in the visioning and development of the State's Strategic Workforce Plan. The three day Vision Session last summer hosted by the State Board included representatives from the University System, Community College system, Career & Technical Education and Adult Education. **ALIGN THE STATE'S COMMITMENT AND INVESTMENT IN MAINE'S WORKFORCE —IMPROVING ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS** Maine will establish a quantifiable state goal related to degree and credential attainment. The future success of Maine's economy is directly connected to having an educated and skilled workforce. As such, efforts must be made to increase the education attainment levels for all citizens as well as increasing skills and related credentials in demand by employers. The State Board and the STEP will work to establish a realistic state degree and credential attainment goal that is supported by all stakeholders. **ALIGN THE STATE'S**

COMMITMENT AND INVESTMENT IN MAINE'S WORKFORCE —COORDINATING WITH ECONOMIC STRATEGIES Maine will establish a State Board comprised of additional non-required WIOA partners who are involved in Education, Economic or Workforce Development, and have resources dedicated to educating and training a skilled workforce. The State Board, as required by WIOA, will have the benefit of additional knowledge, expertise, and resources related to educating and training a skilled workforce as a component of the State Board. As noted in, ALIGN THE STATE'S COMMITMENT AND INVESTMENT IN MAINE'S WORKFORCE —ALIGN WITH ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE CORE PROGRAMS, the State Board will work with the Maine Development Foundation (MDF) to ensure that workforce development is addressed as part of the Maine Policy Leaders Academy program curriculum and to provide opportunities for Legislators to learn about workforce development activity happening across the state. The Maine Policy Leaders Academy delivers a non-partisan educational program on Maine's economy to Legislators. The program's goal is better-informed decision-making by Maine's Legislators who learn about Maine's dynamic economy, the drivers of long-term growth and what it takes to achieve job creation. The State Board will also work to inform the Maine Legislature about workforce development activities, challenges, and infrastructure. The State Board submits an Annual Report to the Governor and Legislature regarding workforce development activity in the State for the previous year. The report is due January 1st each year; however, the Legislature is not in session on that date. Reports end up in a pile of competing papers waiting for Senators and Representatives to return. To increase the likelihood of elected officials having the opportunity to be educated and to understand the challenges and opportunities related to workforce development, the State Board will request time on the Labor Commerce Research & Economic Development Committee meeting agenda to present the report directly to the committee and answer any questions related to the report. Despite widespread support for Industry Partnership legislation, the statute was passed unfunded. The absence of financial resources as greatly restricted the ability to accomplish the goals of this important workforce legislation. The proposed expanded State Board will be the ideal catalyst for moving this statute off the page and into action and for expanding on the work objectives already outlined therein. The statute at Title 26, Chapter 39, and Sections 3301 through 3401 can be access at: http://www.mainelegislature.or/legis/statutes/26/title_26sec3301.html

4. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: INCREASE WDS OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS In order for Maine to achieve its vision, it is critical that the operational effectiveness of the workforce development system (WDS) increases. As a large geographic state with unique demographics and very limited resources, Maine needs to develop a nimble, efficient and effective approach to meet the workforce needs of current and future employers. Working together, the core partners are committed to aligning and integrating their systems to ensure optimal access for Maine's workforce and employers. To that end, initiatives will be pursued that improve customer navigation, data sharing, and continuous improvement through evaluation, accountability, and data driven decision making. INCREASE WDS OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS—CORE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES TO IMPLEMENT THE PROGRAM Maine's core programs will review policies and procedures, make modifications to improve shared customer flow and standardize practices on a statewide basis. These will be agreed upon in written Memoranda of Understanding and implemented through individualized service strategies for both workforce participants and employers. WDS public facing points of contact will have a broad base of knowledge that will increase effectiveness in connecting customers to needed services. Data compilation and evaluation are the cornerstones to increase WDS operational effectiveness and the core programs will work to reduce barriers in data sharing while being vigilant about confidentiality and information security. This will result in a more accurate analysis of Maine's WDS, and support continuous improvement within and across programs. INCREASE WDS OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS—ALIGNMENT WITH ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE PLAN To increase WDS operational effectiveness, the core partners will make optimal use of other resources that can support Maine's workforce and employers. Partnerships with other state

agencies, such as the Departments of Health and Human Services and Economic and Community Development, are critical to maximizing federal and state resources while reducing duplicative or parallel efforts. Although out of the direct purview of the WDS, Maine's infrastructure directly impacts the success of Maine workers and employers; the core partners will work to ensure that activities conducted as part of the Unified State Plan are in alignment with the realities and opportunities of such things as transportation and broadband technology. **INCREASE WDS OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS—COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS** The core programs are in agreement about the importance of a coordinated customer service approach that reflects aligned and integrated goals to ensure the operational effectiveness of Maine's WDS. Specifically, a project has been identified that focuses upon the ease of participant navigation; articulates pathways from education to careers; makes effective use of the web for information and a broad range of learning experiences; and ultimately aligns programs, so that they are user friendly and easily accessible to participants, including those with disabilities. Direct input from workforce participants will ensure that the design is human-centered and effective. Individualized career plans will be the primary tool used to ensure that activities are coordinated and that resources are effectively used across programs to provide comprehensive and high quality services.

INCREASE WDS OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS—COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS The core programs are in agreement about the need to recognize employers as important WDS customers and intend to use local, regional and state plans to align programs and activities to best provide services to employers. Partnerships with businesses and sector strategies will assist the WDS in being knowledgeable about current and projected workforces needs, so that workforce training, education and employment placement are job-driven and forward thinking.

INCREASE WDS OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS—PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS Educational institutions are key partners of the core programs in Maine's WDS. This strategic objective intends to increase the effectiveness in how partners work together. Through the establishment of articulation agreements, joint professional development and a focus on best practices that reduce barriers to employment, partners will define and align the education system to meet the strategic vision. The State's education and training systems must provide job-driven instruction as part of a cohesive continuum that includes secondary schools, adult education, community colleges, and universities, as well as on-the-job training and apprenticeship.

INCREASE WDS OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS—LEVERAGING RESOURCES TO INCREASE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT Maine's core partners have limited funding. Subsequently, all available resources must be accessed for Maine's workforce to increase its educational attainment and for the WDS to be as operationally effective as possible. Frontline case managers need to be fully knowledgeable of what is available and able to guide individuals to appropriate core program services, and other available benefits such as Federal Financial Aid, TANF/ASPIRE, and other grants. Data sharing and greater transparency of outcomes will assist in determining the best return on investments in developing an educated and skill workforce that meets the needs of Maine employers. **INCREASE WDS OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS—IMPROVING ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS** As mentioned previously, Maine has identified a project that focuses on the ease of participant navigation and articulates pathways from education to career to improve access to activities that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials. Articulation agreements will be developed to improve the admission practices for adult learners and establish better supports to successful completion. These steps will result in more workers being able to

obtain the necessary credentials for career advancement. As part of increasing the WDS operational effectiveness, the core partners will address student loan debt issues that prohibit readmission and consider incentives for graduates to stay and work in Maine. Additionally, efforts will be made to improve the transition of students from high school to community college and university, including advocating for smoother credit transfers between institutions.

INCREASE WDS OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS—COORDINATING WITH ECONOMIC STRATEGIES For optimal effectiveness, WDS programs will take deliberate steps to align with regional economic development initiatives throughout the state. The WDS will collaborate with the Department of Economic and Community Development to support incentives for businesses to relocate or remain in Maine. Ongoing audits of existing programs will ensure either continuous improvement or elimination of activities that do not meet expected outcomes. Communication mechanisms will be enhanced to enhance data sharing for workforce preparation and economic development, specifically ensuring that it is available to the frontline employment counselors, job seekers, and employers.

5. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: GROW AND DIVERSIFY MAINE'S WORKFORCE THROUGH IMPROVED ACCESS AND ENGAGEMENT Due to natural attrition and low levels of in-migration, Maine's population is no longer increasing. In addition, the age structure of the population is such that, the number expected to retire and flow out of the workforce over the next 20 years exceeds the number of youth that are projected to enter. These dynamics threaten Maine's economic vitality. According to economic projections, six out of every seven job openings in Maine over the next several years will be to replace existing workers leaving the labor force. There must be a commitment to grow and diversify Maine's workforce to improve access and engagement by implementing two basic strategies: increasing participation in the workforce among the existing population, and attracting people from outside the state to live and work in Maine.

GROW AND DIVERSIFY MAINE'S WORKFORCE THROUGH IMPROVED ACCESS AND ENGAGEMENT—CORE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES TO IMPLEMENT THE STATE'S STRATEGIES To meet this challenge, Maine's core programs are committed to grow and diversify Maine's workforce through improved access and engagement by developing strategies to engage populations that tend to have lower labor participation rates including, but not limited to, people with disabilities, veterans, women, older workers, people without a high school diploma, ex-offenders, individuals with language barriers, female heads of households with dependent children and out of school youth. Reflecting these ideas, state agencies are adopting the slogan, "We need every Mainer." The State Board recognizes that innovative strategies and policies must also be created to attract new residents. Current policies such as Veteran's pensions being state tax exempt create powerful incentives to draw new Mainers. The State Board is investigating the factors that cause in-migration, researching best practices regarding relevant policy actions and considering strategies to incentivize the flow of individuals to Maine. The State Board recognizes that innovative strategies and policies must also be created to attract new residents. Current policies such as Veteran's pensions being state tax exempt create powerful incentives to draw new Mainers. Accordingly, the Board is investigating the factors that cause in-migration, researching best practices regarding relevant policy actions and considering strategies to incentivize the flow of individuals to Maine. Core programs will also offer increased support and engagement for Maine's growing foreign born populations—refugees, asylum seekers, and foreign trained professionals. To grow the economy, transitioning these populations into employees must become a priority for policy makers and for employers. The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services has an established record of success in increasing access to employment for individuals with barriers, as well as conducting successful employer outreach. They will take the lead and work closely with other core partners in designing

and implementing a coordinated approach to services. In Maine, the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services is housed under the Department of Labor and as such, already has an established presence at one-stops throughout the state. With the Bureau of Rehabilitation Service's guidance, core programs will develop an outreach plan to better support target populations. The outreach plan will include the following components:

- Integrated, comprehensive intake and assessment process;
- Case management system for navigational support;
- Shared vision of a career pathways system accessible for all participants;
- Identification of barriers specific to each group to better align strategies and provide support;
- Ensured accessibility of universal services among all core partners;
- Interagency professional development, training, and cross-information regarding accessibility practices and available services;
- Coordinated employer outreach and engagement.

To tap into the full potential of the overlooked populations of the labor pool, it is essential to develop a system where the coordination of services and a robust referral system are the norm. Central to the outreach plan outlined above is the development of a cross agency case management system for all program participants. The case management approach is especially relevant for participants with barriers to employment to ensure accessibility to universal services. Case managers will help participants navigate through the workforce development system and serve as liaisons between departments and agencies. Core partners are committed to working together to develop statewide, interagency training of frontline staff to ensure that all partners are aware of the programs and services offered within the workforce development system.

GROW AND DIVERSIFY MAINE'S WORKFORCE THROUGH IMPROVED ACCESS AND ENGAGEMENT—ALIGNMENT WITH ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF THE PLAN

Veterans and incarcerated individuals are just two of the target populations whose primary agencies are outside the core partners. As such, establishing strong partnerships with the Bureau of Maine Veterans Services and the Department of Corrections (DOC) is essential. For example, the Coastal Counties local workforce development region has a Veterans Services Workgroup. The number of prisoners sentenced to the DOC each year from the courts has been approximately the same for several years and is anticipated to remain stable. In 2014 the MDOC received a total of 1,218 prisoners from the courts. With the average length of incarceration being 18 months, DOC anticipates releasing approximately 1,200 prisoners this year. Over the next 5 years, approximately 6,000 prisoners will be released from DOC and return to communities all over the state. From the moment someone enters into the corrections system, efforts should be underway to provide them with the education and skills needed to prepare for employment. Maine Adult Education works closely with the Department of Corrections to provide integrated and aligned professional development opportunities for Corrections educators. Existing MOUs at both the state and local level established high school equivalency education and testing in corrections facilities. Both agencies are working together on re-entry efforts to provide incarcerated individuals with a smoother, more fluid transfer from the corrections facilities to further education and training through adult education. Additionally, the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services has identified liaisons to each of Maine's correctional facilities as outlined in an MOU, which ensures that those with disabilities have the opportunity to access VR services upon their release from incarceration. There is also a need for increased accessibility for Maine's growing ESOL populations. Refugees, asylum seekers, and foreign trained professionals face unique challenges to entering the workforce. Cumbersome credentialing issues and limited financial assistance to pay for prior learning assessments keep many new Mainers from accessing appropriate training and employment opportunities. In addition to creating additional opportunities for English language acquisition, core partners will engage with other WDS stakeholders to work with the state licensing department to try and streamline the foreign credentialing process. Robust navigation services among all partners are essential to ensuring full accessibility for Maine's most in need. Core partners are committed to reaching out to the following programs to establish articulation agreements and MOUs where they do not exist and to strengthen them where they do. Programs included in outreach efforts include, but are not limited to, Catholic Charities, DHHS, Goodwill, the

University and Community College Systems, LearningWorks, Coastal Enterprises, the Department of Corrections, National Farmworkers Jobs Program, Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), National Able (SCSEP), faith based organizations, recovery centers and other community based organizations.

GROW AND DIVERSIFY MAINE'S WORKFORCE THROUGH IMPROVED ACCESS AND ENGAGEMENT—COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS In addition to the outreach plan designed specifically to ensure accessibility of programming among those most in need, Maine's core partners will strive for a statewide universal design of coordinated activities and resources to provide high quality, customer centered services to all individuals. Core partner coordinated activities include: • Learner-centered approaches to instruction and occupational training; • Appropriate and meaningful assessments of participants' educational and occupational skills (including prior learning assessments) and needs (including accessibility needs for participants with disabilities); • Supportive services, including academic supports (e.g., tutoring and advising); nonacademic supports (e.g. child care, transportation, and financial assistance); career exploration; and navigation assistance through the career pathway program and ideally, into retained employment; • Expanded use of technology to increase access to workforce development services; • Quality work experiences, including job placement assistance and ideally, quality sector/occupation specific pre-employment work experiences (e.g., apprenticeships, internships). With this customized approach, all participants, including the target populations, are able to access the programming and services necessary to become fully engaged in the workforce system. For example, by working with individuals using various tools, such as Discovering Personal Genius and Customized Employment, the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services will encourage some individuals with significant disabilities to consider self-employment as a viable option with appropriate supports.

GROW AND DIVERSIFY MAINE'S WORKFORCE THROUGH IMPROVED ACCESS AND ENGAGEMENT—COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS As spearheaded by the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, the core partners will coordinate and align services to employers that will encourage and support them in the hiring of individuals with disabilities. Partners will inform employers of the value in Maine's Business Leadership Network, which is offered through the Maine State Chamber of Commerce and supported by the Maine Department of Labor and the Department of Health and Human Services. The Network provides a forum that encourages business to business discussions about hiring people with disabilities. The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services will also utilize in-house business relations specialists to help provide the needed connections between Vocational Rehabilitation staff, clients seeking employment, providers and employers. Core partners are committed to providing a coordinated approach to simplify and streamline the flow of information to employers. For example, employers need clear, concise information regarding the hiring of foreign trained workers, including information on credentialing, as well as worker visa distinctions and refugee status definitions. A coordinated approach to integrated staff development throughout the core partners and a streamlined informational repository will give employers quick and easy access to the information on their own. This repository will also provide the same, consistent information throughout the workforce system. Given the prospect of a declining population and workforce, businesses will be encouraged to adopt more flexible work policies to attract and maintain older or remote workers, and to utilize technology to overcome skill and geographic gaps. Internships have also proven to be an effective strategy in keeping graduates in-state for employment. The State Board is investigating strategies and policy actions to encourage the use of internships in order to bolster growth in the workforce.

GROW AND DIVERSIFY MAINE'S WORKFORCE THROUGH IMPROVED ACCESS AND ENGAGEMENT—PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS To grow Maine's skilled workforce, the core programs will reach out to all educational partners to create a State Team of Education Pathways (STEP) committed to working together to create a shared vision of universal accessibility to Maine's Workforce system. Key components of this vision include: • Increased awareness and understanding of the necessity of foundational skills attainment; • A commitment to supporting all learners along their career pathway; • Appropriate and meaningful assessments of participants' educational and occupational skills (including prior learning assessments) and needs (including accessibility needs) for participants with disabilities; • Learner centered approaches to instruction and occupational training; • Supportive services, including academic supports (e.g., tutoring and advising); nonacademic supports (e.g., child care, transportation, and financial assistance): career exploration; and navigation assistance through the career pathway program and, ideally, into retained employment; • Streamlined credentialing of foreign trained professionals.

Additional Information

The State will bring together providers of adult education, postsecondary education, training, career and technical education, eligible providers, libraries, and workforce partners to work with employers, and office of economic development to identify educational and training elements that will be necessary to establish appropriate pathways to employment. It is critical that these groups meet to develop programs and services that are in alignment with available employment opportunities. In addition to the State Employment Partners (STEP), meetings will be held regularly with one-stop partners and the local workforce boards to prioritize needs and identify resources that can be brought to bear to address these needs.

With the establishment of a career pathways approach, educational and training providers will work with employers to identify sectors and identify the role various providers can play in aiding adults to pursue their career pathway for employment within that sector.

GROW AND DIVERSIFY MAINE'S WORKFORCE THROUGH IMPROVED ACCESS AND ENGAGEMENT—LEVERAGING RESOURCES TO INCREASE EDUCATIONAL ACCESS The core partners recognize that only by leveraging the systems resources as a whole will the State be able to produce and maintain a highly educated and skilled workforce. Using a coordinated approach and utilizing resources from each core and workforce system partner, increased educational access can be achieved by addressing the following: • Forgiveness of non-federal student financial obligations to postsecondary institutions that may prevent readmission; • Explore options for employers incentives to support educational opportunities for entry-level and incumbent workers; • Joint professional development for intake and advising staff of educational and workforce system partners to improve integration of services and the ability to engage any and all appropriate providers to best meet client needs; • Greater access to Prior Learning Assessments; • State resources to provide low and no-cost evaluations of foreign secondary and postsecondary credentials; • Articulation agreements between core partners and educational institutions to increase referrals to adult education to optimize its use as a low cost alternative to developmental courses; • Increased support for integrated education and training opportunities; • Advances in technology and assistive devices used to improve access to skills training and employment for all, including individuals with disabilities. **GROW AND DIVERSIFY MAINE'S WORKFORCE THROUGH IMPROVED ACCESS AND ENGAGEMENT—IMPROVING ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS** The accomplishment of this strategy begins while youth are still in high school and the adult client first enters into the postsecondary educational and workforce development systems. Effective strategies

include intake, career and academic advising and assessments, career exploration, financial literacy counseling, development of goals and the identification of any needed support services. The following have been identified as essential to improve access to postsecondary credentials:

- Establish enhanced integration of the efforts of the workforce system with the K–12 system to increase student awareness of careers and career pathways.
- Clearly articulated Career Pathways will be established by educational institutions and employers that outline the step–by–steps to career attainment and advancement;
- MOUs to govern the secondary, adult and postsecondary education and training relationships,
- Co–location of basic skills instruction at appropriate core partner facilities and institutions of higher education;
- College ready adult learners as the result of adult education’s implementation of research–based best practices and College and Career Readiness Standards for Adults;
- Establishment of interventions to help students avoid developmental education and move forward to degree attainment courses;
- Combining contextualized foundational skills with occupational and/or college coursework.
- Integration of foundational skills into credit–bearing classes to accelerate path to certificates and credentials through Integrated Education and Training (IET);
- Flexed schedules of educational and training offerings to reduce scheduling conflicts for working students;
- Expansion and promotion of use of technology and reasonable accommodations to broaden student access to educational offerings;
- Increasing the availability of credit bearing college classes at adult education sites.

GROW AND DIVERSIFY MAINE’S WORKFORCE— COORDINATING WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES The State Board recognizes that, given the projected decline in Maine’s working age population, innovative strategies and policies must be created to attract new residents to the state. Accordingly, the Board is investigating the factors that cause in–migration, researching best practices regarding relevant policy actions and considering strategies to incentivize the flow of individuals to Maine.

6. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE: CREATE AND ALIGN OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS TO ACHIEVE THE VISION The creation and implementation of a comprehensive Outreach and Communications plan is foundational to achieving the goals of Maine’s workforce development system. This plan must address the “need to know” of a variety of internal and external stakeholders: workforce development board members, employers, local and state agencies, municipalities, policy makers, potential and incumbent Maine workers, workforce system partners, postsecondary and training institutions, as well as employees of the core partners.

CREATE AND ALIGN OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS TO ACHIEVE THE VISION— CORE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES TO IMPLEMENT THE STATE’S STRATEGY The core partners are committed to ensuring that employees and clients of their agencies understand the vision for workforce development in Maine, the services that are available to users of the system, and the role and responsibilities of each partner relative to the success of the vision. To meet the strategy of Aligning Outreach and Communications, core partners will take the following steps:

- Create a WDS Message Coordinating Council staffed by representatives of each core partner, including a representative of the One–Stop Operators group;
- Provide extensive professional development and cross training for core partners so each can deliver a consistent message on WDS services and practices (i.e. data/resources, recruiting, training opportunities, educational opportunities, layoff assistance);
- Each core partner will contribute to a WDS informational website for external stakeholders;
- Create a map of committees that identifies membership, roles and responsibilities;
- Maintain a current intranet for informational updates for core partner employees;
- Develop marketing materials that highlight the core partner collaborative approach to service delivery;
- Post partner information on each core partner’s website;
- Create and disseminate WDS marketing materials in alternate formats that are accessible to workers and potential workers with disabilities;
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Create and disseminate WDS marketing materials for employers regarding disability related services; • Coordinate partner approach to employer services.

CREATE AND ALIGN OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS TO ACHIEVE THE VISION—
ALIGNMENT WITH ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF THE PLAN • Conduct WDS summits and seminars; • Coordination of WDS services through clear communication and guidance to Corrections, Veterans and other special populations on how to access such services; • Creation of a committee to deal with WIOA policy development and implementation to facilitate access to services; • Establishment of MOUs with partner organizations; • Create communication streams between and amongst local collaborating agencies.

CREATE AND ALIGN OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS TO ACHIEVE THE VISION—
COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS • Partners promote the WDS vision on promotional materials, websites, etc.; • Client referrals for services are made to partner agencies when appropriate; • Policy audits will be conducted to eliminate barriers to agency coordination of services.

CREATE AND ALIGN OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS TO ACHIEVE THE VISION—
COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS • Convene a statewide employer focus group to share the WDS vision, learn their needs, inform them of services, and develop strategies for increasing employer engagement; • Determine process for employer contact; • Reduce duplication of services; • Enhance WDS communication to employers to streamline their access to appropriate services.

CREATE AND ALIGN OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS TO ACHIEVE THE VISION—
PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS • Engage with secondary schools to expand student awareness of Maine's career pathways, in-demand occupations and employment opportunities • Involve postsecondary educational institutions and training organizations in the messaging of the WDS; • Create and distribute common WDS message that clarifies the roles and services of each WDS partner for other educational institutions; • Engage educational institutions in the development of career pathways; • Create MOUs with postsecondary institutions and adult education regarding implementation of Ability to Benefit.

CREATE AND ALIGN OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS TO ACHIEVE THE VISION—
LEVERAGING RESOURCES TO INCREASE EDUCATIONAL ACCESS • Explore uses of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) funds to include more job training; • Regular WDS communication to increase awareness of opportunities to braid funds to increase services; • Sharing Transition Career Exploration Workshop (for students with disabilities) (TCEW) curriculum with schools for their use. CREATE AND ALIGN OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS TO ACHIEVE THE VISION—IMPROVING ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS • Develop and share a clear, concise consumer handbook with information on postsecondary services; • Publicize no-cost and low-cost training opportunities; • Promote availability for Vocational Rehabilitation to collaborate and coordinate with educational institutions in provision of services for students with disabilities. CREATE AND ALIGN OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS TO ACHIEVE THE VISION—COORDINATING WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES • Engage Maine's Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) in all communication regarding WDS Mission; • Promote the alignment between strategies of the WDS and DECD; • Develop communications strategies that identify people with disabilities as a resource in economic development; • Offer consistent messaging amongst all state agencies to promote WDS.

Requested Revision;

STATE OF MAINE

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

BUREAU OF EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

55 STATE HOUSE STATION

AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0055

MAINE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

Subject of Policy: Customer Co-Enrollment Policy No. PY16-06

To: State WDB

Local WDBs

Chief Elected Officials

WIOA Core & Required Partners

From:

Edward D. Upham, Director

Bureau of Employment Services

Issuance Date: TBD Status: DRAFT

References WIOA §107(d)(5) and §108 (b)(1)(F)(3)

Preamble to WIOA Final Regulations; 20 CFR 677.160(a)(1)(ii); 678.500 (b)(1)

TEGLs: 03-15; 08-15; and 04-16

Purpose: To provide guidance to WIOA partners regarding the purpose and practice of customer co-enrollment.

Background: Co-enrollment has long been encouraged by the USDOL between programs serving dislocated workers (Title I Dislocated Worker program, National Emergency Grants and Trade Adjustment Assistance for example); and Labor Exchange services for all Title I participants involved in job search activities. Co-enrollment permitted customers access to necessary services and resources that may not have been available through the other program, or allowed them to access services prior to approval of a specific program such as while waiting for a layoff event to be Trade Certified.

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), co-enrollment is promoted as one method for aligning and coordinating services between core programs and to streamline services in order to promote efficiency and provide a seamless service experience for the customer.

Co-Enrollment: is defined as an enrollment in two or more WIOA programs, and/or State or Local grant-funded programs. A customer may be enrolled in another WIOA-funded program that does not require coordination of services between programs; however, coordinated services may be in the best interest of the customer. When this is the case the co-enrollment may be referred to as a Dual-enrollment or a Coordinated-Enrollment.

Coordinated- or Dual-enrollment allows service providers to leverage additional resources on behalf of the customers thus enhancing performance outcomes.

Coordinated co-enrollment is when the program staff, from each separate program work to together for the benefit of the customer to eliminate any unnecessary duplication of services and or to coordinate and streamline services such as working to decide which program will conduct an assessment, development an individual employment plan, assist with job search, or provide supportive or training services.

Coordinated co-enrollment may be used to expand the type and level of resources that can be dedicated on behalf of a participant, for example for OJT approved training for a TAA participant allows the TAA Program to reimburse employers up to 50 percent, but WIOA allows a reimbursement of up to 75 percent, a co-enrollment in WIOA Title I could leverage an additional 25 percent employer reimbursement bringing the total reimbursement to the employer up to 75 percent.

Coordinated co-enrollment requires program staff from each program to connect on behalf of participants; it should be clear to both the participant and partner staff which of the services identified in his or her individual plan will be provided by which partner. If some services have already been provided by one partner, the extent to which the other partner will recognize and accept the service outcome for the purpose of co-enrollment must also be spelled out, for example acceptance of the initial or comprehensive assessment that has already been conducted or the acceptance of the individual employment plan that has already been developed and already outlines a career pathway for the participant.

Coordinated Co-enrollment will require staff to:

- a. Determine, at time of intake, if a customer is already enrolled in another WIOA-funded program. Note: tracking and reporting of co-enrollment in other WIOA-funded programs is an annual reporting requirement for all Core WIOA programs.
- b. Initiate customer consent for staff from each program, in which a customer is already enrolled or being referred to, to discuss his/her individual plan and the type and level of services each program will provide to best meet his/her needs.
- c. In order to reduce confusion for the customer, the programs must determine which one is to be the primary enrolling entity (usually the provider who made the initial enrollment).
- d. The primary enrolling entity will be responsible for coordinating activities and ensuring all services are documented and IEP/ISS is updated as required by each program.

e. Partners must discuss the level and type of information that will be shared between the partners, for example sharing of placement and outcome information.

f. For the purpose of common exit, service providers must follow the State policy on common exit and if directed must establish a way to ensure that the participant does not exit one program until the services of the other program have been completed (with the exception of follow-up services). Note: Common Exit Policy has not yet been developed

Co-enrollment is strongly encouraged and/or required for use of certain WIOA funds for:

Integrated Education and Training: WIOA promotes the integration of adult education services with occupational education and training and workforce preparation, as well as the creation of career pathways for Youth in Title I WIOA Youth Programs. The definition of “career pathway” is codified in WIOA Section 3(7). Title II authorizes the use of funds for integrated education and training and workforce preparation activities.

Title I authorizes the use of Adult and Dislocated Worker Training funds for:

- Work readiness training that is provided in combination with occupational training; and
- Education and literacy activities, including English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs, provided concurrently or in combination with occupational training.

In addition, leveraging funding between WIOA Title II and the Title I Youth Program provides an opportunity to create a service strategy that concurrently enrolls OSY in education programs combined with workforce preparation and training. Partnering with Title II programs and leveraging resources effectively can assist local areas in meeting their requirement to develop and implement career pathways by aligning the employment, training, education, and supportive services youth need. (WIOA Section 107(d)(5))

Homeless Veterans Grantee participants are required to be enrolled in Employment Services, Jobs for State Veterans Grant and/or WIOA Title 1 Adult, DW or Youth programs.

MOUs:

Local Area may negotiate and articulate other co-enrollment practices by and between partner programs that improve streamlining and integration of services as part of the partner MOUs.

B. ALIGNMENT WITH ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE PLAN

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

This document was written/formatted prior to portal data entry format being available – Please see content in III (A)(2)(A).

C. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS

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

This document was written/formatted prior to portal data entry format being available – Please see content in III (A)(2)(A).

D. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS

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

This document was written/formatted prior to portal data entry format being available – Please see content in III (A)(2)(A).

E. PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Describe how the State's Strategies will engage the State's community colleges and area career and technical education schools, as partners in the workforce development system to create a job-driven education and training system. WIOA section 102(b)(2)(B)(iv).

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F. PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS.

Describe how the State's Strategies will engage the State's other education and training providers, including providers on the state's eligible training provider list, as partners in the workforce development system to create a job-driven education and training system.

This document was written/formatted prior to portal data entry format being available – Please see content in III (A)(2)(A).

Requested Revision;

The State will bring together providers of adult education, postsecondary education, training, career and technical education, eligible providers, libraries, and workforce partners to work with employers, and office of economic development to identify educational and training elements that will be necessary to establish appropriate pathways to employment. It is critical that these groups meet to develop programs and services that are in alignment with available employment opportunities. In addition to the State Employment Partners (STEP), meetings will be held regularly with one-stop partners and the local workforce boards to prioritize needs and identify resources that can be brought to bear to address these needs.

With the establishment of a career pathways approach, educational and training providers will work with employers to identify sectors and identify the role various providers can play in aiding adults to pursue their career pathway for employment within that sector.

G. LEVERAGING RESOURCES TO INCREASE EDUCATIONAL ACCESS

Describe how the State's strategies will enable the State to leverage other Federal, State, and local investments that have enhanced access to workforce development programs at the above institutions, described in section (E).

This document was written/formatted prior to portal data entry format being available – Please see content in III (A)(2)(A).

H. IMPROVING ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS

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

This document was written/formatted prior to portal data entry format being available - Please see content in III (A)(2)(A).

I. COORDINATING WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES.

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

This document was written/formatted prior to portal data entry format being available - Please see content in III (A)(2)(A).

B. STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES

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

1. THE STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE'S STRATEGIES. THIS MUST INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF—

A. STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS THAT SUPPORT COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGIES (E.G., LABOR MARKET INFORMATION SYSTEMS, DATA SYSTEMS, COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS, CASE-MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS, JOB BANKS, ETC.).

STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS Core partners of this Unified Plan utilize the following case management and management information systems (MIS): Adult Education uses MaineSTARS, Vocational Rehabilitation utilizes AWARE, and Wagner–Peyser and formula program providers utilize a combination of systems, including the One Stop Operating System (OSOS) and the Maine Job Bank (MJB), a labor exchange system. The aforementioned systems comply with current federal reporting requirements for each program. The data elements required for each program are being collected and will be used to support the coordinated implementation of Maine's strategic objectives. MaineSTARS is a federally approved MIS system compliant with adult education's National Reporting System. Local adult education programs are required to use MaineSTARS for all intake, demographic, assessment, and attendance data. At the state level, aggregate numbers are compiled in MaineSTARS and used to perform data matches against Maine Department of Labor employment data, high school equivalency completion data, and the National Student Clearinghouse database for postsecondary enrollment. The AWARE system collects and reports data required by the Rehabilitation Services Administration in the delivery of Vocational Rehabilitation services, as well as serving as a case management tool for the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. The system is maintained by its vendor, Alliance Enterprises, and work is currently underway for needed upgrades to meet WIOA reporting requirements. The OSOS system collects and dispatches the data required for current formula program performance reports. Reports are created for a variety of programs spanning formula and Wagner Peyser, to Trade and Apprenticeship. OSOS also collects data pertaining to the RESEA program, the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker, Veterans, Ticket to Work, Work Opportunity Tax Credit and other state funded programs such as the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program, plus more. Major changes to OSOS are necessary to conform to the new WIOA requirements which is a major reason that Maine is as quickly as possible migrating to America's Job Link Alliance (AJLA), which is expected to be fully WIOA compliant when all the rules are finalized. While the case management and MIS systems comply with federal reporting requirements for each program, the interfaces between the systems are, at present, limited, and resources for new systems in a small state such as Maine are constrained (states with relatively small populations cannot cover the fixed costs of purchasing and maintaining operating systems as readily as larger states, which receive substantially higher funding allotments). Moreover, the OSOS system is in need of upgrade, as the development language is now obsolete making the staffing of qualified programmers difficult. Recognizing that achieving the State's vision will require greater levels of integration among operating and case management systems, Maine's WIOA Steering Committee is implementing the following solutions: • Maine's WIOA Performance Accountability Group, a subcommittee of Maine's WIOA Steering Committee, has completed an analysis of current systems and has developed a strategy for pulling data from the existing, disparate systems to meet federal WIOA reporting requirements; • Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI), MDOL's labor market information provider, will add the data on participants of core partners to Maine's workforce longitudinal data system, thereby linking the records of core program participants with their corresponding wage and employment records for program evaluation and reporting purposes; • Wagner–Peyser and formula funded programs will

upgrade their MIS system to America's Job Links Alliance (AJLA). AJLA is a system that includes case management, labor exchange, eligible training provider list and other collection and extrapolation components required by WIOA within the next two years. Most important, AJLA has the capacity to interface with other required programs, like the Bureau of Unemployment Compensation (BUC) and CWRI, and can potentially interface with core partner systems (MaineSTARS and AWARE) to import and export data necessary to conduct an integrated intake/registration or possibly integrated case management to some level; • A Request-For-Information process will be utilized to assess other front-end software solutions that pull data from existing legacy systems in order to support common intake, assessment and case management across core partner programs. In addition, Maine's workforce longitudinal data system will be used to assist Eligible Training Providers in reporting performance outcome data required under WIOA.

B. DATA-COLLECTION AND REPORTING PROCESSES USED FOR ALL PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING THOSE PRESENT IN ONE-STOP CENTERS*.

STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS Core partners of this Unified Plan utilize the following case management and management information systems (MIS): Adult Education uses MaineSTARS, Vocational Rehabilitation utilizes AWARE, and Wagner-Peyser and formula program providers utilize a combination of systems, including the One Stop Operating System (OSOS) and the Maine Job Bank (MJB), a labor exchange system. The aforementioned systems comply with current federal reporting requirements for each program. The data elements required for each program are being collected and will be used to support the coordinated implementation of Maine's strategic objectives. MaineSTARS is a federally approved MIS system compliant with adult education's National Reporting System. Local adult education programs are required to use MaineSTARS for all intake, demographic, assessment, and attendance data. At the state level, aggregate numbers are compiled in MaineSTARS and used to perform data matches against Maine Department of Labor employment data, high school equivalency completion data, and the National Student Clearinghouse database for postsecondary enrollment. The AWARE system collects and reports data required by the Rehabilitation Services Administration in the delivery of Vocational Rehabilitation services, as well as serving as a case management tool for the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. The system is maintained by its vendor, Alliance Enterprises, and work is currently underway for needed upgrades to meet WIOA reporting requirements. The OSOS system collects and dispatches the data required for current formula program performance reports. Reports are created for a variety of programs spanning formula and Wagner Peyser, to Trade and Apprenticeship. OSOS also collects data pertaining to the RESEA program, the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker, Veterans, Ticket to Work, Work Opportunity Tax Credit and other state funded programs such as the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program, plus more. Major changes to OSOS are necessary to conform to the new WIOA requirements which is a major reason that Maine is as quickly as possible migrating to America's Job Link Alliance (AJLA), which is expected to be fully WIOA compliant when all the rules are finalized. While the case management and MIS systems comply with federal reporting requirements for each program, the interfaces between the systems are, at present, limited, and resources for new systems in a small state such as Maine are constrained (states with relatively small populations cannot cover the fixed costs of purchasing and maintaining operating systems as readily as larger states, which receive substantially higher funding allotments). Moreover, the OSOS system is in need of upgrade, as the development language is now obsolete making the staffing of qualified programmers difficult. Recognizing that achieving the State's vision will require greater levels of integration among operating and case management systems, Maine's WIOA Steering Committee is implementing the following solutions: • Maine's WIOA Performance Accountability Group, a subcommittee of Maine's WIOA Steering Committee, has completed an analysis of current systems and has developed a strategy for pulling data from the

existing, disparate systems to meet federal WIOA reporting requirements; • Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI), MDOL's labor market information provider, will add the data on participants of core partners to Maine's workforce longitudinal data system, thereby linking the records of core program participants with their corresponding wage and employment records for program evaluation and reporting purposes; • Wagner–Peyser and formula funded programs will upgrade their MIS system to America's Job Links Alliance (AJLA). AJLA is a system that includes case management, labor exchange, eligible training provider list and other collection and extrapolation components required by WIOA within the next two years. Most important, AJLA has the capacity to interface with other required programs, like the Bureau of Unemployment Compensation (BUC) and CWRI, and can potentially interface with core partner systems (MaineSTARS and AWARE) to import and export data necessary to conduct an integrated intake/registration or possibly integrated case management to some level; • A Request–For–Information process will be utilized to assess other front–end software solutions that pull data from existing legacy systems in order to support common intake, assessment and case management across core partner programs. In addition, Maine's workforce longitudinal data system will be used to assist Eligible Training Providers in reporting performance outcome data required under WIOA.

* For the PY 2016 state plan, descriptions of data collection and reporting processes need only include currently known indicators.

2. THE STATE POLICIES THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE'S STRATEGIES (E.G., CO-ENROLLMENT POLICIES AND UNIVERSAL INTAKE PROCESSES WHERE APPROPRIATE). IN ADDITION, DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING GUIDELINES FOR STATE-ADMINISTERED ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO A ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM, INCLUDING BENCHMARKS, AND ITS GUIDANCE TO ASSIST LOCAL BOARDS, CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIALS, AND LOCAL ONE-STOP PARTNERS IN DETERMINING EQUITABLE AND STABLE METHODS OF FUNDING INFRASTRUCTURE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SEC. 121(H)(1)(B). BEGINNING WITH THE STATE PLAN MODIFICATION IN 2018 AND FOR SUBSEQUENT STATE PLANS AND STATE PLAN MODIFICATIONS, THE STATE MUST ALSO INCLUDE SUCH GUIDELINES.

STATE POLICIES Administrators of the Maine's core programs had extensive discussions regarding the policies and practices that will enable the State to achieve its strategic objectives. At the beginning of these discussions, it became apparent that establishing the basic operating principles, or the 'must haves' of an integrated workforce development system, will be essential to creating operational plans that implement the State's strategies. The principles outline how services can be integrated and delivered to customers of the one-stop system with the goal of enhancing the effectiveness in serving clients, minimizing duplication of efforts and increasing customer satisfaction. Following are the stages of customer flow that Maine's core partner programs developed for one-stop centers.

- Initial Triage
- Intake
- Assessment by one of four core partners,
- Services and plan development

Initial Triage —The first point of contact for customer at a One-stop center must be knowledgeable, welcoming and capable of assessing the customer's needs and circumstances (e.g. does the customer have a disability?). In addition to performing an initial triage" (a series of questions to identify what the customer's needs and where to direct them) the initial contact person, or "navigator" will make the customer feel understood and connected. The navigator is responsible for directing customers to the optimal resources: intake, a specific program (referral) or the information center (self service). Intake (the process of gathering the data to determine eligibility)—Maine will have a common intake system where relevant customer data is captured and is electronically available to all partners with the informed consent of the customer. This will reduce the need for customers to fill out intake forms multiple times, thereby increasing efficiency of operations and customer satisfaction. Common intake will also foster greater continuity of service.

Assessment—Currently, each core program has a unique assessment process, which requires customers to be re-assessed when they enroll in a different program. While the core programs share a common purpose in assessing clients, there exists little standardization in the tools and processes used. Maine's assessment process will be:

- o Standardized. Core partners will set standards for assessment tools that are accessible and to be used for specific purposes (i.e. CASAS for numeracy and literacy). Standardization will create opportunities for cost savings and enhance customer service;
- o Seamless. Core partners will be able to access customer assessments across programs. As clients move to new programs their test results will follow them electronically, eliminating the need for retaking the same test twice. Customers will only take tests when a different skill needs to be assessed. This modular system of assessment will minimize duplication of effort, streamline the customer experience and result in better communications among programs.
- o Integrated. Partners will recognize a customer's assessment when it was conducted by another partner. This will minimize the retaking of tests and duplication of efforts.

Services and Plan Development (getting every customer employed or on a career path). Currently, a client's plan is not routinely shared among partners, thus reinforcing the 'siloes' nature of the existing system. As part of this unified plan, policies will be developed to enable a client's service plan to follow them (paper copy or scanned file) when they are referred to a new program.

POLICIES SUPPORTING THE ENACTMENT OF THESE BASIC PRINCIPLES A range of policies (enumerated below) will be developed by the WIOA Steering Committee to support the aforementioned 'must haves':

- Policies governing—and optimizing—communication across and among programs and partners to foster better continuity of service and reduce 'drop-out' rates;
- Protocols for record sharing (or scanned sharing) of individualized service plans among partners;
- The development of a quasi-standard individualized service plans template (programs are expected to continue to use their proprietary framework);
- Policy on standards for assessments and protocols for inter-agency and inter-program assessment sharing;
- Policies for professional development to enable the:
 - o development of new skill sets for those operating as navigators;
 - o proper reading and interpretation of partner individualized service plans;
 - o proper interpretation of intake data;
 - o proper use of the front-end software;
 - o proper interpretation of assessment data.
- Policies governing the development of system improvement measures (measuring communication, drop outs, number of customers referred, etc.).

MOUs will also be developed and guide work that can be done by and between partners to align services and formalize referral processes and guidelines. Such agreements will also catalog and map out the parts of the workforce development system that will be made up of comprehensive one-stop centers, satellite one-stop centers, and various other points of service entry, such as partner service sites. The MOUs will be a major tool for articulating specific ways that resources, services, and information can be aligned and integrated and the level and extent to which each partner will jointly serve and or refer an individual customer.

3. STATE PROGRAM AND STATE BOARD OVERVIEW

A. STATE AGENCY ORGANIZATION

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

STATE AGENCY ORGANIZATION The organization and delivery systems for the core programs covered in this Unified Plan are described below. **ADULT, YOUTH, DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAMS AND WAGNER–PEYSER PROGRAMS** The Bureau of Employment Services (BES) is the State Workforce Agency (SWA) within the Maine Department of Labor established to provide oversight and administration of state and federal workforce programs and to provide financial, administrative and policy support to Maine’s one–stop system. The Bureau was established in 1996 by consolidating the Bureau of Employment and Training Programs and the Bureau of Employment Security’s Job Service Division. The BES provides labor exchange services at one–stop centers across the State and runs Maine Job Bank Central. BES also administers the majority of USDOL funded Employment and Training programs including: Veterans Services, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Rapid Response, RESEA Reemployment Program, Disability Employment Initiative, Ticket to Work, the ASPIRE/TANF work placement program, the SNAP Employment and Training program, the Migrant Seasonal Farmworker Program and the Maine Apprenticeship Program. The BES is also responsible for administering the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program (CSSP) a program targeted to low income individuals to enable them to attain post–secondary credentials in high–demand, high–wage occupations, and the Rural Veteran’s Coordination Pilot program a program that provides supports to military personnel who have just transitioned back into civilian life. Bureau of Employment Services **FIGURE 18: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE—EMPLOYMENT SERVICES**

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION Within the Maine Department of Labor’s Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, vocational rehabilitation services are delivered through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI). DVR and DBVI staff is regionally based in seven one–stop centers and provide statewide coverage. Bureau of Rehabilitation Services **FIGURE 19: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE—REHABILITATION SERVICES**

ADULT EDUCATION ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE The Office of Adult Education and Family Literacy is the state agency within the Maine Department of Education that provides services, instruction and vocational training primarily for individuals beyond the compulsory school age through a career pathways system. Elements of this system include learner intake, assessment, advising, instruction and individual learning plans; is guided by data management and analysis, annual monitoring and annual professional development plans; uses appropriately certified staff; is designed to meet identified local needs; and makes use of partnerships and alignment with workforce development, postsecondary institutions and support services. Maine Adult Education offers courses in literacy and adult basic education, English language acquisition, citizenship, high school completion, college transition, career exploration and preparation, job skills training and personal enrichment. In addition, support services, such as academic and career advising and financial literacy are provided. Maine Adult Education has over 76 programs located throughout the state administered through public school administrative units.

Maine Department of Education **FIGURE 20: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE—ADULT EDUCATION**

B. STATE BOARD

Provide a description of the State Board, including—

STATE BOARD Maine's State Workforce Development Board (State Board) is responsible for the functions articulated in Section 101 of Subtitle—A, chapter one of WIOA. The State Board serves as a convener of workforce, education, and business stakeholders and seeks to align and improve employment and training activities and programs, in order to enhance the economic prosperity of Maine residents and enable business growth. The State Board implements Governor LePage's workforce development initiatives, ensures the workforce system is customer focused and takes a leadership role in aligning public investments with job training activities to ensure the workforce system is demand driven.

1. MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

Provide a membership roster for the State Board, including members' organizational affiliations.

MEMBERSHIP ROSTER The membership roster for the State Board, including members' organizational affiliations, is provided. TABLE 9: STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD MEMBERSHIP ROSTER State Workforce Development Board Members, 2016

NAME	COMPANY/ORGANIZATION	Affiliation
Paul R. LePage	State of Maine	Governor
Fred Webber	(Chair) Maine Street Solutions	Business representative
Jon Mason	BIW	Business representative
Liz Rensenbrink	Tyler Technologies	Business representative
Terry Young	Puritan Medical Products	Business representative
Ed McKersie	Pro Search	Business representative
Kevin Healey	Kennebec Savings Bank	Business representative
Susan Hammond	Four Directions Development Corp.	Business representative
Robert Carmichael	Maine Savings Federal Credit Union	Business representative
Ryan Bushey	Louisiana Pacific	Business representative
Nicole Morin—Scribner	St Mary's Health System	Business representative
Scott Good	Crescendo Consulting	Business representative
Joanne Harris	MDI Hospital	Business representative
Leo (Chip) Roche	New Fab	Business representative
Jeanne Paquette	Labor MDOL	Commissioner
William Beardsley	Education MDOE	Commissioner
Tom Davis	Penobscot County	Chief Elected Official
Sallie Chandler	York County	Chief Elected Official
Don Berry	AFL/CIO	Labor organization
Jennifer McKenna	Plumbers/Pipefitters	Labor—mgt. apprenticeship program
John Leavitt	NE Region Council of Carpenters	Labor organization
Mel Clarrage	Association for the Blind of Maine	Community based org.
Tracey Cooley	Job Corps	Community based org.
Amy Volk	Senate	Senator
Erin Herbig	House	Representative
Garret Oswald	SWIB	Director

In addition to the members listed above, the following commissioners and higher education representatives also provide input to the board:

TABLE 10: ADDITIONAL COMMISSIONERS AND HIGHER EDUCATION REPRESENTATIVES PROVIDING INPUT Additional State Agency Commissioners and Higher Education Representatives Providing Input to the SWB

NAME	COMPANY/ORGANIZATION	Affiliation
David Bernhardt	Maine Department of Transportation	Commissioner
George Gervais	Maine Department of Economic and Community Development	Commissioner
Mary Mayhew	Health and Human Services	Commissioner
Joseph Fitzpatrick	Maine Department of Corrections	Commissioner
James Page	University of Maine System	Chancellor
Dereck Langhauser	Maine Community College System	President

2. BOARD ACTIVITIES

Provide a description of the activities that will assist State Board members and staff in carrying out State Board functions effectively.

BOARD ACTIVITIES In addition to the activities described above, the State Board assists the Governor in the development, modification and implementation of a state plan. The State Board convenes member and stakeholder board meetings six times per year. Regular communications with board members are carried out via email every two weeks. The State Board also maintains a website, which contains meeting minutes, important news and other relevant information. The website serves as a communication tool with stakeholders and interested parties. State Board activities also include the production of an annual report and the coordination of other activities that are relevant to the development of the state's workforce. During the summer of 2015, the board hosted a three day workshop for the purpose of creating the state's vision for the Unified Plan.

4. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS AND ONE-STOP PROGRAM PARTNERS

A. ASSESSMENT OF CORE PROGRAMS

Describe how the core programs will be assessed each year based on State performance accountability measures described in section 116(b) of WIOA. This State assessment must include the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of programs broken down by local area or provider. Such state assessments should take into account local and regional planning goals.

ASSESSMENT OF TITLE I— ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER AND YOUTH PROGRAM SERVICES Maine Bureau of Employment Services has established a schedule of formal monitoring, which includes a program and fiscal review of each of the Title IB programs annually. Maine's guidance on oversight and monitoring responsibilities spells out the roles and responsibilities of local area monitoring and identifies the criteria to be reviewed annually.

ASSESSMENT OF TITLE II— ADULT EDUCATION TABLE 11: ADULT EDUCATION FEDERAL PARTICIPANT PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

Maine Statewide Adult Education Federal Participant Performance and Outcome Rates* Educational Functioning Levels FY13 Negotiated FY13 Actual FY13 Out-come FY14 Negotiated FY14 Actual FY14 Out-come

Level	FY13 Negotiated	FY13 Actual	FY13 Out-come	FY14 Negotiated	FY14 Actual	FY14 Out-come
Beginning ABE Literacy	37%	35%	Did Not Meet	37%	27%	Did Not Meet
Beginning Basic Education	32%	39%	Exceeded	32%	32%	Met
Low Intermediate Basic Ed.	40%	37%	Did Not Meet	40%	37%	Did Not Meet
High Intermediate Basic Ed.	42%	26%	Did Not Meet	40%	25%	Did Not Meet
Low Adult Secondary Ed.	53%	18%	Did Not Meet	53%	21%	Did Not Meet
Educational Functioning Levels	FY13 Negotiated	FY13 Actual	FY13 Out-come	FY14 Negotiated	FY14 Actual	FY14 Out-come
Beginning ESL Literacy	30%	47%	Exceeded	32%	37%	Exceeded
Low Beginning ESL	42%	62%	Exceeded	50%	49%	Did Not Meet
High Beginning ESL	29%	46%	Exceeded	32%	34%	Exceeded
Low Intermediate ESL	24%	38%	Exceeded	27%	25%	Did Not Meet
High Intermediate ESL	22%	40%	Exceeded	24%	27%	Exceeded
Advanced ESL	100%	7%	Did Not Meet	28%	11%	Did Not Meet
Educational Functioning Levels	FY13 Negotiated	FY13 Actual	FY13 Out-come	FY14 Negotiated	FY14 Actual	FY14 Out-come
Entered Employment	54%	33%	Did Not Meet	55%	38%	Did Not Meet
Retained Employment	73%	69%	Did Not Meet	75%	64%	Did Not Meet
Obtained HSE Credential	93%	81%	Did Not Meet	94%	93%	Did Not Meet
Entered Postsecondary Ed.	26%	13%	Did Not Meet	28%	16%	Did Not Meet

*PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND OUTCOMES ARE FOR PARTICIPANTS IN FEDERAL PROGRAMS AND DO NOT INCLUDE MAINE COLLEGE TRANSITIONS DATA OR OTHER STATE FUNDED PROGRAMMING OUTCOMES. In FY13, statewide performance measure target rates for federally funded activities were met or exceeded in 55 percent of the educational functioning levels (6 out of 11). In FY14, statewide performance measure target rates were met or exceeded in only 36 percent (4 out of 11) of the educational functioning levels. For both FY13 and FY14, participant outcome targets were unmet in all four categories. As this assessment is for participants in federal programs only, a state goal moving forward will be to include and report for state purposes outcomes earned by all students, regardless of funding streams. Based on these assessments, the state will address the following strategies in an effort to improve participant performance measure and outcome rates.

Increase Posttest Percentage Rates The state target for number of participants to be post tested is 60 percent. This target has not been met in the past two years (posttest percent: FY13 – 49 percent, FY14 – 50 percent). Definitive determination of whether or not a student has made any academic gain during their course of study cannot be determined without the administration of a posttest. As a result, the low number of participants being post-tested makes it impossible to meet performance targets. For example, in FY13, only 44 percent of participants with an EFL of Low Adult Secondary were post tested. Even if 100 percent of those participants had made an academic gain, the performance measure rate would still remain unmet as it is 9 percent lower than the 53 percent

target rate. Developing a strategic plan to increase post testing at the local level is the first step to improved performance measures. Evidence of a local provider's ability to meet posttest targets will also be a major consideration when determining eligibility for funding. Enhance Career Pathways Services Unmet statewide employment, high school equivalency, and postsecondary outcomes demonstrate the need for an increased focus on career pathways programming and services. Access to career pathways services, such as career exploration, academic advisement, campus tours, job fairs and seminars on how to pay for postsecondary education and training, enhance the student's ability to achieve their academic and professional goals. Adults who are able to receive the career pathways services of the Maine College Transition program enter postsecondary at 33 percent, a rate 5 percent above those who do not. Improved alignment of these services with postsecondary education, training and workforce system partners is a critical next step. Alignment with College and Career Readiness Standards Increasing participant educational gain rates requires attention to evidence-based best practices for adult education instruction. Educational gain should become evident as adult education programs alignment with the instructional shifts and academic rigor of College and Career Readiness Standards. Participant retention is maximized when academic skills are integrated into training programming that is relevant to participant career goals. By increasing the use of integrated education and training and taking full advantage of professional development opportunities to promote College and Career readiness Standards, Maine Adult Education will provide high quality instruction that in turn will lead to higher performance measures.

ASSESSMENT OF TITLE III WAGNER-PEYSER PROGRAMS –ACCESSIBILITY – EEO PRACTICES Wagner-Peyser programs are assessed at the same time as Title IB program reviews are being conducted. Staff members are interviewed regarding knowledge and practice of explaining job order procedures and job seeker registration services and are asked to explain the ways in which they provide employer assistance and help in creation and resolution of jobs orders. A review of orders and assessment of staff regarding EEO and affirmative action requirements is also conducted and random review of staff knowledge of these requirements and Wagner Peyser regulations are also melded into the question review process. Processes to provide initial assessment and appropriate referrals to Info Center customers and front end procedures are also reviewed. In some instances participants may also be interviewed either directly on site or via telephone. Monitors use the Checklist provided under Section 188 to conduct the accessibility review. Center accessibility requirements are also assessed and staff members are asked to explain how customers can access the assistive technology in the centers; all required posted information is examined to ensure that it reflects the most up-to-date version of the regulations and whether or not centers are able to provide the information in Braille and other languages besides printed English. At least once annually a separate Equal Employment Opportunity review is conducted by the State EEO officer. The EEO officer reviews sub-recipient compliance with universal access and non-discrimination requirements through examination of participant applications and enrollments against demographic data. Likewise participant files are reviewed again to ensure that all staff assisted participants have been provided with the required EEO statement and their rights to file a complaint. Upon completion of the review, providers are supplied with a formal report of review outcomes and a corrective action plan if there are findings.

ASSESSMENT OF TITLE IV PROGRAMS—REHABILITATION SERVICES Within the Department of Labor's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), Maine has two federally Designated State Units, the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), which deliver Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services. Since the performance accountability measures required in Section 116(b) of WIOA were not included in the performance standards and indicators historically required of all VR agencies, BRS will need to develop data sources to assess the performance of DBVI and DVR by these measures as they are defined by regulation. Initially, BRS will be using Maine Unemployment Insurance wage data to establish baseline and initial WIOA performance targets for employment retention and earnings. Given that this data set does not provide information on individuals who are placed in self-employment or other jobs, such as federal and out-of-state positions, BRS will be working with its

core partners and the Rehabilitation Services Administration to develop alternate data sources that will provide a more complete report of the employment outcomes achieved by people with disabilities served by DVR and DBVI. Additionally, the measures of credential attainment rate, skill gains, and effectiveness in serving employers need further federal definition, so that BRS can identify ways to capture, report and assess DVR and DBVI performance on these indicators. In the interim, BRS will be reporting the performance results of FY 2015 State Plan goals in the DBVI and DVR portions of this Unified State Plan. [See (p) Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals.]

LOCAL BOARD AND PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

The Bureau of Employment Services (BES) program monitoring tool is fashioned after the Core Monitoring Tool published by the USDOL-ETA. Each local area and its Title IB sub-recipients are monitored annually. Monitoring is conducted to ensure that the one-stop system is in compliance with the intent and substance of the rules governing funding streams, and to identify whether the systems are operating to achieve the State and local area or regional strategic workforce system goals. The monitoring tool used is designed to explore the working relationships between required partners within the system and in particular the core partners housed in the one-stops. Monitoring provides an opportunity to identify and share best practices across the State and to identify performance and compliance issues that need attention and address. Each year Bureau of Employment Services conducts on-site monitoring of the local board during which local board governance is evaluated and local area sub-recipient monitoring activity is assessed. The local area governance review includes examination of board policies, board membership and formal Memoranda of Understanding with required partners. It also includes a review of board minutes, requests for proposal, service and sub-recipient contracts and an overview of quarterly reports and most recent progress in achieving planned service levels and performance goals. Inadequate policies and/or lack of required board membership are identified as findings and technical assistance is provided upon request. The local area plan is reviewed against plan guidelines issued by the USDOL and the State Board. Plans that do not contain all of the required elements are not approved by the State Board until they comply with all of the requirements. Local areas are also evaluated on the process used to develop and create the local plan, to ensure that there has been adequate involvement of system partners in identifying and implementing strategies outlined in the plan and to ensure that the plan contains steps for implementation of identified strategies. Local board certification is approved only if the local board has an approved plan in place, meets negotiated performance measures, maintains required local board membership, addresses any outstanding findings or policy requirements and sustains fiscal integrity. Methods the local board uses to communicate, educate and inform sub-recipients and system partners is also evaluated to understand local area effectiveness in meeting plan goals and promoting continuous improvements. Local area sub-recipients are also monitored annually to ensure that the local board oversight is adequate and results in sub-recipient compliance. Sub-recipient monitoring includes intensive file reviews to ensure that adequate documentation of eligibility and participant services are in place. Program staff interviews are utilized to gauge whether program design and delivery is being conducted according to requirements and local area plans and participant interviews are conducted to gain insight on the participant's perspective and satisfaction with the service being provided. BES has made a practice of reviewing participant files on the MIS system prior to conducting the on-site paper file reviews to identify prospective issues with data element validation requirements. Sometimes specific training programs are the focus of a review, such as On-the-Job Training, Customized Training and Work Experience contract reviews and interviews with employers providing the work-based training. Such contracts are reviewed for compliance with labor standards and non-displacement requirements and also to ensure that the level and quality of the training is commensurate with the needs of the participants being trained. Sub-recipient interviews allow the monitors to assess whether the service providers understand and are implementing service delivery according to the local area plan and whether they are familiar with and applying federal, state and local board policies correctly and meeting the requirements of specific programs. Tools that service providers use to conduct initial, comprehensive and academic

assessments are also appraised as are the methods for providing and documenting provision of required services, including information about non-discrimination and customer complaint process, labor market and career information, and job search assistance processes. Monitors examine whether or not all required aspects of each of the programs are being implemented and spending thresholds attained and/or spending limits adhered to. Youth services staff are asked to explain how they assess each youth participant's need for any of the required youth service elements and the number of enrolled youth who access each of the elements. Youth program case managers are interviewed to showcase how they develop an individual service strategy for a youth and whether they partner with outside entities to provide any of the service elements, such as Adult Mentoring. Work experience files and contracts are reviewed and staff members are asked to explain how Work Experience sites are monitored to determine that they are safe and to explain the process for addressing Work Experience site issues. Service providers must also provide an overview of how Work Experience site employers are educated about child labor law and safety requirements that may pertain to the particular site or participants. Youth policies are reviewed to identify whether and how they differ from Adult policies, such as supportive service policies or assessment and plan development methods.

ASSESSMENT OF EMPLOYER SERVICES One of the fundamental components of assessing quality of employer services is to identify if the information and services being provided by the formula program services providers and/or local board staff are being coordinated with similar outreach conducted by other one-stop system partners. Providers are asked to explain how they promote the services of the Maine Job Bank and whether they collaborate with other Maine business assistance entities, such as the Department of Economic and Community Development's account executives or Maine's Small Business Development Centers or the Maine Community Colleges' Business and Professional services leads. Also assessed is the number of public training resources that are packaged or bundled on behalf of employers and whether or how pools of participants are assessed and screened for new hire OJT training to meet the needs of employers.

QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT Local areas are required to submit quarterly reports that identify actual to planned service levels and levels of attainment of negotiated performance goals. Local areas submit both quantitative and qualitative components and are asked to identify at least one service success story from each program every quarter. Planned spending is also reviewed against actual using quarterly fiscal reports; if there are spending thresholds to be met or spending caps which cannot be exceeded, these reports are used to identify and address risk. Quarterly reporting allows us to address and understand issues regarding service or spending levels that are below or above planned levels. Bureau of Employment Services responses to quarterly reports may be in written or oral form; whenever there are common issues across multiple local areas at once, a group conference call is initiated to share data and brainstorm action steps to address the issues directly with local board staff.

DATA VALIDATION Each year the BES conducts data validation, an activity that involves careful scrutiny of both paper and MIS files to ensure that data reported is valid and properly documented. After each round of data element validation is completed, the BES provides reports to each local area office that identifies any of validation errors (failures); shortly thereafter the BES also provides training to each local area to go over the errors, how to address them going forward and to refresh staff about all of the required tracking and documentation.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION Job Seeker and employer customer satisfaction surveys are conducted at least once annually in addition to any local area customer satisfaction activities. These are conducted using survey monkey and may include short 10 minute phone interviews as well. In general the results provide us with information about the customer perceived value of required services and whether or not the services are meeting the needs of the customer. The quality of staff assistance is also ascertained through the questionnaire. The results of the service are explained in the Annual Report.

PERFORMANCE RESULTS Each year new State performance goals for the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth and Wagner Peyser programs are negotiated with USDOL. In turn the Maine BES negotiates performance goals with each of the local areas who are also provided with data shared by USDOL on use of the regression model to project

and propose appropriate levels of performance to be achieved. The ability to achieve proposed performance levels can be affected by a number of factors, including unanticipated series of mass layoffs, layoffs of low-skill workers in a high-skill job market, and rurality and lack of job openings in specific geographic areas. Over the last three program years Maine has achieved or exceeded all of the required levels with the exception of PY14 in which it failed to achieve the negotiated Literacy Numeracy measure for youth. The following steps are being taken to improve the literacy numeracy rate of Maine's youth participants:

- Best practice sharing takes place on a bi-monthly basis at the Younger Workers Committee meetings. The members of this committee include leaders from Maine's WIOA youth service providers, Job Corps, Secondary Career and Technical Education programs, Adult Education, DHHS foster youth programs and more.
- In addition to this meeting, BES has initiated a regular WIOA youth lead meeting that also takes place on a bi-monthly basis. This team is made up of WIOA Core service provider leads serving youth and includes WIOA youth service staff, Adult Education and Vocational Rehabilitation. Activities for this team include: identifying and sharing best practices, understanding new requirements under WIOA, understanding how core partners work with youth, and brainstorming solutions to challenges.
- In identifying a solution to the Literacy/Numeracy gains issue, it was found that youth that are not fully engaged in a group cohort are less likely to come in for post-testing requirements as are homeless youth and youth involved with corrections. One strategy discussed was to incorporate more academics into activities, like work experience (as is required under WIOA), and to do so at a level that is appropriate for the particular youth participant; another is consideration of using incentives that reward youth who stick to and achieve the goals in the service strategy, which must include goals and methods for attaining skills gains and for post-test requirements.
- Finally, formal professional development for youth staff has been identified as a critical need for Maine's system, mainly because staff turnover is higher than ever (many long-term staff are retiring, and the wage levels for entry level youth case managers are not high enough to retain the special talent required of a youth counselor). These teams have also discussed strategies and partnerships to engage more out-of-school youth. A list of partners who refer youth has been identified and shared, the WIOA youth team has also shared a list of formal agreements they have with outside partners who serve the same youth participants. Some team members also sit on the Maine Youth Transition Council, which coordinates services for youth transitioning out of foster care.

Requested Revision;

III.b.4.A: Assessment of Core Program Activities Using Annual Performance Accountability Assessment Results.

Now that all four core partners are required to report on the same performance outcomes, the State will be better able to compare outcomes for quality improvement purposes - based not only on the barriers of the individuals served, but on the type and level of services received through each core program.

Using specific reporting elements, such as co-enrollment, level and type of Career Services provided, level and type of Training Services provided (or not), amounts spent on each participant for each service type, participant demographics and local economic factors, the State will be able to develop a quality assessment tool that more deeply explores all of the data that may affect performance achievement.

The additional data will allow the State to compare the programs, service packages, co-enrollments and specific approaches of local areas (and individual service providers) that meet or exceed planned and negotiated measures with those of local areas that are having difficulty doing so. In

doing this, the State will be able to promote and/or require local areas that are struggling to achieve negotiated measures to replicate the practices of local areas that are exceeding goals. Such strategies may include, expanding the number of participants taking part in multiple core programs services simultaneously, such as Adult Education and Title I services for education and training. It may also identify that professional staff development around participant and/or employer outreach needs to be addressed. Finally, it may be that State, local area or service provider policies are actually restricting service blending possibilities and that by adjusting these the providers will be better able to address participant needs and provide supports for improved employment opportunities and longer term employment success.

Once the State becomes adept at utilizing the Statistical Adjustment Model it will have the ability to identify factors that are beyond the local area's control, such as major downsizings, extreme rurality, higher levels of non-English speaking residents etc. and will be able to recommend proactive responses by core and other service partners in those areas that can begin to address those issues, by directing collaborative investments to improved English Literacy Programs that combine ESL and Occupational Training, or that establish partnerships that link individuals without access to service points, like One-Stops or affiliate sites because of extreme distances, through technology or new partnerships with Adult Education or Municipal Libraries.

Once the State becomes adept at utilizing the Statistical Adjustment Model it will have the ability to identify factors that are beyond the local area's control, such as major downsizings, extreme rurality, higher levels of non-English speaking residents etc. and will be able to recommend proactive responses by core and other service partners in those areas that can begin to address those issues, by directing collaborative investments to improved English Literacy Programs that combine ESL and Occupational Training, or that establish partnerships that link individuals without access to service points, like One-Stops or affiliate sites because of extreme distances, through technology or new partnerships with Adult Education or Municipal Libraries.

Local Areas are conducting research around high-growth career pathways and training staff to utilize pathway models when providing LMI guidance and developing individual services strategies with participants. It is likely there is some direct correlation between clearly defined pathways (both at the individual and local area level) and improved employment attainment and retention outcomes.

Maine reviews performance on a quarterly and annual basis using a number of tools, from program and fiscal reports, to annual and desk top monitoring to anecdotal information sharing. By using all available assessment data, the State has been able to identify service models that result in better outcomes for high-risk youth that may be able to be replicated in some areas but not all. Several counties in Maine are so vast and sparsely populated (for example Aroostook County is the size of Rhode Island and Connecticut combined) that new and different ways of providing services need to be implemented to achieve required measures.

B. ASSESSMENT OF ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS

Describe how other one-stop delivery system partner program services and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan will be assessed each year. Such state assessments should take into account local and regional planning goals.

Through MOUs with one-stop partner programs, the State will ensure that such programs are reviewed annually and that their performance assessment is in alignment with goals and objectives articulated in the Plan.

Requested Revision;

In addition to monitoring of One-Stop partner programs conducted by their own administrative entity, the level and ability of the partner programs to adhere to the activities identified in the local area MOU, that pertain to provision of and access to services and cross-agency referrals, will be reviewed as part of the MOU review process identified by each local board and as part of the annual monitoring process conducted by the MDOL (State Workforce Agency).

Local areas are required to provide an annual report on the progress of their local/regional strategic plan activities, including partner-related activities identified in the plans. These reports will also be used to evaluate and assess the efficacy of One-Stop Partner roles in the local systems.

The State Workforce Board has a subcommittee made up of Required One-Stop Partners. The committee was expanded significantly to include key optional partners who play a significant role in Maine's workforce system. The partners of this committee will meet quarterly and will inform the State Board of partnership and integration goals, successes and challenges. The committee includes the State or Regional administrative entity for each required and optional partner some of whom also sit on the State Board as required under WIOA, the members include: Local Board Directors, State Leads for: Labor Exchange, Veteran's Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, Unemployment Compensation, Adult Education, Job Corps, Community Services Block Grants, SCSEP, Trade Adjustment Assistance, and the Maine Community College System Carl Perkins Grant lead, and EMDC - the lead agency for the NFJP grant, the TANF program lead and Department of Corrections Employment and Training Programs. In addition, the committee includes: the Penobscot and Passamaquoddy Indian Nations, the Maine Competitive Skills Scholarship Program, the Maine Apprenticeship Program, the Maine Development Foundation, the Maine State Library System, New Ventures Maine, CAP Agencies, the University of Maine and the Department of Economic and Community Development.

The mission for this subcommittee is to provide leadership to their service providers in the local areas to implement and improve a customer-centric, seamless, integrated workforce system that meets the needs of workers, including those with barriers to employment and employers.

The State Workforce Development Board reviewed all of the criteria stipulated by WIOA and the final regulations that must be considered for One-Stop Certification; they felt it was already a very thorough list. They identified two additional items to be included as criteria for certification. The first area was outreach, the level, methods and outcomes of outreach efforts to both employers and target populations, particularly to employers with high-demand, high-wage job openings and particularly to targeted population that cannot readily access the one-stop services because they live in isolated areas or because they are currently incarcerated and waiting for release.

In addition to Outreach, the SWDB identified the ability of individual one-stops to meet or exceed performance measures so that not only local area performance can be compared but one-stop center performance can be compared and best practices identified and replicated and/or corrective action plan or additional resources and technical assistance can be applied to one-stops that are having difficulty meeting or exceeding performance measures.

A one-stop certification policy draft is being developed that will inform local boards of these two additional requirements and that will recap the WIOA requirements for One-Stop Certification. Once completed it will be included in the State Unified Plan.

C. PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Beginning with the state plan modification in 2018 and for subsequent state plans and state plan modifications, provide the results of an assessment of the effectiveness of the core programs and other one-stop partner programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the Unified or Combined State plan during the preceding 2-year period (i.e. the 2-year period of the plan modification cycle). Describe how the State is adapting its strategies based on these assessments.

In preparation for the 2018 Plan reviews each program will monitor performance data to determine program effectiveness and efficiency for the previous two years. In order to make data transparent, program performance data will be shared and communicated with all system partners and stakeholders.

D. EVALUATION

Describe how the state will conduct evaluations and research projects on activities under WIOA core programs; how such projects will be coordinated with, and designed in conjunction with, State and local boards and with State agencies responsible for the administration of all respective core programs; and, further, how the projects will be coordinated with the evaluations provided for by the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Education under WIOA.

ASSESSMENT The Steering Committee will conduct an annual assessment regarding the state's progress in implementing this plan. The assessment will review progress, obstacles and necessary changes in course of action. In addition, the State will assess the overall effectiveness of the workforce development system as described below. Maine's Workforce Longitudinal Data System may play an integral role in measuring long-term participant outcomes and in providing information that drives program evaluation and policy decisions. The system is designed to measure wage and employment outcomes of program participants by credential and program. A range of programs are currently part of the data sharing partnership, and additional partners will be added. Current partners include Maine's Community Colleges, the University of Maine System, Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation programs and MDOL. Defining Industry Recognized Credentials and measuring the attainment of these credentials will also be an important aspect for assessing progress. Once credentials are defined and data sharing partnerships arranged, the Maine Workforce Longitudinal Data System may be used to measure the employment outcomes of participants earning these awards. Maine will also utilize control group studies to assess performance, as described below. Maine's economic analysis states that the majority of jobs that are projected to grow in Maine will require postsecondary education and training. Maine has utilized Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) to support WIA participant attainment of traditional two and four year college degrees. However, WIOA strongly emphasizes employer-based workforce preparation and promotes new education alliances intended to limit duplication of services and to increase the engagement of employers in developing standards and articulating pathways workers can take to attain entry to upper level skills. Selecting a pool of individuals who successfully completed training during PY15, the state will analyze and compare the long-term employment and earnings outcomes of participants enrolled in employer-based training, (On-the-Job Training, Registered Apprenticeship, Customized Training, or employer-funded certificate training) with the outcomes of participants enrolled in traditional two or four year college degree or certificate programs. Information used to evaluate the outcomes of each of the participant groups will include the costs borne by the WIOA programs, as follows:

- Full-cost of the formal component of participant training:
 - o For college bound trainees: tuition, fees, books, remedial or pre-requisite courses and other charges of the educational institution;
 - o For employer-based trainees: OJT wages, cost of any related classroom training or instruction, cost of

customized training funded by WIOA; o Full cost of supportive services funded for the full term of the training program. o Percentage of staff time directly supporting the participant from the point of program entry to successful completion of training and including any follow-up services; o Full amount and type of non-WIOA funds leveraged, such as: PELL, scholarships, individual contributions and employer wage and classroom cost match, including costs of employee benefits paid to participants while in training, if any. Additional aspects that will be evaluated for each participant will include: • Industry for which trainee was prepared; • Length of time in formal training (program/OJT start to program/OJT end date); • Length of time from completion of training to attainment of employment; • Whether or not the training included both an experiential and academic component; • Whether or not trainee attained a portable credential, degree, diploma, license or will attain a portable credential, such as a certificate of apprenticeship; • Wages at second quarter after exit; • Wages at sixth quarter after exit; and • Wages at tenth quarter after exit. In addition to participant analysis, employers offering the work-based training will be surveyed regarding their perspectives on the value and effectiveness of this approach. Employers will be asked to provide their input regarding the overall success of employees they hire just out of college with those they have hired and trained through WIOA supported work-based training. This input will be used to inform service providers who are developing work-based training programs for employers and participants. Participants with similar socio-economic backgrounds and academic levels at entry will be randomly selected from across the state, using data captured through formal intake and assessment. Because it is assumed that the number of employer-based training approaches will increase under WIOA, additional comparison cohort groups will be selected each year through PY17. Data accumulated will be analyzed at the end of each program year and in total at the end of PY20. A report comparing the long-term employment and earnings outcomes of each of the two participant cohorts of the study will be produced. Results of the evaluation will be used to inform workforce development service providers and employers about the benefits and/or pitfalls of each of the approaches and to improve the practices involved with each of the approaches, including the following: • Initial and ongoing involvement of the employer or industry for which employees from both cohorts are being educated and trained; • Processes used to prepare and support participants throughout their preparation for training, training, and subsequent employment; • Formulas for greatest return on investment and cost efficiencies identified; • Level of relevance to the employer for each training approach; • Level of skill quality produced as identified in earnings and employment of each approach • Amount of non-WIOA funds leveraged with each approach; • Overall lessons learned based on the findings including strengths and weaknesses of each approach for both the employer and the worker.

5. DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

Describe the methods and factors the State will use in distributing funds under the core programs in accordance with the provisions authorizing such distributions.

A. FOR TITLE I PROGRAMS

For Title I programs, provide a description of the written policies that establish the State's methods and factors used to distribute funds to local areas for—

1. YOUTH ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 128(B)(2) OR (B)(3),

ALLOCATION DISTRIBUTION

MDOL will reserve the 5 percent of the Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Worker allocation allowable for administration for mandated state administrative functions and additional required tasks including: the establishment and maintenance of a list of eligible training providers; conducting oversight and monitoring of local programs in coordination with the State Board and USDOL; providing technical assistance; and establishing and maintaining fiscal and management accountability information systems. Historically, MDOL has executed WIOA contracts with the Local Workforce Development Boards who in turn develop contracts with local service providers.

Allocation distributions have always been figured according to each individual county within a local area. These county allocations will continue to be used after the current PY15 four local area configuration changes in PY16 to become three local areas. The change to three local areas is the result of the chief elected officials and boards from Local Areas One and Two electing to consolidate into a single local area beginning on or around January 1, 2016.

The formulas for calculating the allocations based on ASU, Excess Unemployed, and Disadvantaged Adults will continue to be used in the county allocation formula as before.

The following charts provide a summary of the Program Year 2015 WIA Formula Distribution based on the current four local area configuration and on the soon to be three local area configuration.

TABLE 12: TITLE I ALLOCATION OF DISTRIBUTED FUNDS UNDER FOUR LOCAL AREAS

Maine 4 Local Area Allocation Chart

Fund County Youth \$ Adult \$ DW \$

Local Area 1 10% Admin Aroostook 21,035 20,110 13,950

Washington 12,517 11,100 8,166

90% Program Aroostook 189,318 180,991 125,548

Washington 112,655 99,902 73,496

Totals \$335,525 \$312,103 \$ 221,160 \$ 868,788

Local Area II

10% Admin Hancock 14,621 14,311 15,222

Penobscot 44,444 33,663 46,232

Piscataquis 5,058 5,041 2,501

90% Program Hancock 131,587 128,801 137,002

Penobscot 399,993 302,972 416,084

Hancock 45,527 45,369 22,512

Totals \$ 641,230 \$ 530,157 \$ 639,553 \$ 1,810,940

Local Area III

10% Admin Androscoggin 23,415 20,977 17,846

Franklin 10,148 8,252 5,050

Kennebec 23,752 22,276 15,183

Oxford 13,586 14,540 8,500

Somerset 16,212 16,748 9,713

90% Program Androscoggin 210,737 188,790 160,616

Franklin 91,328 74,267 45,451

Kennebec 213,765 200,482 136,645

Oxford 122,274 130,859 76,503

Somerset 145,909 150,733 87,416

Totals \$ 871,126 \$ 827,922 \$ 562,923 \$ 2,261,971

Local Area IV

10% Admin Cumberland 48,896 38,711 27,974

Knox 6,426 6,550 4,751

Lincoln 5,864 6,117 4,715

Sagadahoc	4,531	4,808	4,699
Waldo	9,435	9,341	5,954
York	31,409	30,911	43,047
90% Program Cumberland	422,068	348,403	251,774
Knox	57,833	59,948	42,762
Lincoln	52,773	55,049	42,431
Sagadahoc	40,775	43,267	42,290
Waldo	84,917	84,070	53,595
York	282,680	278,203	387,427
Totals	\$ 1,045, 560	\$ 964,379	\$ 911,420 \$ 2,921,359

TABLE 13: ALLOCATION OF DISTRIBUTED FUNDS, THREE LOCAL AREAS

Maine 3 Local Area Allocation Chart

Fund County Youth Adult DW

New Local Area

10% Admin Aroostook	21,035	20,110	13,950
Washington	12,517	11,100	8,166
Hancock	14,621	14,311	15,222
Penobscot	44,444	33,663	46,232
Piscataquis	5,058	5,041	2,501
90% Program Aroostook	189318	180991	125549
Washington	112655	99902	73496
Hancock	131,587	128,801	137,002
Penobscot	399,993	302,971	416,084
Hancock	45,527	45,369	22,512

Totals \$ 976,754 \$ 842,262 \$ 860,712 \$ 2,679,728

Local Area III

10% Admin Androscoggin 23,415 20,977 17,846

Franklin 10,148 8,252 5,050

Kennebec 23,752 22,276 15,183

Oxford 13,586 14,540 8,500

Somerset 16,212 16,748 9,713

90% Program Androscoggin 210,737 188,790 160,616

Franklin 91,328 74,267 45,451

Kennebec 213,765 200,482 136,645

Oxford 122,274 130,859 76,503

Somerset 145,909 150,733 87,416

Totals \$ 871,126 \$ 827,922 \$ 562,923 \$ 2,261,971

Local Area IV

10% Admin Cumberland 48,896 38,711 27,974

Knox 6,426 6,550 4,751

Lincoln 5,864 6,117 4,715

Sagadahoc 4,531 4,808 4,699

Waldo 9,435 9,341 5,954

York 31,409 30,911 43,047

90% Program Cumberland 422,068 348,403 251,774

Knox 57,833 59,948 42,762

Lincoln 52,773 55,049 42,431

Sagadahoc 40,775 43,267 42,290

Waldo 84,917 84,070 53,595

York 282,680 278,203 387,427

Totals \$ 1,045, 560 \$ 964,379 \$ 911,420 \$ 2,921,359

YOUTH FUNDS Of the total amount of funds allocated for Youth training under WIOA §128, the State will reserve five percent for statewide activities including administration as permitted by WIOA §128(a). The remaining amount will be distributed to local areas according to WIA §128(b) (2): 33 1/3 percent of the federal allotment to Maine is allocated to local areas based on the relative number of unemployed individuals residing in areas of substantial unemployment in each local area as compared to the total number of such unemployed individuals in the State. 33 1/3 percent of the federal allotment to Maine is allocated to local areas based on the relative excess number of unemployed individuals who reside in each local area as compared to the total number of such unemployed individuals in the State. "Excess number" means the number of unemployed individuals in excess of 4.5 percent of the civilian labor force. 33 1/3 percent of the federal allotment to Maine is allocated to local areas based on the relative number of disadvantaged youth compared to the total number of disadvantaged youth in the State. The State will not employ the discretionary option described in WIOA §128(b) (3). Data for the first two requirements will be produced by MDOL's Center for Workforce Information Services. Data for the third element will be provided by the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) from census data. The State will employ the discretion given by the Secretary of Labor to utilize the "hold harmless" clause described above.

Requested Revision;

As Maine follows the WIOA local area distribution formula, we are adding the "minimum percentage" component to the plan which delineates how funds are allocated to local areas for the Youth and Dislocated Worker Programs. The wording is exactly the same for both the Youth and Dislocated Worker allocation description.

Minimum Percentage – The Local Area will not receive an allocation percentage for a fiscal year that is less than ninety percent (90%) of the average allocation percentage of the local area for the two preceding fiscal years. Amounts necessary for increasing such allocations to local areas to comply with the preceding sentence shall be obtained by ratably reducing the allocations to be made to other local areas.

2. ADULT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) OR (B)(3),

DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS FOR CORE PROGRAMS TITLE I PROGRAMS ADULT AND YOUTH TRAINING FUNDS ADULT FUNDS Of the total amount of funds allocated for Adult Training under WIOA §132(b) (1), the State will reserve 5 percent for statewide activities including administration as permitted by WIOA §128(a). The remaining amount will be distributed to local areas within 30 days of receipt as required by WIOA §182(e). 33 1/3 percent of the federal allotment to Maine is allocated to local areas based on the relative number of unemployed individuals residing in areas of substantial unemployment in each local area as compared to the total number of such unemployed individuals in the State. 33 1/3 percent of the federal allotment to Maine is allocated to local areas based on the relative excess number of unemployed individuals who reside in each local area as compared to the total number of such unemployed individuals in the State. "Excess number" means the number of unemployed individuals in excess of 4.5 percent of the civilian labor force. 33 1/3

percent of the federal allotment to Maine is allocated to local areas based on the relative number of disadvantaged adults compared to the total number of disadvantaged adults in the State. Data for the first two requirements will be produced by MDOL's Center for Workforce Information Services. Data for the third element will be provided by the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) from census data. The State will employ the discretion given by the Secretary of Labor to utilize the "hold harmless" clause: MINIMUM PERCENTAGE—No service delivery area within any State shall be allocated an amount equal to less than 90 percent of the average of its allocation percentage for the two preceding fiscal years prior to the fiscal year for which such determination is made. If the amounts appropriated pursuant to section 3(a)(1) for a fiscal year and available to carry out this part are not sufficient to provide an amount equal to at least 90 percent of such allocation percentage to each such area, the amounts allocated to each area shall be ratably reduced.

3. DISLOCATED WORKER EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) AND BASED ON DATA AND WEIGHTS ASSIGNED.

DISLOCATED WORKER TRAINING FUNDS Of the total amount of funds allocated for Dislocated Worker training under WIOA §132(b) (2), the State will reserve 25 percent for statewide rapid response activities as permitted by WIOA §133(a) (2) and will reserve five percent for statewide activities including administration as permitted by WIOA §128(a). The remaining amount will be distributed to local areas according to WIOA §133(b) (2) (B). The following four data elements will be used to calculate allocation percentages: Insured unemployment— The average weekly number of continued unemployment insurance program claims (less partial) during the previous full year for which data is available for each county is aggregated by local area and divided by the total to arrive at a percentage for each local area. Unemployment concentrations— The annual average of unemployment for each county during the previous full year for which data is available is aggregated by local area and divided by the total to arrive at a percentage for each local area. Declining industries data— The number of jobs lost between the previous full year for which data is available and the year five years previous to that year in both durable and non-durable goods manufacturing by county is aggregated by local area and divided by the total to arrive at a percentage for each local area. Long-term unemployment data— The number of unemployment insurance program exhaustees during the previous full year for which data is available for each county is aggregated by local area and divided by the total to arrive at a percentage for each local area. Data for these elements will be produced by MDOL's Center for Workforce Information Services. Each of the above elements is weighted equally. The remaining factors named in §133(b)(2)(B)(ii), "plant closing and mass layoff data" and "farmer-rancher economic hardship data" will only be considered if proven to be useful for the distribution of funds to areas of need in Maine. Large plant closings have occurred in some Maine counties, but are not a predictor of the location of future large plant closings. Although ten years ago there were many farmers in certain areas of the state who were leaving agriculture, in the years since, there has been no wholesale dislocations which would require more attention to this occupation than others.

Requested Revision;

As Maine follows the WIOA local area distribution formula, we are adding the "minimum percentage" component to the plan which delineates how funds are allocated to local areas for the Youth and Dislocated Worker Programs. The wording is exactly the same for both the Youth and Dislocated Worker allocation description.

Minimum Percentage – The Local Area will not receive an allocation percentage for a fiscal year that is less than ninety percent (90%) of the average allocation percentage of the local area for the two preceding fiscal years. Amounts necessary for increasing such allocations to local areas to comply with the preceding sentence shall be obtained by ratably reducing the allocations to be made to other local areas.

B. FOR TITLE II:

1. MULTI-YEAR GRANTS OR CONTRACTS

Describe how the eligible agency will award multi-year grants or contracts on a competitive basis to eligible providers in the State, including how eligible agencies will establish that eligible providers are organizations of demonstrated effectiveness.

Through a competitive, multi-year grant process, eligible providers may apply for funds to provide adult education services. An eligible provider is an institution of higher education, agency that conducts apprenticeship programs, public or private providers of training services, local educational agency, community-based or faith-based organization, volunteer literacy organization, library, public housing authority, partnerships between an employer or any eligible provider not in the list above that has the ability to provide adult education and literacy activities to eligible individuals.

Requested Revision;

Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy funds are used to provide adult literacy services throughout the State. Historically, adult education services have been provided in a variety of locations (i.e. public schools, libraries, career centers, municipal buildings and other facilities) in each of Maine's 16 counties. The need for literacy services of each county will be determined based on US Census and American Community Service data. Due to the rural nature of much of the state, proximity to services for adults within each county will also be considered.

Federal adult education and family literacy funds are received by the Maine Department of Education Office of Adult Education and Family Literacy. It is the responsibility of that state office agency to disseminate those funds to eligible providers and provide technical assessment and monitoring services. Agency eligible to apply for funding are those outlined in Title II and noted in the first paragraph of this section.

Maine Adult Education will prepare a competitive RFP process for a multi-year (at least three years with the ability to extend for up to two additional years) grant to deliver adult basic education services in July 1, 2017. Based on grant scores, the Maine Office of Adult Education and Family Literacy uses a formula method to determine the amount of funding allocated to each sub-grantee. Other considerations include literacy rate of the area and performance indicators as outlined in Title II of WIOA. The formula will take into consideration local program performance in relation to meeting state targets and the need for services.

After the initial award year, sub-grantees will apply annually for continued funding.

AEFLA Competition Timeline:

September-October 2016 - Office of Adult Education creates RFP with input of local workforce boards

November 2016 – State office recruits readers/scorers

December 2016 - Maine Department of Education publishes request for proposals for AEFLA funding. RFP development and alignment with all of the State of Maine procurement office procedures regarding public notice (posting in Kennebec Journal and on Procurement Office website), scoring, and contract awards will be adhered to.

January 2017 – Adult Education office conducts bidder’s conference

March 2017 – RFPs due

March 2017 – Reviewers read and score proposals

April – May 2017 – State Office insures that proposals meet all requirements and rank order proposals

May 2017 – State Office announces AEFLA awards

June 2017 – Contracts signed with sub-recipients

July 2017 – FY 18-20 grant cycle begins

Each eligible agency that applies must, in order to be considered for funding, as noted in paragraph two above, have demonstrated effectiveness in serving eligible adult learners (low levels of literacy, English language learners, learners with barriers) and the ability to meet the Thirteen Considerations of WIOA Title II. That effectiveness will be determined by the State from the submission of relevant data as part of the proposal process. Data will need to show numbers of low-level learners served, English language learners, educational gain, transition to employment and/or postsecondary or skills training. Proposals that are unable to provide evidence of adequate effectiveness will be eliminated.

Any organization of demonstrated effectiveness is eligible to apply.

2. ENSURE DIRECT AND EQUITABLE ACCESS

Describe how the eligible agency will ensure direct and equitable access to all eligible providers to apply and compete for funds and how the eligible agency will ensure that it is using the same grant or contract announcement and application procedure for all eligible providers.

Proposals will be assessed as to the applicant’s ability to meet the Thirteen Considerations and other requirements of WIOA, demonstrate evidence of successful past performance in providing adult literacy services, programmatic alignment with local workforce board plan priorities, and the ability to successfully address the state’s career pathways components. Additional WIOA requirements that must be met include the ability to offer programs that: lead to industry-recognized credentials; lead to postsecondary credentials; meet the educational and training needs of individuals with barriers; relate to in-demand industry sectors and occupations in Maine; and make use of technology to increase accessibility.

C. TITLE IV VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

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

TITLE IV VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION The State Legislature distributes funding for Vocational Rehabilitation services as part of the biennial budget. The amounts are generally based on the prior year allotment with adjustments made for Personal Services and funding requests submitted by the agency for specific purposes. These funding requests may or may not be approved by the Legislature. Each Vocational Rehabilitation division has their own individual general fund appropriation account within the biennial budget which is the basis of each individual account within the state's accounting system. The general fund appropriation is not shared between the two Vocational Rehabilitation divisions.

6. PROGRAM DATA

A. DATA ALIGNMENT AND INTEGRATION

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

1. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PLANS TO MAKE THE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR THE CORE PROGRAMS INTEROPERABLE TO MAXIMIZE THE EFFICIENT EXCHANGE OF COMMON DATA ELEMENTS TO SUPPORT ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION.

PLANS FOR INTEROPERABLE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR THE CORE PROGRAMS Core partners of this Unified Plan presently utilize disparate case management and management information systems (MIS): Adult Education uses MaineSTARS, Vocational Rehabilitation utilizes AWARE, and Wagner–Peyser and formula program providers are in the early stages of transitioning to America's Job Link Alliance (AJLA). As such, the interfaces between the core partner's information systems are currently limited. Moreover, resources for new systems or system enhancements in a small state such as Maine are constrained (states with relatively small populations cannot cover the fixed costs of purchasing and maintaining operating systems as readily as larger states, which receive substantially higher funding allotments). These facts notwithstanding, Maine's core partners recognize that achieving the type of integrated and efficient service levels articulated in this plan will require 'breaking down the data siloes' and achieving greater levels of system integration. The inability of Maine's case management systems to share information inhibits the alignment and delivery of integrated services and limits the effectiveness of the WDS. At present, program and intake managers are unable to discern if a person entering a one–stop center has already received services from a core partner unless this information is self–disclosed by the individual. Since many participants do not self–disclose history of prior services, this can result in the participant being directed to resources they've already received. Recognizing these limitations, the core partners have agreed in principle to pursue a strategy that will enable existing, disparate systems to share data in order to improve the delivery of services.

Requested Revisions;

In an effort to improve the current inadequacies described above, Maine has developed a two tiered strategy for data alignment and integration. While planning a long-term, technological solution to integrate data systems for Core partner programs, a short term strategy will be implemented that maximizes the efficient exchange of common data elements and aligned assessments.

The data alignment workgroup includes representatives from each core partner who have been charged with identifying common data elements shared by all core programs. The workgroup has already begun crafting a common intake/referral template to reduce duplication and streamline the intake process. Toward this end, the core partners have also agreed to use the same educational assessment (the CASAS) for all programs and are currently negotiating how to best implement eCASAS technology to facilitate the alignment and sharing of educational assessments with program referrals. While this will not fully align all managed information and database systems, as a

short term strategy, it has the potential to vastly improve participant experience by reducing duplication and increasing communication among the partners. It also aids in evaluation by creating a participant trail where referrals can be tracked and participant outcomes can be collected from partner agencies.

Ultimately, Maine will have to develop the capacity for core programs and other partners to share an integrated data system that will allow each agency to collect, utilize, protect, and report out data specific to their agency while also begin able to share and utilize common data from other partner agencies. The core partners are committed to this process and have established a data systems workgroup containing members from each core partner tasked with researching available software and other technology solutions. It is still early in the process for systems alignment, but to date, the group has been formed and begun meeting. First steps in the timeline include researching available software and identifying which data system model might work best in Maine. Additional information regarding specific data system models is included in part two of the data alignment and integration section.

2. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PLANS TO INTEGRATE DATA SYSTEMS TO FACILITATE STREAMLINED INTAKE AND SERVICE DELIVERY TO TRACK PARTICIPATION ACROSS ALL PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN.

PLANS TO INTEGRATE DATA SYSTEMS TO FACILITATE STREAMLINED INTAKE & SERVICE DELIVERY As part of this Unified Plan, Maine's WIOA Steering Committee will formally investigate software tools that facilitate common intake and other shared front-end activities. The core partners and Steering Committee are already aware that several open-source software products are on the market or in development. These systems are designed to 'sit on-top' and 'pull' information from existing legacy systems and allow data to flow among partners to create a 'common front door.' Other tools are designed for interagency collaboration and have been optimized for WIOA. These products also work with existing legacy systems, enabling referrals between agencies, sharing and tracking of assessments, tracking of clients who are referred, plus more. Early investigations reveal that these products are customizable, enabling states to determine the data elements captured. This type of functionality would address the state's need for better communication among case management and management information systems. Achieving greater levels of front-end system integration will require: • identifying the pieces of information within the core program's system that should be shared; • establishing data sharing agreements; • addressing the privacy and governance issues surrounding the use of the shared data; • selecting a software tool most suited to address the partner's needs; • identifying funding to support purchase and implementation of the strategy As part of this unified plan, Maine's core programs will create a plan to address the preceding steps.

Requested Revision;

Maine is pursuing a data integration system that will allow each agency to use its existing system while still allowing a smooth sharing of common data elements for required reporting purposes. The goal is to provide a better quality of experience for the participant as they navigate through the system by reducing duplication and streamlining services.

The data systems workgroup has been established and is currently researching available software and technology that would help meet this goal. As described in documentation from the NRS, we are mindful that, "System architecture supports critical needs for data systems. Under WIOA states have an increased responsibility for data security and privacy of information as well as an expectation of coordination of data across agencies. This sets up a potential for creating and dealing with complex

systems.” Toward this end, the data systems workgroup is giving careful consideration to each data systems option and conducting an examination of system outputs and data exchange requirements all while keeping in mind the security and privacy considerations of each partner agency.

As identified by the NRS, there are four models of data system integration: the Unified Data System, Back-end Integration, Front-end Integration, and the Interfacing System. Financial and time concerns make a unified system out of reach at this time. All other data systems are all still being considered. Because core partners have expressed an interest in maintaining their existing data systems the data systems workgroup is currently researching more of an interface data system with software that can combine common data elements at intake and “sit-on-top” of existing systems to pull out data and share it with other systems as necessary.

To fully optimize the exchange of data among agencies, WIOA partners have agreed that any data integration system must include the following:

- The ability to work with and leverage existing legacy systems and maintain state level ownership of all data.
- Data governance that maintains data security and personal privacy compliance.
- Agreements and comprehensive training that will maintain consistent definitions and protocols throughout the system.
- Reporting and analysis tools compliant with WIOA regulations including outcomes reporting.
- The ability to provide high level graphics/dashboards while allowing drill-downs to specific information depending on user roles and permissions.
- Integration of UI, ES, and workforce IT systems (AJLA) so they can “speak” to each other.
- The ability to expand to include additional workforce partners as the need arises.

Finding a system able to be customized to meet Maine’s workforce development needs as outlined above will allow core partners to track individual participation across all programs. By working through the implementation plan and timeline described below in part three, the data integration workgroup will align existing agency services to the extent actionable while also pursuing Maine’s long term data integration strategy.

3. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE BOARD WILL ASSIST THE GOVERNOR IN ALIGNING TECHNOLOGY AND DATA SYSTEMS ACROSS REQUIRED ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS (INCLUDING DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMON INTAKE, DATA COLLECTION, ETC.) AND HOW SUCH ALIGNMENT WILL IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY TO INDIVIDUALS, INCLUDING UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS.

THE STATE BOARD’S ROLE ASSISTING THE GOVERNOR IN ALIGNING TECHNOLOGY AND DATA SYSTEMS The State Board (SWB) will assist the governor in aligning technology and data systems across partner programs. The SWB is active in establishing the parameters for new technology systems in order to allow core partner systems to communicate. The Maine Department of Labor is implementing a new management information system, the Americas Job Link Alliance

(AJLA), which will facilitate WIOA federal reporting. The State Board will also take a leadership role in establishing the parameters for new system software that will enable common intake and other shared front–end system activities. The State Board will take a leadership role in advising the governor on technology systems for measuring the performance of programs and participants. Maine’s workforce longitudinal data system will play an integral role in measuring the outcomes of participants over time in order to measure and direct resources more effectively. The State Board also convenes the WIOA Steering Committee meetings and facilitates discussions in support of creating improved modes of service delivery to individuals, including those with barriers and who are unemployed. The core partners are also represented on the Steering Committee and through numerous meetings and discussions, a comprehensive strategy that reflects their input and the desire of the governor for increased efficiency of operations is being developed.

Requested Revision;

State Workforce Development Board leadership has been instrumental in developing a state strategy for aligning and integrating the complex data systems involved. Under their guidance, the WIOA steering committee was formed to develop and direct all areas of WIOA implementation. The committee has been working for over eighteen months to bring partners together, leverage resources and support, and to align systems and processes. In regards to data alignment and systems integration, the required one-stop partner programs have agreed to and are working toward the following implementation plan and timeline:

7/1/2016 – 12/31/2016:

- Create the MOU workgroup with representatives from required one-stop partners tasked with negotiating and creating essential MOU agreements for data sharing among the agencies as well as the privacy and security of participant data.
- From previous work gathering common data elements, the Data Alignment Workgroup begins creating initial common referral form and continues discussions around common or aligned intake forms.
- Performance Measures Reporting Workgroup continues discussions regarding required participant outcome reporting and opportunities for longitudinal data system.
- Data systems workgroup formed to research available solutions to integrated data systems.

1/1/2017 – 6/30/2017:

- Report out from all workgroups to the WIOA steering committee for input and to finalize decisions regarding data alignment and integration.
- Finalize MOU agreements among required one-stop partners and begin implementation of MOU agreements. Provide guidance for local level MOU agreements where necessary.
- Finalize common forms for current data systems and begin the professional development/cross-training process of partner agencies.

- Begin implementation of participant outcome reporting to the extent actionable under existing data systems while continuing to pursue longitudinal capabilities where possible.
- Continue identifying integrated technology needs and researching possible software and technology solutions. Pursue funding opportunities as they arise.

7/1/2017:

- Signed data sharing MOU agreements.
- Full implementation of common forms and one-stop partner alignment where applicable including the continuation of varied and multiple interagency professional development opportunities among the core partners for front-line staff.
- Short-term data alignment and integration strategy fully operational with full implementation of performance and outcome measures as possible with existing data systems.
- Continued work toward long-term data system integration as software technology and funding allows.

Mindful of the Governor's desire for improved efficiency among state agencies, the State Workforce Development Board recognizes that implementing the steps listed above will streamline services and greatly improve the overall experience and outcomes of unemployed individuals and all others participating in Maine's workforce development system.

4. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PLANS TO DEVELOP AND PRODUCE THE REPORTS REQUIRED UNDER SECTION 116, PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM. (WIOA SECTION 116(D)(2)).

DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PLANS TO DEVELOP REPORTS REQUIRED UNDER SECTION 116, PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM Section 116 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act outlines the required reporting parameters for core partners. Currently, all core partners are collecting and reporting many similar performance measures by using the Unemployment Insurance (UI) database through the Maine Department of Labor. Employment data is obtained through a data match using participant social security numbers for all core partners, except the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services. However, since the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services is housed under the Department of Labor, employment performance measures will also be able to be obtained through a Social Security data match using the same Department of Labor UI database. The same can be said for median wage reporting requirements. Although median earnings are not currently being reported by any core program, median wage data is collected through the UI database, and as such the core programs will be able to report median earnings using the UI database once the definitions and reporting regulations are agreed to and finalized. Some performance measures regarding credential attainment are currently collected by Adult Education, the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, and Title I Youth Services programs. Credential attainment for secondary school diplomas and high school equivalency will be obtained by accessing Adult Education's high school equivalency data to track credential attainment for the agencies with this requirement. Postsecondary enrollment information is currently obtained for adult education using the National Student Clearinghouse through the Department of Education to conduct a data match. Unfortunately, the credential data in its current state is incomplete and unable to meet the requirements of section 116 as it currently exists. Although the National Student Clearinghouse is a

useful tool for tracking postsecondary enrollment, the database is not currently being used to track successful postsecondary completion nor does it include all recognized postsecondary education or training programs—two required data elements from section 116 of WIOA. To enable core programs to collect and report this required data, the WIOA Data workgroup is researching other available resources and examining ways several data sets may be able to be combined to compile the data necessary for the required performance measures. The core partners are also exploring ways to align the Department of Labor’s expanded Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) with the new data requirements under WIOA. Measurable skill gains are currently collected and reported for Adult Education using the federally approved CASAS assessment for the pre—and—post testing of participants. Once measurable skill gains are defined and assessments are created that meet the federal guidelines, adult education will adopt and implement pre—and—post testing with the new assessment to measure participant skill gains. Through the use of technology, core partners intend to coordinate and align measurable skills assessment by implementing one assessment tool that can be used by all partners. For example, use of the eCASAS assessments by all local Adult Education programs, one—stops, and other eligible training providers will enable the core partners to share the assessment data and meet reporting requirements. None of the core partners are currently measuring or reporting indicators of effectiveness in serving employers. The core partners have agreed upon the need for both qualitative and quantitative measures. Once effectiveness has been defined and indicators of effectiveness have been identified, the core partners are committed to collecting and reporting the required measures.

Planning Note: States should be aware that Section 116(i)(1) requires the core programs, local boards, and chief elected officials to establish and operate a fiscal and management accountability information system based on guidelines established by the Secretaries of Labor and Education. Separately, the Departments of Labor and Education anticipate working with States to inform future guidance and possible information collection(s) on these accountability systems. States should begin laying the groundwork for these fiscal and management accountability requirements, recognizing that adjustments to meet the elements above may provide opportunity or have impact on such a fiscal and management accountability system.

B. ASSESSMENT OF PARTICIPANTS' POST-PROGRAM SUCCESS

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

ASSESSMENT OF PARTICIPANTS' POST-PROGRAM SUCCESS Developing long-term participant outcomes is essential to creating a continuous cycle of program and system improvement. Moreover, as discussed in the first section of this Unified Plan (Economic and Workforce Analysis), Maine has a variety of workforce challenges that require measurement, tracking and assessment. As such, Maine's core partners are committed to producing an evaluation system that extends beyond what's required for federal reporting. Maine's Workforce Longitudinal Data System will play an integral role in measuring long-term participant outcomes. This system links unit level participant records with their corresponding wage and employment data and was developed under grants from U.S. E.T.A and Maine's Statewide Longitudinal Data System, which is administered by the Maine Department of Education. The Workforce Longitudinal Data System presently measures first year wage and employment outcomes of university and community college graduates at the campus, credential and area of study level. As part of this plan, the system will be used to measure the outcomes of workforce development system program participants. To do so, the WIOA Steering Committee, core program managers and the State Board will collaborate to define the data that is required to inform decision making and program improvement. Other programs that are not presently using wage data for performance accountability evaluations will also be added to the wage-matching system. Maine's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), for example, is in the process of developing a data sharing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Maine Department of Labor for the purposes of evaluating the outcomes of Department of Health and Human Services participants.

C. USE OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) WAGE RECORD DATA

Explain how the State will meet the requirements to utilize quarterly UI wage records for performance accountability, evaluations, and as a source for workforce and labor market information, consistent with Federal and State law. (This Operational Planning element applies to core programs.)

USE OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE WAGE RECORD DATA A Maine Department of Labor Memorandum of Understanding regarding the use of Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage record data permits the department to use the data in three different ways. First, data will be used to measure and manage performance for: Title I-B Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs, Wagner-Peyser, Trade, Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), National Dislocated Worker Grants and other Federal initiatives such as the Disability Employment Initiative. Second, wage data will be used for customizing and providing services to employers and, third, the data will be utilized to measure and evaluate long term outcomes and performance through the Maine Workforce Longitudinal Data System (MLWDS) on behalf the department, other agencies and educational institutions. The department uses the wage data to monitor the status and progress of participants enrolled in the Title 1-B, Wagner-Peyser, Trade and WOTC programs for such purposes as: verifying work history, assessing suitability for enrollment and training, and confirming employment after program exit. Another use is to generate internal program performance and management reports and Federal reports such as the WIASRD and the Labor Exchange ETA 9002 and Vet-200 reports. UI wage data access is also vital to wage verification as part of the annual data element

validation process required by WIOA and the U.S. Department of Labor. Under WIOA, the UI wage data will also be utilized to determine the initial and continuing eligibility of training providers to receive WIOA training funds and to be included on Maine's Eligible Training Provider List as a means of assessing the effectiveness of the eligible programs. In addition, standard assessments and reports will be posted on the web so that consumers will be able to easily access information that will assist them in making choices about the variety of education and training programs available in Maine, and the providers of those training programs. Work-based experiences such as apprenticeship, work experience, On-the-Job Training (OJT), and other programs will be promoted and utilized by Maine Department of Labor staff in outreach to employers and the business community. Judicious use of wage data that maintains confidentiality can enhance the assessment of employer needs and provision of appropriate services. It can assist the workforce development system in educating employers on the return on investment of a better educated and trained workforce. By funding the Maine Workforce Longitudinal Data System (MWLDS), Maine's policymakers have clearly signaled the move towards data-driven decision making in future rulemaking, goal setting and program evaluation. Standard reports from the MWLDS using UI wage data will be designed to provide information to evaluate the effectiveness of the training programs administered by the core partners under WIOA. A primary goal is to develop reports that reflect the wage and employment outcomes for education and training programs over time to improve program performance and enhance customer choice. Standard reports will guide improvement of the workforce system by enabling administrators to evaluate program effectiveness and allocate limited public funds more effectively.

D. PRIVACY SAFEGUARDS

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

PRIVACY SAFEGUARDS Personally identifiable information at the individual record level is protected by having all staff sign a confidentiality agreement and, when appropriate for non-departmental agencies, release of information forms signed by customers are obtained in order to release UI data to that agency. In terms of outside agencies personally identifiable information is protected by aggregating individual records and standardized confidentiality screening. MWLDS' public facing results are aggregated to protect the confidentiality of participants being measured. In addition, outcomes with fewer than 10 participants are suppressed for confidentiality purposes. Additionally, the Center for Workforce Research and Information is implementing additional privacy protections by adopting a System Security Plan based on FIPS 199/NIST 800-60 Vol2, Rev1 guidelines.

7. PRIORITY OF SERVICE FOR VETERANS

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

PRIORITY OF SERVICE FOR VETERANS The State Board, Maine Department of Labor and Local Workforce Development areas are jointly required to develop and issue a "priority of service to veterans" policy that applies "to every qualified job training program funded, in whole or in part, by the Department" for which they have direct oversight and responsibility. Board level area policy must adhere to 20 CFR 1010 dated December 19, 2008 and TEGL No 14-08 dated March 18, 2009, and incorporate veteran priority into current WIOA priority of service policy. Veteran's priority of service definitions for covered and non-covered persons can be found at Priority of Service for Veterans and Eligible Spouses: Final Rule (<http://www.dol.gov/vets/>). The State Board, Maine Department of Labor and Local Workforce Development area service providers are responsible for developing strategies and implementing the veterans' priority of service as defined and required by 38 U.S.C 4215(b) and 20 CFR Parts 1001 and 1010. Maine's one-stop system is the core mechanism that will support, expand and maintain services to the veteran population throughout the State. Eligible veterans or eligible spouses with significant barriers to employment as defined in Veterans' Program Letter (VPL) 03-14, Section 5, will receive "top priority." Priority of service applies to Workforce Investment Act Adult, Dislocated and Youth Grants, National Emergency Grants, Demonstration Grants, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Wagner-Peyser, American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and other core programs funded by the U.S. Department of Labor and administered in Maine by the Maine Department of Labor (MDOL). Maine Department of Labor and one-stop providers will take the necessary actions to ensure that priority of service opportunities are clearly visible and articulated to all customers who engage in one-stop services. At a minimum, "priority of service to veterans" will include adherence to and implementation of the following guidelines:

Outreach/Recruitment:

- Inclusion of information regarding veterans' priority of service in printed materials targeted to customers and employers;
- Inclusion of information regarding veterans' priority of service in presentations made to customers and employers;
- Addition of veterans' priority of service information to service providers, Maine one-stop centers and Department of Labor web sites; and
- Pro-active recruitment of veterans by targeted contact strategies or other strategies that focus on employers as well as job seeking veterans, particularly when the region is not in compliance with veterans' priority of service performance measures.

Notification:

- Addition of a veterans' priority of service rights statement to the complaint procedures provided to a Veteran customer; and/or
- Addition of a veterans' priority of service rights statement to the signature portion of the WIOA (or other covered) program paper intake forms or applications;
- Inclusion of information regarding veterans' priority of service at front desk reception areas, as well as in universal access information center locations;
- Provision of the opportunity for veterans and eligible spouses to make known their veteran status; and
- The Maine Job Bank job notification system will inform eligible veterans of job opportunities first and on a more frequent basis than all other registrants

Intake/Registration for Services:

- Written policies to establish that service providers who receive WIOA funds for employment and training programs will be required to identify covered persons at the point of entry to programs and/or services, so that veterans and eligible spouses can take full advantage of the priority of service; and
- Written policies and procedures to ensure veterans and eligible spouses understand their entitlement to priority of service and the full array of employment and training services available. Policies will address eligibility requirements that veterans and eligible

spouses must meet in order to gain entry into programs and be provided applicable services.

Eligibility for Services:

- Written policies and procedures to ensure veterans and eligible spouses meet the statutory eligibility requirements applicable to the specific employment and training program;
- Written policies and procedures to ensure veterans and eligible spouses are given priority of service where statutory or mandatory priorities are in effect and particularly, where Local Area service providers have instituted mandatory priorities due to limited funds;
- Written policies and procedures to ensure that veterans and eligible spouses receive access to services or resources earlier than non-covered persons, or before a non-covered person, if resources or services are limited; and
- Written policies that target special populations of veterans including Special Disabled Veterans, Campaign Badge Veterans, Disabled Veterans, and eligible spouses when services or resources are limited.

To determine whether veterans are receiving priority of service in core programs funded by the U.S. Department of Labor and administered by Maine Department of Labor, several measurements will be incorporated. Benchmarks will be established to provide a baseline to measure the impact of priority of service to covered participants: one will benchmark the covered participants using prior program year data. Many veterans face difficult labor market transitions, particularly upon reentering civilian life and may require specialized employment and training services to boost their job prospects. Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS) and Maine Department of Labor have established effective program designs that include other providers such as the Togus Veteran's Rehabilitation program. Additionally, veterans with more severe adjustment difficulties may require counseling, social services, and more in-depth support from specialists who are more familiar with their needs. Maine's Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) are delegated the authority to generate the "Quarterly Reports on Services to Veterans." Nonetheless, the responsibility for the content of such reports remains with one-stop center managers. These reports focus on compliance with Federal law and regulations with respect to special services and priorities for veterans. As new US Department of Labor and Maine Department of Labor veterans programs are introduced and implemented, the veterans' team and Wagner-Peyser staff will assist in delivering these services and programs to veterans. Delivery of services through the one-stop system to veterans and eligible spouses is standardized to ensure that no veteran or eligible spouse is turned away without receiving some level of service. Stationed in key one-stop centers, Disabled Veterans Outreach Program specialists and Local Veterans Employment Representatives work exclusively with veterans and eligible spouses to facilitate their access to all programs and services for which they are eligible under the priority of service policy. These specialists provide one-on-one assistance that includes case management, assessment, planning, advocacy, job development, job matching, referral to other state and federal programs and follow-up. As veterans and eligible spouses may be referred to any available employment and training service open to the general public regardless of funding source, it is important that all one-stop center staff establish and maintain effective working relationships with one-stop system partners and service networks. These relationships will strengthen coordination of interagency efforts to help support veteran service initiatives. Veterans' priority of service language will be integrated into financial and nonfinancial working agreements and Memoranda of Understanding with other organizations to ensure Maine's workforce development system is "Keeping the Promise!"

8. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

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

ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM UNIVERSAL ACCESS: A SUSTAINED EFFORT Building on two rounds of funding under the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI), initial steps to provide more comprehensive physical and programmatic access have begun. The Disability Employment Initiative has increased understanding of sensitivity to the complexity of universal access. Given limited human and financial resources, Maine proposes to chart a five year course of improvement leading to institutionalized practices that ensure and sustain universal access. A universal access working group composed of key personnel will be established to implement this effort. Initially, the group will have wide representation that includes the required WIOA partners, related partners/providers, and subject matter experts with backgrounds in accessibility, accommodations, and special populations. Working group membership/representation will be fluid, based on the issue or need being addressed. A universal access coordinator will lead the work group. This dedicated staff position in the Bureau of Employment Services will provide technical assistance to aid the one-stop centers in achieving and sustaining universal access. This Bureau oversees physical access to one-stop centers, the customer complaint resolution process, policy development that affects the delivery of services, and monitoring/certification of one-stop centers. The universal access coordinator will provide technical assistance to aid the one-stop centers in achieving and sustaining universal access. The Bureau will establish MOU's or other agreements with Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Bureau of Unemployment Compensation, the Adult Education program, Bureau of Human Resources, Office of Family Independence, Office of Adult and Disabled Services, and other non-labor agencies (i.e. Corrections) to establish commitments to system wide universal access. To establish universal access as a policy and quality assurance initiative, the universal access coordinator will have the authority of a program manager working under the Division of Policy and Evaluation. Under the direction of the universal access coordinator, the work group will draft a five year plan to improve and sustain universal access and when indicated, make recommendations to the State Board through its program policy committee, and directly to the Commissioner of Labor, when indicated, to emphasize department wide authority and support for accessibility. If warranted and if resources allow, the work group will conduct a staff development needs assessment. Planning will include initial and ongoing staff training and an updated assessment of physical accessibility for one-stop centers, WIOA partner provider facilities, vocational rehabilitation providers, and adult education programs. Policy issues will be identified; and guidance will be provided to one-stop centers, local workforce boards, and required partners. That guidance will be refined over time as policies are developed and monitoring/certification activities occur. **SECTION 188 CHECKLIST** The WIOA Section 188 Checklist developed by the USDOL Office of Civil Rights will be the guiding document for the working group. The checklist is considered a comprehensive overview of requirements and provides reliable advice on achieving and sustaining universal access.

LEVERAGING EXISTING RESOURCES AND CONSTITUENT COMMITTEES Maine will build and maintain a system that includes access based on language, race, national origin, religion,

culture/ethnicity, ability/disability, age, sex/gender identity, and all other protected classes under WIOA, the Americans with Disability Act, applicable state laws, and other federal laws related to public access and civil rights. The working group will establish minimum standards of access, based on the Section 188 Checklist, and issue guidance to the system and its partners to help them meet the standards. The Maine State Board has several committees designed to address the workforce needs of specific constituencies, including women, older workers, younger workers, veterans, and people with disabilities. These committees will be asked to advise the universal design working group on programmatic and physical access and to assist with policies and operational guidance to assure that the one-stop system and its partners are accessible and meeting requirements. Other organizations serving and representing job-seeking constituencies, including migrant and seasonal workers, "displaced homemakers," ex-offenders, populations whose identities are based on culture/ethnicity/religion, youth, people with disabilities, and older Mainers will be consulted and invited to participate in planning, policy review, staff training, testing and evaluating programmatic and physical access, including customer service. The State Rehabilitation Councils for the General and Blind VR programs, as well as related councils for the Deaf/Late Deafened/Hard of Hearing and Development Disabilities, will also be included. Focus groups and surveys of customers and larger affected populations will be used to determine if accessibility goals are being met. Universal access for employers/businesses will be explored and addressed as well. Business organizations will be consulted for their input, and employer accessibility that falls under Section 188 will be assessed. Program or policy efforts that come from that assessment will be incorporated into the working group's strategic plan. CORE PRIORITIES Developing a vision and working definition of universal access is essential. Maine does not have all the human and financial resources to implement and sustain universal access without a commitment to a long term initiative. Therefore, the initial priority is the development of a five-year strategic initiative, with each year's efforts building on and refining prior efforts. The system's vision of universal access will dictate the goal(s) and will provide the destination for the five year course. Determining how to best inspire system investment will be part of the working group's charge. Staff training and initial policy development will follow quickly. Training: Professional development for any major systems or operational change is one of the best guarantors of sustainability. With the goal of sustained competence related to serving diverse populations and with related policies in mind within the workforce development system and among partner agencies, the work group will develop a training plan that is compatible and synchronized with other staff training. The objective of the universal access training efforts is sustained competence related to serving diverse populations and knowledge of related policies across the system and among partner agencies. Training for employees will include information on locating and providing access to needed resources such as translators and interpreters, transportation services, and alternative formats. The Section 188 Checklist will inform training topics and plans for managers, supervisors, and facility operations staff. Initial training for staff and partners will include, at a minimum: • General orientation to universal access, WIOA and other legal requirements; • Customer service—both culturally sensitive service and general customer service; • Resources within the system and in the larger community; • Complaint resolution. A variety of training approaches will be considered and deployed, depending on available financial and human resources, training topics, and other conditions. Co-training with and for partners will be considered to best use resources and help system partners' staffs to "be on the same page." Blending and braiding training resources will be a guiding principle. All one-stop center staff will be trained and required to demonstrate competency in serving diverse populations and knowledge of related policies across the system and among partner agencies. One-stop center certification will depend on demonstrating that employees have achieved the required competencies in universal access. Policies: Existing policies will be reviewed and updated to reflect WIOA intent and to meet the standards articulated in the Section 188 Checklist. Universal access policies that will govern one-stop center certification will be developed in collaboration with the Bureau of Employment Services' Division of Policy and Evaluation and the State Board Program Policy Committee. Examples of immediate policy priorities

include assistive technology and equipment responsibility, website/social media accessibility, programmatic and physical accessibility of workshops and events, service animal protocols, customer flow for the employment network, prohibition of automatic referrals to vocational rehabilitation, alternative formats for required tests/assessments, and consistent use of equal employment and accommodations tag lines. Program participation rules governing required orientation workshops, the RESEA program, and other mandatory programs will be examined to ensure full accessibility, especially access to alternative formats and accommodations. The feasibility of a central accommodations fund and various ways of ensuring/maintaining its solvency will also be explored. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND OTHER CHALLENGES TO ACCESS Maine is a leader among states in ensuring that domestic violence victims have legal protections to avoid job loss and loss of unemployment insurance benefits due to domestic violence counseling, treatment and court appointments. The universal access working group will examine how domestic violence affects physical and programmatic access to services and make any necessary changes to address this situation. Similarly, the working group will explore the potential implications of low literacy, financial hardship, and poor housing/homelessness on access to services. Policies and practices designed to mitigate the most challenging circumstances will be investigated in collaboration with low-income individuals, people who are homeless, and the organizations representing them.

MONITORING PROGRESS The Section 188 checklist and policies will be used to monitor the system's progress toward universal access. Quantitative outcomes will be used, when practical, to assess system accessibility and utilization by WIOA's priority populations. Best practice models from other systems and other states will be researched and tailored to Maine whenever possible.

Requested Revision;

Building on our experience with the Disability Program Navigators grant and two rounds of the Disability Employment Initiative, the Bureau of Employment Services is already in the process of drafting, adopting, and promulgating two policies, one on nondiscrimination and one on accessibility, which will be distributed to local workforce development boards, their chief elected officials, one-stop operators/managers/staff, eligible training providers, and all entities awarded WIOA funds.

The policies will cover non-discrimination and access for all classes under Section 188. The policies define and prohibit discrimination, and will require, as appropriate, the provision of auxiliary aids, assistive technology, adaptive equipment, and accommodations, along with physical accessibility, technological/internet accessibility, EEO requirements, and public notice of the availability of auxiliary aids/services and accommodations.

The policies will also reference procedures for filing complaints, which are already contained in our CareerCenter Customer Complaint Manual. Current staff people are familiar with the manual and it is available on the shared drive for reference. Staff training includes customer complaint protocols and is part of the core training that we plan to provide to required partners.

The policy also requires the State and Local Boards to post required notices, meeting agendas and minutes, and other information and to ensure that their websites, meeting spaces, and documents meet current accessibility standards.

Compliance with the policies will be required for one-stop certification. WDBs and operators will develop protocols to assist front-line staff in partner agencies on how to identify appropriate services for individuals and deliver them in an accessible and non-discriminatory fashion.

All front-line staff will be informed/reminded of the procedures for handling customer complaints related to discrimination or lack of access. Customer service training will be provided to all front line staff within three months of hire, and after that annually. Managers, in collaboration with BES and the WIOA staff development group, will be responsible for providing and documenting this training,

WDBs and operators will be responsible for developing mechanisms to deliver information on local workforce development system resources in an easy-to-access manner, They will conduct outreach to inform the public of these resources. Workforce development system partners and community agencies will also be informed of these resources and how to assist clients and participants in accessing and navigating the workforce system's resources.

In accordance with §678.800, WDBs will be responsible for ensuring that these provisions are implemented. Monitoring will include compliance with these policies. WDBs will assess their one-stops at least once every three years. They will also review and update any criteria when conducting any program reviews or when updating their local plans.

When monitoring or other activities reveal a need for system-wide technical assistance, policy updates, or concerns related to non-discrimination and accessibility, the Bureau of Employment Services may provide or assist with providing the necessary TA.

We will use the Section 188 checklist, Promising Practices In Achieving Universal Access and Equal Opportunity: A Section 188 Disability Reference Guide, and the USDOL's Integrated Service Delivery Toolkit to assist system partners, providers, and local boards with guidance on developing their own monitoring tools.

Implementing and monitoring compliance with these policies will be overseen by a universal access coordinator and a core Universal Access work group of system stakeholders and subject matter experts from the larger community, including the Alpha One (independent living center), Disability Rights Maine, the state ADA coordinator, Maine CITE (designated adaptive technology provider for the Maine Department of Education), NAMI Maine, and other agencies and entities with relevant expertise in both accessibility and non-discrimination. Members of the state or local workforce boards will be included.

The Bureau of Employment Services will implement standard operating procedures that include a designated Assistive Technology specialist in each one-stop. The specialists' responsibilities will include routine inventories of equipment. One-stop managers will be responsible for ensuring that all assistive technology and adaptive equipment are functioning, and that adequate resources are available to replace/repair equipment, update assistive software, and obtain new equipment when needed.

The Bureau of Employment Services will also continue to operate a Ticket-to-Work workforce employment network through the one-stops, ensuring that people receiving federal SSI and DI benefits are served by the workforce system. One-stop managers will designate at least one Ticket-to-Work specialist in each office.

Staff training to ensure compliance with Section 188 and ADA/ADAA

As part of the state's implementation of WIOA, the Universal Access work group and the WIOA staff development group will be responsible for providing system-wide training to all required partners'

management and staff. This training will be incorporated into the larger training plan for WIOA implementation.

The Universal Access work group will help the broader WIOA staff development group with integrating these trainings into its training plan for WIOA-required partners.

Training to be provided in the first six months to a year following approval of the state's WIOA strategic plan:

- Orientation to the Maine workforce development system's non-discrimination and accessibility policies, including WIOA section 188
- Orientation to the principles of universal access
- Customer service training that is culturally and disability sensitive, including an initial interviewing procedure to mitigate "automatic referrals" to vocational rehabilitation
- Basic disability awareness and etiquette
- ADA/ADAA and Maine Human Rights Act
- Job accommodations-legal requirements and how to assist customers (employers and jobseekers) with requesting and negotiating accommodations
- Encouraging disability disclosure in the CareerCenter, and how to correctly document the disclosure in the customer case management system
- Identification of language interpretation resources and how to access them for customer communications (both ASL and spoken languages)
- Use of assistive technology and adaptive equipment in the CareerCenter and customer access to additional assistive technology and adaptive equipment
- Customer complaint protocols
- General resources on disability and language access

Managers and supervisors, in collaboration with our WIOA staff development group, will provide training to new hires, and on an annual or biennial basis to all staff. The training will be recorded; and some training will be offered through online training providers, such as the New England ADA Technical Assistance Center and other regional ADATACs. The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Maine Department of Education, and other agencies (such as those named above as Universal Access work group members/resources) will provide, or help provide, training.

Examples of other training to be offered, either concurrently or after initial training have been completed.

- Hidden disabilities

- Deaf culture
- Blind culture
- Mental health first aid
- Service animals
- Accessing community resources
- Creating accessible documents

The WIOA staff development group will identify a method for documenting compliance with training requirements for implementation by supervisors and managers. Documentation will be a required element of one-stop certification and monitoring.

The Universal Access work group or its coordinator, in concert with the Bureau of Employment Services Director of Policy and Evaluation.

First three months:

- Universal Access Work Group formed, coordinator identified/designated
- Group meets, identifies its charge, and begins developing training plan

Months 6 – 12

- Training providers and modalities identified, plan drafted
- Training schedule developed
- First set of training provided to all staff

Year 2:

- Monitoring and one-stop certification tools related to section 188 developed
- Monitoring and certification tool tested, revised as needed
- Training revised as needed, based on initial delivery
- Training continues for new hires and incumbent staff

Years 3 – 5

- One stop certification and local monitoring conducted

- Issues identified in certification and monitoring process are addressed as appropriate (technical assistance, training revisions, policy revisions)
- Training revised as needed
- Training is now ongoing and routine
- WIOA state strategic plan updated as needed

9. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners) will ensure that each one-stop center is able to meet the needs of English language learners, such as through established procedures, staff training, resources, and other materials.

To meet this challenge, Maine's core programs are committed to grow and diversify Maine's workforce through improved access and engagement by developing strategies to engage populations that tend to have lower labor participation rates including, but not limited to, people with disabilities, veterans, women, older workers, people without a high school diploma, ex-offenders, individuals with language barriers, female heads of households with dependent children and out of school youth. Reflecting these ideas, state agencies are adopting the slogan, "We need every Mainer." The State Board recognizes that innovative strategies and policies must also be created to attract new residents. Current policies such as Veteran's pensions being state tax exempt create powerful incentives to draw new Mainers. The State Board is investigating the factors that cause in-migration, researching best practices regarding relevant policy actions and considering strategies to incentivize the flow of individuals to Maine. The State Board recognizes that innovative strategies and policies must also be created to attract new residents. Current policies such as Veteran's pensions being state tax exempt create powerful incentives to draw new Mainers. Accordingly, the Board is investigating the factors that cause in-migration, researching best practices regarding relevant policy actions and considering strategies to incentivize the flow of individuals to Maine. Core programs will also offer increased support and engagement for Maine's growing foreign born populations—refugees, asylum seekers, and foreign trained professionals. Strategies to improve access for this population to core partners, one-stop partners and within the career centers and partner agency offices will include, but not be limited to:

- Printed workforce development system materials in multiple languages
- Availability of translation services
- Diversity and cultural awareness training for staff
- Development and implementation of robust referral protocols to adult education English language acquisition activities and to other agencies offering assistance with housing, immigration issues, foreign credential assessment, etc. as appropriate
- Seminars on becoming a successful employee in the Maine workplace
- Training for employers on benefits of diversifying their workforce
- Engagement with community and faith-based groups serving the ELL population to determine alignment of their services with those of the workforce development system

To grow the economy, transitioning these populations into employees must become a priority for policy makers and for employers.

Requested Revision;

English Language Learners receive services in Maine's One-Stop Centers and through the WIOA core and affiliated partner agencies. Posters in multiple languages describing agency services as well as the availability of translation services are prominently displayed. In addition, staff at all agencies will receive ongoing training on being culturally sensitive and welcoming. Many of the agencies in the workforce system already have bilingual staff on staff. To better serve non-English speakers, the One-stop Partner Committee will identify best practices to enabling English Language Learners to meet their educational, training and employment needs.

The new MIS/Job Bank system recently implemented throughout Maine One-Stop Centers is also accessible through the internet and has the ability to be switched into 30 different languages at the

click of a mouse. This is a new feature that will allow all workers to access informational services online in their own language.

State Workforce Agency Policy on Language Access is as follows:

POLICY STATEMENT ON LANGUAGE ACCESS, TITLE VI

SUBJECT: Language Access Policy for Individuals Whose Primary Language is not English and Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. This Policy and Procedure Statement is designed to provide equal access to programs, services, and benefits for those individuals who may be limited in speaking, writing and/or understanding English (Limited English Proficient), which includes those individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

BACKGROUND: Since the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, great strides have been made toward the inclusion of all people in the mainstream of American life. All individuals are guaranteed access to public accommodations regardless of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, or physical or mental disability. In Maine, much work has been done to ensure the provision of qualified interpreters for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. The Department makes every effort to ensure equal access to services for all people served, regardless of communication circumstances.

The application of this policy shall be consistent with the provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Federal nondiscrimination rules; and Maine statutes regarding services to persons who are deaf or hard of hearing (34B M.R.S.A. §1218) and American Sign Language interpretation (32 M.R.S.A. §1521(5)).

POLICY STATEMENT: The Maine Department of Labor (MDOL) recognizes its obligation to provide linguistic access to services for individuals whose primary language is not English. Individuals for whom MDOL staff may need interpreter services include applicants, customers, family members, and/or companions. When MDOL staff does not speak the language needed, staff will inform the applicant/consumer that interpreter services are available to ensure equal access to programs and services provided by this Department and its contractors. Accordingly, it is the policy of MDOL to provide its staff with interpreter resources to be utilized in providing access to programs and services to Limited English Proficient persons as well as to persons who are deaf or hard of hearing. This policy outlines guidelines and procedures for the use of such interpreter services.

? All programs, benefits or services provided by MDOL shall be made available to all eligible persons regardless of their abilities to speak, write and/or understand English and who are deaf or hard of hearing.

? MDOL will provide interpreter services at no cost to individuals applying for or participating in MDOL programs.

? MDOL will have policies and procedures which combine the use of in-person and telephone interpreter services as well as translated material necessary for effective communication.

? MDOL is committed to the continued evaluation and improvement of these services, as well as education of staff in available resources and procedures.

? It is a goal of MDOL to employ bilingual/multilingual staff able to communicate directly in languages used in our various regions.

RATIONALE: This policy affirms MDOL's commitment to ensure equal access to benefits and services for Limited English Proficient individuals and persons who are deaf or hard of hearing. The procedures outlined below will ensure that information, services, programs, benefits, obligations, responsibilities and rights are communicated in languages that are understood by and are at no cost, and without significant delay to these individuals. This policy also provides for an effective exchange of information between staff and Limited English Proficient persons, and between staff persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, while services are being provided. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that no person is excluded from or denied equal access to benefits, programs and/or services due to linguistic barriers.

PROCEDURE STATEMENT

Access to the Department: The Department shall use available technologies and services to ensure access to MDOL programs, shall monitor ways that developing technologies and services can enhance access, and will ensure that staff has the equipment, training, and resources for communication for performance of their jobs.

1. In the reception areas of all MDOL buildings where customer services are provided, MDOL shall post and maintain signs in various languages, informing the public of interpreter services available at no charge to the public. Interpreter services include providing in-person or remote ASL (American Sign Language) interpreters and Limited English Proficient interpreter services, and making MDOL's employee language bank available. Where facilities have communication equipment, such as Interprettype or assistive listening devices, staff shall ensure the equipment is available and operational for communication between customers and staff.

2. TTY (Telephone for the deaf) numbers must be included in any listing of Department telephone numbers. TTY numbers must be listed and clearly identified on all letterhead, business cards, brochures or fliers, facsimile cover pages, posters, web sites, or similar documents or communication tools whenever a telephone number is listed. Telephone listings and State or Departmental telephone directories must include TTY numbers.

3. TTY, and/or equivalent such as Nextalk, must be available and operational in all MDOL office locations and facilities. Staff must have instruction and demonstrated proficiency in TTY use and access to TTYs sufficient to perform their job tasks. Receptionists and switchboard operators, including those assigned back-up responsibilities, must be capable of receiving and initiating TTY calls and relay calls (including voice carryover and hearing carryover). Training and performance standards must include the handling of potential TTY calls ("silent calls"). TTYs must not be set on automatic answer in locations where voice telephones are answered by a staff person in accordance with State policy.

4. In offices where video communication equipment is installed, staff must have instruction and demonstrated proficiency to operate the equipment for communication, such as videophone calls, sufficient to perform their job tasks.

Language Assessment and Primary Language Identification

1. Initial contact – Staff, observing the following, should consider that an applicant/customer may be Limited English Proficient or deaf or hard of hearing:

- Family member speaks or companions are non-communicative,
- Speakers exhibit limited English skills (broken English) or use one-word answers, or
- Speakers have a heavy accent.

The MDOL employee should consult, if necessary, with other people in the office and referral sources to determine native or primary language.

2. Explain rights – If the applicant/customer is Limited English Proficient or deaf or hard of hearing, staff should explain to the individual the right to have a language interpreter service at no cost.

3. Notation – The staff person must make a distinctive note on the outside of the customer's paper file and/or on-line record that interpreter services will be needed, reading: "Needs Interpreter Services: Language _____"

4. When an employee becomes aware that effective communication is not occurring, appropriate interpreter services should be provided to ensure equal access.

5. Getting Interpreters – It is the responsibility of the MDOL contact /service provider to arrange for interpreters as follows:

a) If an in-house bilingual employee is available for the needed language and can provide immediate communication, staff should use him/her. The Department encourages bilingual employees to assist with translation. However, it is not intended for bilingual staff to provide ongoing interpretation.

b) Consider shifting caseloads to make best use of existing staff resources.

c) Contact an interpreter from the list of community interpreters. Otherwise, contact one of the Limited English Proficient interpreter services, which are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Follow the procedures in Attachment 1.

d) The division or bureau providing services to the applicant/customer is responsible for the cost of related interpretation fees. No contract is required.

6. Other translators – When an individual declines free interpreter service, MDOL shall use other persons who can provide effective communication between the parties. The staff person will write in the applicant's/customer's record, the name of the person interpreting. It is not recommended that a family member or friend be utilized unless other interpreter services have been offered and refused and both parties have agreed to the family member or friend. Minors (under 18 years old) may never be used as interpreters under any circumstances. An individual has the right to change his/her mind and request MDOL provide a different interpreter.

Staff Expectations

1. Staff members who are proficient in languages other than English, including ASL, are encouraged to utilize those languages in communicating directly with a customer, if it is the customer's choice.

2. Staff should avoid conflicts of interest and assignments that create the appearance of a conflict of interest. The roles assumed by staff in the provision of services to customers are incompatible with the interpreter role.

a. Even a qualified staff interpreter should not interpret at any meeting or situation on behalf of his or her own customers

b. MDOL staffs who also function as interpreters outside their roles in the Department may not accept paid interpreting assignments or jobs from provider agencies with which the State contracts, except with specific written permission of the Bureau of Purchases.

3. Situations where staff may provide interpreting for others include:

a. Bilingual staff may assist with immediate communication as described in IV.B.5 & 6, above for arranging interpreter services.

b. Qualified staff interpreters may interpret at meetings involving customers carried on the caseloads of other Department staff.

c. Emergencies, during which life, health or safety of customers or others may be in immediate jeopardy, are sufficient justification to permit MDOL employees to utilize their best judgment and efforts to facilitate communication until such time as qualified interpreters become available in accordance with 32 MRSA §1525-A(2).

Printed Translation of Documents

In addition to the required initial contact sign posted in each reception area of MDOL buildings where customers are served, there may be a need to print certain other documents in various languages. Program managers will determine on a program-by-program basis which documents will be printed depending on the program customer's/applicants primary language and the number of customers needing language interpretation and whether the document is considered vital. It is not required that every document that may need to be translated in the future be identified by title or category now. Audio or video translations, if needed (in lieu of printed material) may be utilized. In the event no written translation of documents is available, MDOL will ensure that in-person translation or translation by telephone will be provided in a timely manner.

TR TRAINING

A. Training of Staff

Managers must ensure that staff members who may be called upon to utilize interpreter services under the requirements of this policy will be trained on the implementation of this policy as well as educated about the following:

§ The impact of ethnic and cultural differences and effective communication.

§ The crucial need for sensitivity and understanding of ethnic and cultural differences.

§ Definition of the role of the Title VI/EEO Coordinators.

§ How to use interpreter services effectively.

This training will be incorporated into New Employee Orientation and New Supervisory Training. Periodic review of this policy and identification of ongoing training needs will be developed on an on-going basis by each Bureau.

Interpreter Training, Qualifications and Confidentiality

MDOL shall take reasonable steps to screen self-identified bilingual staff members, interpreter agencies, and individuals from the general public that offer to be placed on MDOL' active list of interpreters. They will be screened to determine that they can:

- Fluently and accurately communicate in the languages(s) in which they claim proficiency.
- Interpret effectively to and from other languages and English.
- Interpret exact concepts. Interpreters should translate as literally as possible to avoid distorting the meaning of the interpretation. Interpreters should not interject something that was not said.
- Understand the obligation to maintain confidentiality.

Any in-person interpreter utilized by MDOL staff shall sign a statement certifying that they can interpret fluently in the language needed and indicate whether they can speak, write and/or understand the language (see Attachment 4). All in-person interpreters shall sign a Confidentiality Statement before services are rendered (see Attachment 5). A file copy of both documents shall be maintained by the division or institution employing the interpreter.

NOTE: When a MDOL staff member has reason to believe that an interpreter from a professional agency, a telephone interpreter service, or a MDOL bilingual staff member acting as an interpreter is not qualified or properly trained to serve as an interpreter or is hampering effective communication between MDOL and an individual who is Limited English Proficient or deaf/hard of hearing, MDOL shall obtain another interpreter.

COMPLAINT RIGHTS AND PROCESS

MDOL will take appropriate corrective action if a complaint or other information indicates a failure by any of its personnel to adhere to the Department Labor Language Access Policy.

All complainants must be given the complaint procedures and complaint form. (See attachments 7& 8). If a customer chooses to file a complaint, the Title VI Complaint/ Title II ADA form shall be completed and forwarded to the EEO Coordinator.

Translated materials and interpreter assistance will be provided during the complaint process.

The MDOL Title VI or ADA Coordinator has been designated to receive and respond to questions or concerns about the adequacy or availability of interpreter services and/or of translated documents at MDOL facilities.

All MDOL staff members who receive complaints from customers must forward them to their immediate supervisors and to the MDOL Title VI or ADA Coordinator.

The complaint procedure and complaint form shall be distributed to the Limited English Proficient individual in the appropriate language (if available); otherwise the complaint procedure will be communicated to the individual who is Limited English Proficient in their language in another effective manner on a case by case basis.

The MDOL Title VI or ADA Coordinator shall also give any person who wishes to file a complaint a copy of the Complaint Form. It shall be provided in the primary language of the Limited English Proficient person; if not available in that language, the Coordinator shall assist the person through an interpreter or interpreter service.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

A. Video programs, Noncommercial Sustaining Announcements and Public Service Announcements produced or used by MDOL on or after the date of this policy must be captioned. Labels and promotional material must clearly identify the presence of closed captioning. Material already existing as of the date of this policy need not be modified to include captioning except when necessary to provide effective communication.

B. Notices of conferences or workshops open to the general public with pre-registration must state that sign language and assistive listening devices are available upon request. Notices of events open to the general public without pre-registration must state that sign language interpreters and assistive listening devices will be available.

C. Printed material for the use of the general public must include the notation that the material is available in alternate formats upon request. Alternate formats may include translation of the material into a specific language other than English, large print, Braille, audio or electronic version, etc.

Distribution: All MDOL and Partners. Post on Bulletin Boards in all MDOL locations.

IV. COORDINATION WITH STATE PLAN PROGRAMS

Describe the methods used for joint planning and coordination among the core programs, and with the required one-stop partner programs and other programs and activities included in the Unified or Combined State Plan.

STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS During May and June of 2015, a group of 60 workforce stakeholders, including administrators of the core programs, workforce developers, educators, advocates, and policy makers, convened for three full days to discuss the State's workforce development system (WDS) and to create a vision for a bright future. Discussion centered on what success will look like for Maine's WDS in five to ten years and what will need to occur in order to make the vision a reality. A broad range of ideas were shared; many were challenged and some honed. Ultimately, it was discovered that participants shared many of the same ideals. From this unity arose a vision for Maine's WDS. The resulting vision addresses the requirements of WIOA and creates a meaningful plan for the future.

V. COMMON ASSURANCES (FOR ALL CORE PROGRAMS)

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include assurances that—

1. The State has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a State Board or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts; Yes
2. The State has established a policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of State boards and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes; Yes
3. The lead State agencies with optimal policy-making authority and responsibility for the administration of core programs reviewed and commented on the appropriate operational planning elements of the Unified or Combined State Plan, and approved the elements as serving the needs of the populations served by such programs; Yes
4. (a) The State obtained input into the development of the Unified or Combined State Plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administering the core programs, required one-stop partners and the other Combined Plan programs (if included in the State Plan), other primary stakeholders, including other organizations that provide services to individuals with barriers to employment, and the general public, and that the Unified or Combined State Plan is available and accessible to the general public; (b) The State provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by the State Board, including State agency official(s) for the Unemployment Insurance Agency if such official(s) is a member of the State Board; Yes
5. The State has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities; Yes
6. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements in this Act, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA section 184(a)(3); Yes
7. The State has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA section 188, Nondiscrimination, as applicable; Yes
8. The Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program; Yes
9. The State will pay an appropriate share (as defined by the State board) of the costs of carrying out section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs; Yes
10. The State has a One-Stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all One-Stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA); Yes

11. Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate; and Yes

12. Priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses is provided in accordance with 38 USC 4215 in all workforce preparation, development or delivery of programs or services funded directly, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor. Yes

VI. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

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

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND
YOUTH ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE I-B

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

A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

1. REGIONS AND LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS

A. IDENTIFY THE REGIONS AND THE LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS DESIGNATED IN THE STATE.

SUB-STATE REGIONS Maine has identified three regions for the purpose of aligning workforce development resources to regional economies. These regions are referred to as Northeastern, Central/Western, and Coastal Counties. A number of factors were considered in determining regional boundaries. The State has always been careful to avoid prospective divisions that might create “two Maines” such as a major highway or railway lines that would divide the State up into two vastly different economies and leaving the perception of “have” and “have not.” When the requirement for identifying regions was made known, the State and Local Boards considered factors such as alignment with economic development districts and post-secondary institutions, inclusion of a major urban hub and distribution of employment by industry. It was also very important to support partnerships that were already in place for the purpose of community planning and development. Of key importance was the appropriate distribution of financial resources for the purposes of workforce development. The full policy on regional configuration is attached in Appendix IV. **FIGURE 14: SUB-STATE REGIONS**

Several factors set the regions apart. With nearly half of the state’s population and only 12 percent of the land area, the Coastal Counties region is the most densely populated of the three. This region is home to half of Maine’s jobs and has high exposure to financial services, leisure and hospitality sectors (Location quotients (LQ) of 1.29 and 1.13, respectively), and a low proportion of jobs in natural resources and mining (LQ of .42). While all three of Maine’s regions are projected to experience declining population growth, the impact on Coastal Counties will be less negative than in the other areas. The Central/Western region represents 29 percent of Maine’s land area, 28 percent of the population and one quarter of the state’s jobs. The region has the state’s highest concentration of jobs in manufacturing (LQ 1.16) and education (LQ 1.14), and, as home to the state capital, have a high proportion of government jobs. Farms and food production is a burgeoning growth industry. Demographics and population declines are the region’s most pressing issues—the outlying counties are projected to experience a 20 percent decline in the working age population. The expansive but sparsely populated Northeastern region represents nearly 60 percent of the state’s land and one fourth of the population. The region maintains 23 percent of the state jobs, with relatively high concentrations in natural resources, government and retail (Location quotient (LQ) ratios of 2.09, 1.18 and 1.16, respectively). The Northeastern region also has the lowest share of manufacturing sector jobs. Many companies in the sector have downsized or ceased operations, displacing thousands of workers over the years. A more detailed discussion for each region follows.

COASTAL COUNTIES REGION The Coastal Counties Region is comprised of six counties and is the most geographically, demographically, and economically diverse of Maine’s three regions. It is also the most densely populated with 47 percent of the state’s population and 51 percent of private sector jobs in just 12 percent of the state’s land area. Six of Maine’s ten largest municipalities are located in the region: Portland, South Portland, Brunswick and Scarborough in Cumberland County, and Biddeford and Saco in York County. For service delivery purposes, given the size of the area, the region is generally classified into four distinct hubs. York County, located in the southern area of the region, is the gateway to Maine. Its coastal plain contains Maine’s most visited beaches and supports a large touristic industry base. Beyond tourism, York has several defined economic clusters related to defense-dependent industries, health care, retail, and manufacturing. Interstate 95, running north/south through York and Cumberland Counties, creates an east/west demarcation that separates the seasonal tourist industry of the beaches and larger commerce centers from the rural, agricultural, bedroom communities and, for the most part, small

business and retail centered communities. The extreme southwestern county towns have a New Hampshire commerce focus. Cumberland County, the central area of the region, is Maine's most significant commerce hub. Cumberland County hosts Maine's largest city, Portland, with greater Portland encompassing Westbrook, South Portland, and Scarborough as a defined labor market area. Portland dramatically capitalizes on its strategic location. The resurgence of shipping and bulk cargo transfers, status as a major port of call for cruise ships, the re-emergence of rail, and being home to the state's major airport have established Portland as a major transportation hub. Commerce is centered on healthcare, banking, IT industries, bio tech, service industries, and retail. The west of Interstate 95 is characterized by growing bedroom communities and retail expansion. The lakes and mountain regions, in particular, focus on tourism and seasonal, recreational-based economics. Sagadahoc, Lincoln, Knox, and Waldo counties, commonly identified as the mid coast, comprise the northern segment of the region. These counties are historically steeped in farming, dairy, and in the traditions of the sea; boat building and fishing. Similar to York County, the mid coast attracts and is supported by a significant influx of Maine's seasonal tourists visiting the stunning area. Aggregated, the mid coast region features the following economic centers. The three cluster communities of Brunswick, Topsham, and Bath form one of the major economic regions of the four-county mid coast. In addition to Bath Iron Works, the redevelopment of the former Naval Air Station at Brunswick into Brunswick Landing has the potential to become the most significant commerce park in southern Maine. In addition, healthcare, retail, and colleges form the most prominent industries or opportunities for growth on the southern end of the mid coast hub. The closure of Brunswick Naval Air Station in 2011 presented a challenge for economic and workforce development in the region, potentially removing millions of dollars of economic activity from the region and reducing demand for a wide range of products and services. Redevelopment of the former base locations in Brunswick and Topsham is well underway and having a positive economic impact. To date, the project has attracted nearly \$200 million in private and public investment. Over 50 public and private entities employ more than 450 people in six target sectors: aerospace, composites, information technology, biotech, renewable energy and education, and in other complementary industries. The Boothbay/Damariscotta hub features a strong tourist industry, Reny's retail and distribution operations, Møllycke medical; as well as two substantial boat builders, Washburn and Doughty, and Hodgdon Yachts. The labor and economic loss of Maine Yankee Nuclear Power has been absorbed and opens up opportunities for redevelopment along with the former Masson Station site in Wiscasset. The north end of this hub features the retail commerce cluster of Thomaston, Rockland, Rockport, and Camden. Major employers include Fisher Engineering, Dragon Cement, Penbay Medical Center and those associated with the tourist industry. Rockland, Rockport, and Camden are home to working waterfronts, both commercial and seasonal recreational. The one area of commonality among all four counties in this hub is the fact that tourism is a critical industry either on a transient or destination basis. Route 1 (the coastal route) hugs the coast, providing access points to the hundreds of miles of coast line and peninsular amenities found along the way.

Biggest Challenges:

- Output is stagnant –not much real growth in broad economy since the recession.
- Tightening labor market –approaching full employment slow overall employment growth.
- Population demographics are starting to impact employment.
- There has been and continues to be a loss of skill and experience.
- Needed in-migration will be challenging because of wage differentials.

Population and workforce trends in this region are somewhat better than statewide trends due to more favorable rates of births and in-migration. Still, the region will be challenged by a rapidly aging population. Between 2015 and 2030, Coastal Counties is projected to lose 11 percent of its working age population ages 20 through 64, compared to a 14 percent loss on a statewide basis. Within the region, the outlook ranges from a loss of nine percent in Cumberland County to a 27 percent loss in Lincoln County. Because the region comprises such a large share of Maine's employment, its industry composition is not significantly different from the state as a whole. The region has a slightly smaller share of government jobs, 14 percent compared to 16 percent statewide. All other industry shares are within one percentage point of the statewide distribution. FIGURE 15: JOBS BY

INDUSTRY: COASTAL COUNTIES The 2014 annual average unemployment rate of 4.9 percent in the region was well below the statewide average rate of 5.7 percent (not seasonally adjusted). Within the region unemployment rates ranged from a low of 4.4 percent in Cumberland County to a high of 6.1 percent in Waldo county. The range of incomes and unemployment rates across the six counties is due in large part to internal variations in economic structure. Southernmost York and Cumberland counties have the highest density of population and jobs. Together, these two counties account for 80 percent of the region's jobs, with an above-average share of jobs in growing industries (healthcare and social assistance, professional and business services, private education, and leisure and hospitality). The mid-coast counties of Sagadahoc, Lincoln, Knox and Waldo are less populated and more reliant on seasonal commerce related to tourism, agriculture and fishing. These counties have a below-average share of jobs in growing industries. **EMPLOYERS** Of the region's fifty largest private employers, seventeen are in health care and social assistance, nine are retailers and eight are manufacturers. Home to the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, General Dynamics Armament Systems in Saco, and Bath Iron Works, the region's economy is more dependent on defense spending than most regions of the nation.

TABLE 2: 50 LARGEST EMPLOYERS, COASTAL COUNTIES COASTAL COUNTIES REGION FIFTY LARGEST PRIVATE EMPLOYERS, 2014 EMPLOYER NAME EMPLOYMENT RANGE BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

EMPLOYER NAME	EMPLOYMENT RANGE	BUSINESS DESCRIPTION
MAINE MEDICAL CENTER	6001–6500	General medical and surgical hospitals
BATH IRON WORKS CORPORATION	5001–6000	Ship building and repairing
HANNAFORD BROS CO	4501–5000	Supermarkets and other grocery stores
L.L.BEAN, INC.	4001–4500	Retail sales
UNUM PROVIDENT	2501–3000	Direct life insurance carriers
WAL MART ASSOCIATES INC	2001–2500	Discount department stores
SOUTHERN MAINE MEDICAL CENTER	1501–2000	General medical and surgical hospitals
SHAWS SUPERMARKETS INC	1501–2000	Supermarkets and other grocery stores
MERCY HOSPITAL	1501–2000	General medical and surgical hospitals
PRATT & WHITNEY AIRCRAFT GROUP	1001–1500	Aircraft engine and engine parts mfg.
T D BANK N A	1001–1500	Commercial banking
BOWDOIN COLLEGE	1001–1500	Colleges and universities
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND	1001–1500	Colleges and universities
MID COAST HOSPITAL	1001–1500	General medical and surgical hospitals
YORK HOSPITAL	1001–1500	General medical and surgical hospitals
IDEXX LABORATORIES INC	1001–1500	Pharmaceutical preparation mfg.
PENOBSCOT BAY MEDICAL CENTER	501–1000	General medical and surgical hospitals
GOODWILL INDUSTRIES OF NORTHERN N E	501–1000	Vocational rehab. services and retail stores
ATTENDANT SERVICES INC	501–1000	Services for the elderly and disabled
MAINE BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE	501–1000	Inpatient/outpatient mental health centers
BANK OF AMERICA	501–1000	Commercial banking and credit card issuing
ATHENAHEALTH INC	501–1000	Office administrative services
LOWES HOME CENTERS INC	501–1000	Home centers
HOME DEPOT USA INC	501–1000	Home centers
WEX LLC	501–1000	Financial transaction processing and clearing
MARTINS POINT HEALTH CARE INC	501–1000	Offices of physicians except mental health
FAMILY PRACTICE CENTER	501–1000	Offices of physicians except mental health
WALDO COUNTY GENERAL HOSPITAL	501–1000	General medical and surgical hospitals
SPURWINK SERVICES INCORPORATED	501–1000	Other individual and family services
SWEETSER	501–1000	Residential and outpatient mental health services
NOR DX	501–1000	Medical laboratories
FAIRCHILD SEMICONDUCTOR CORP	501–1000	Semiconductors and related device mfg.
INTERMED PA	501–1000	Offices of physicians except mental health
LINCOLNHEALTH	501–1000	General medical/surgical hospitals and offices of physicians
ST JOSEPHS COLLEGE	501–1000	Colleges and universities
TWC ADMINISTRATION LLC	501–1000	Wired telecommunications carriers
IDEXX OPERATIONS INC	501–1000	Druggists' goods merchant wholesalers
S D WARREN	501–1000	Paper, except newsprint, mills
IDEXX DISTRIBUTION INC	501–1000	Other professional equip. merchant wholesaler
TYLER TECHNOLOGIES INC	501–1000	Custom computer programming services
RITE AID OF MAINE INC	501–1000	Pharmacies and drug stores
TEXAS INSTRUMENTS INCORPORATED	501–1000	

Semiconductors and related device mfg. FAIRPOINT LOGISTICS INC 251–500 Telemarketing and other contact centers OPPORTUNITY ALLIANCE, THE 251–500 Child day care services CIRCLE K 251–500 Gas stations with convenience stores ANTHEM HEALTH SYSTEMS INC 251–500 Direct health and medical insurance carriers NICHOLS PORTLAND 251–500 Fluid power cylinder and actuator mfg. TARGET CORPORATION 251–500 Discount department stores UNITED PARCEL SERVICE INC 251–500 Couriers and express delivery services FIA CARD SERVICES NA 251–500 Credit card issuing

The latest available statistics reveal that the majority of the region’s workforce lives and works within the area (262,000 primary job holders). About 49,000 resident workers commute to jobs outside the region, offset by 50,000 non–resident workers commuting into the region (2013, OnTheMap, U.S. Census Bureau).

CENTRAL/WESTERN REGION The Central/Western Region encompasses 29 percent of Maine’s land area. It is home to 28 percent of the state’s population and 25 percent of private sector jobs. The largest population centers in the region are the cities of Lewiston and Auburn in Androscoggin County, and Augusta and Waterville in Kennebec County. Similar to the state, the region will be challenged by a rapidly aging population. Between 2012 and 2032 the Central/Western Region is projected to lose 16 percent of its working age population. Within the region, the outlook ranges from a loss of 11 percent in Androscoggin County to 20 percent in Somerset County. In 2014, the annual average unemployment rate of 6.1 percent in the Central/Western region was above the 5.7 percent statewide average. Unemployment rates ranged from a low of 5.4 percent in Kennebec County to a high of 7.9 percent in Somerset County. The disparity of unemployment rates across the five counties is due in large part to variations in the economic structure within the region. The central, more populous counties—Androscoggin and Kennebec—have more job opportunities than the sparsely populated rim counties of Franklin, Oxford and Somerset. The economic base in Androscoggin and Kennebec counties is diversified across a broad spectrum of industries, with higher concentrations of jobs in professional and business services, and transportation and warehousing (Androscoggin), and healthcare (Kennebec) than the region as a whole or the state. In addition, Kennebec County is home to Augusta, Maine’s capitol city, and has a significant concentration of jobs in state government (15 percent of county jobs compared to 4 percent of jobs statewide). In the rim counties, the economy is less diverse and more concentrated in forest–based manufacturing and highly seasonal industries such as agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting in Somerset and Oxford, and leisure and hospitality in Franklin and Oxford.

FIGURE 16: JOBS BY INDUSTRY: CENTRAL/WESTERN REGION Within the region, incomes tend to be higher in the central counties of Androscoggin and Kennebec compared to the western counties of Franklin, Oxford and Somerset. From 2011 through 2013, the median household income ranged from a high of \$45,597 in Kennebec County to a low of \$32,218 in Oxford County, compared to the state median of \$47,405 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011–2013 ACS).

EMPLOYERS In 2014, nineteen of Central/Western Maine’s fifty largest private employers were health care and social assistance providers, nine were manufacturers and eight were retailers. Recent expansions of the region’s economic base include the opening of Oxford Casino in June 2012. Oxford Casino created more than 400 jobs in 2012 and is stimulating further local development.

TABLE 3: 50 LARGEST EMPLOYERS—CENTRAL/WESTERN REGION

CENTRAL/WESTERN REGION FIFTY LARGEST PRIVATE EMPLOYERS, 2014 EMPLOYER NAME	EMPLOYMENT RANGE	BUSINESS DESCRIPTION
MAINEGENERAL MEDICAL CTR	3001–3500	General medical and surgical hospitals
WAL MART ASSOCIATES INC	3001–3500	Discount department stores
CENTRAL MAINE HEALTHCARE CORP	2501–3000	General medical and surgical hospitals
HANNAFORD BROS CO	1501–2000	Supermarkets and other grocery stores
T D BANK N A	1501–2000	Commercial banking
ST MARY’S REGIONAL MEDICAL CTR	1001–1500	General medical and surgical hospitals
VERSO PAPER CORP.	501–1000	Paper, except newsprint, mills
NEW BALANCE ATHLETIC SHOE INC	501–1000	Footwear manufacturing
BATES COLLEGE	501–1000	Colleges and universities
CIANBRO CORPORATION	501–1000	Highway, street and bridge construction
COLBY COLLEGE	501–1000	Colleges and universities
RUMFORD PAPER COMPANY	501–1000	Paper, except newsprint, mills
S D WARREN	501–1000	Paper,

except newsprint, mills FRANKLIN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL 501–1000 General medical and surgical hospitals MURPHY HOMES INC, JOHN F 501–1000 Residential developmental disability homes PINE STATE TRADING COMPANY 501–1000 Wine and spirit merchant wholesalers T MOBILE USA INC 501–1000 Telemarketing and other contact centers SUNDAY RIVER SKIWAY 501–1000 Skiing facilities REDINGTON FAIRVIEW GENERAL HOSPITAL 501–1000 General medical and surgical hospitals L.L.BEAN, INC. 501–1000 Mail order houses CENTRAL MAINE POWER CO 501–1000 Electric power distribution NORTH COUNTRY ASSOCIATES 501–1000 Nursing care facilities, skilled nursing INLAND HOSPITAL 501–1000 General medical and surgical hospitals STEPHENS MEMORIAL HOSPITAL 501–1000 General medical and surgical hospitals HOME RESOURCES OF MAINE INC 501–1000 Services for the elderly and disabled HUHTAMAKI INC 251–500 All other converted paper product manufacturing C N BROWN CO 251–500 Fuel dealers/gas stations with convenience stores TAMBRANDS INC 251–500 Sanitary paper product manufacturing SHAWS SUPERMARKETS INC 251–500 Supermarkets and other grocery stores SUGARLOAF MOUNTAIN CORP 251–500 Skiing facilities ROMAD COMPANY L.P, 251–500 Limited–service restaurants PER SE TECHNOLOGIES INC 251–500 Other accounting services BB DEVELOPMENT LLC 251–500 Casinos, except casino hotels MAINEGENERAL REHAB & NURSING 251–500 Nursing care facilities, skilled nursing MACS CONVENIENCE STORES LLC 251–500 Gasoline stations with convenience stores GOODWILL INDUSTRIES OF NORTHERN N E 251–500 Vocational rehab. services and retail stores TRI–COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES 251–500 Outpatient mental health centers ARGO MARKETING GROUP INC 251–500 Telemarketing and other contact centers HOME DEPOT USA INC 251–500 Home centers RITE AID OF MAINE INC 251–500 Pharmacies and drug stores NESTLE WATERS NORTH AMERICA INC 251–500 Bottled water manufacturing ANDROSCOGGIN HOME CARE & HOSPICE 251–500 Home health care services GREAT FALLS HOLDINGS INC, 251–500 Telemarketing and other contact centers MEDICAL CARE DEVELOPMENT INC 251–500 Residential developmental disability homes DINGLEY PRESS LLC, THE 251–500 Commercial printing, except screen and books MARDENS INC 251–500 Discount department stores KENNEBEC MENTAL HEALTH ASSOC 251–500 Outpatient mental health centers SKILLS INC 251–500 Other residential care facilities J M P B 251–500 Services for the elderly and disabled SEBASTICOOK VALLEY HEALTH 251–500 General medical and surgical hospitals

Statistics describing worker flow into and out of the Central/Western region reveal that 71 percent of the region’s 151,000 resident primary jobholders lived and worked within the area. In 2013, about 44,000 resident workers commuted to jobs outside the region, partially offset by 37,000 nonresident workers commuting into the region to work, for a net outflow of 7,000 commuters. (2013, OnTheMap, U.S. Census Bureau)

NORTHEASTERN REGION The five counties comprising Northeastern Region encompass 59 percent of Maine’s land area, are home to 25 percent of the state’s population, and 23 percent of private sector jobs. The largest population centers in the region are the cities of Bangor, Orono and Brewer in Penobscot County, and Presque Isle and Caribou in Aroostook County. Like the state, the region will be challenged by a rapidly aging population. Between 2012 and 2032 the region is projected to lose 16 percent of its working age population. The greatest percentage decline will be in Piscataquis County, which is projected to experience a 28 percent decline (in its working age population). The 2014 annual average unemployment rate of 6.9 percent was higher than the 5.7 percent statewide average. Within the region, unemployment rates ranged from a low of 6.2 percent in Penobscot County to a high of 8.4 percent in Washington County. The disparity of unemployment rates across the five counties is due in large part to the diverse makeup of the region’s economic structure. The more densely populated Hancock and Penobscot Counties offer better job prospects than the sparsely populated northern and eastern counties of Piscataquis, Aroostook and Washington. Within the region there are three distinct economies; coastal Hancock and Washington counties; regional service centers in Bangor and Presque Isle/Caribou; and Piscataquis, interior Hancock, Washington, and rural Penobscot and Aroostook counties. The economic base in coastal Hancock and Washington counties is dependent on seasonal, tourism–related commerce and maritime trades, with concentrations of jobs in leisure

and hospitality, retail, and construction industries. The economic base in the Bangor metropolitan area and Presque Isle/Caribou is diversified across a broad spectrum of industries with relatively large shares of private jobs in retail, wholesale trade, health care and social assistance. These areas are commercial and regional centers for government administration and educational services. Away from the coast and outside its service areas, the balance of the region is rural. The economic base is heavily dependent on natural resource-based industries (farming and logging), woods-based manufacturing and seasonal tourism. Relatively high concentrations of private jobs occur in natural resources, retail and manufacturing industries. FIGURE 17: JOBS BY INDUSTRY:

NORTHEASTERN REGION The industry structure of the Northeastern Region features higher concentrations of jobs in government, 19 percent; health care and social assistance, 19 percent; and retail trade, 16 percent compared to the state at 16 percent, 17 percent and 14 percent, respectively. Five percent of the region's jobs are in natural resources and mining, compared to one percent statewide. Within the region, incomes tend to be higher in the central counties of Hancock and Penobscot compared to the northern and eastern counties of Aroostook, Piscataquis and Washington. From 2009 through 2013, the median household income ranged from a high of \$47,460 in Hancock County to a low of \$36,646 in Piscataquis County, compared to the state median wage of \$48,453 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009–2013 ACS). **EMPLOYERS** In 2014, twenty of the region's fifty largest private employers were health care and social assistance providers, eleven were retailers and seven were manufacturers. **TABLE 4: 50 LARGEST EMPLOYERS—**

NORTHEASTERN REGION FIFTY LARGEST PRIVATE EMPLOYERS, 2014 EMPLOYER NAME EMPLOYMENT RANGE BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

EASTERN MAINE MEDICAL CENTER	3501–4000	General medical and surgical hospitals
WAL MART ASSOCIATES INC	2001–2500	Discount department stores
HANNAFORD BROS CO	1001–1500	Supermarkets and other grocery stores
JACKSON LABORATORY	1001–1500	Research and development in biotechnology
AROOSTOOK MEDICAL CENTER, THE	1001–1500	General medical and surgical hospitals
ST JOSEPH HOSPITAL INC	501–1000	General medical and surgical hospitals
EASTERN MAINE HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS	501–1000	Office administrative services
MAINE COAST REGIONAL HEALTH FACILIT	501–1000	General medical and surgical hospitals
PENOBSCOT COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE	501–1000	Offices of physicians except mental health
ACADIA HOSPITAL CORP	501–1000	General medical and surgical hospitals
HUSSON UNIVERSITY	501–1000	Colleges and universities
TWIN RIVERS PAPER COMPANY LLC	501–1000	Newsprint mills
BANGOR SAVINGS BANK	501–1000	Savings institutions
MAYO REGIONAL HOSPITAL	501–1000	General medical and surgical hospitals
CIRCLE K	251–500	Gasoline stations with convenience stores
MCCAIN FOODS USA INC	251–500	Frozen fruit and vegetable manufacturing
L.L.BEAN, INC.	251–500	Retail sales
NORTHERN MAINE MEDICAL CENTER	251–500	General medical and surgical hospitals
MICRODYNE OUTSOURCING INC	251–500	Telemarketing and other contact centers
DEAD RIVER COMPANY	251–500	Fuel dealers
CHARLOTTE WHITE CENTER	251–500	Services for the elderly and disabled
GENERAL ELECTRIC CO	251–500	Switchgear and switchboard apparatus mfg.
HOULTON REGIONAL HOSPITAL	251–500	General medical and surgical hospitals
MT DESERT ISLAND HOSPITAL	251–500	General medical and surgical hospitals
HARDWOOD PRODUCTS CO	251–500	Surgical appliance and supplies manufacturing
EMERA MAINE	251–500	Hydroelectric power generation
HOLLYWOOD CASINO	251–500	Casino hotels
COMMUNITY HEALTH AND COUNSELING SVC	251–500	Other individual and family services
PARADIS INC, LOUIS J	251–500	Supermarkets and other grocery stores
LOWES HOME CENTERS INC	251–500	Home centers
R H FOSTER ENERGY LLC	251–500	Petroleum bulk stations and terminals
RITE AID OF MAINE INC	251–500	Pharmacies and drug stores
DARLING'S AUTO MALL	251–500	New car dealers
WOODLAND PULP LLC	251–500	Pulp mills
OHI	251–500	Assisted living facilities for the elderly
DYSARTS SERVICE INC	251–500	Other gas stations
PENQUIS C.A.P., INC.	251–500	Other individual and family services
TALARIA COMPANY LLC, THE	251–500	Boat building
SECURITAS SECURITY SERVICES USA INC	251–500	Security guards and patrol services
BLUE HILL MEMORIAL		

HOSPITAL 251–500 General medical and surgical hospitals AROOSTOOK MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN 251–500 Outpatient mental health centers CARIBOU NURSING HOME INC 251–500 Nursing facilities, skilled nursing SHAWS SUPERMARKETS INC 251–500 Supermarkets and other grocery stores CALAIS REGIONAL HOSPITAL 251–500 General medical and surgical hospitals CARE & COMFORT 251–500 Home health care services DOWN EAST COMMUNITY HOSPITAL 251–500 General medical and surgical hospitals CELLCO PARTNERSHIP 251–500 Wireless telecommunications carriers HOME DEPOT USA INC 1–250 Home centers BAR HARBOR INN 1–250 Hotels and motels except casino hotels Statistics describing worker flows into and out of Northeastern region reveal that most of the region’s 124,000 primary job–holders lived and worked within the area. In 2013, about 21,900 resident workers commuted to jobs outside the region, partially offset by 18,100 non–resident workers commuting into the region to work. (2013, OnTheMap, U.S. Census Bureau)

B. DESCRIBE THE PROCESS USED FOR DESIGNATING LOCAL AREAS, INCLUDING PROCEDURES FOR DETERMINING WHETHER THE LOCAL AREA MET THE CRITERIA FOR “PERFORMED SUCCESSFULLY” AND “SUSTAINED FISCAL INTEGRITY” IN ACCORDANCE WITH 106(B)(2) AND (3) OF WIOA. DESCRIBE THE PROCESS USED FOR IDENTIFYING REGIONS AND PLANNING REGIONS UNDER SECTION 106(A) OF WIOA. THIS MUST INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE STATE CONSULTED WITH THE LOCAL BOARDS AND CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIALS IN IDENTIFYING THE REGIONS.

LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS Maine proposes three local workforce development areas which correspond with the state’s three planning regions. In accordance with WIOA, these local areas serve as “a jurisdiction for the administration of work–force development activities and execution of adult, dislocated worker, and youth funds allocated by the State.” At the start of Program Year 2015, Maine had four Local Areas: Coastal Counties, Central Western, Tri–County and Aroostook/Washington. The Aroostook/Washington and Tri–County Local Areas will be consolidated into a single area called the Northeastern region. The merging of the two areas into one is expected to be finalized by the end of February 2016. A number of issues contributed to the need for consolidation. The Aroostook /Washington area is characterized by very low population densities across its vast geographical area, and funding levels far lower than for the three other local areas. Despite lower funding, the Aroostook /Washington area had the full burden of performing the required administrative activities. The administrative financial burden created difficulties at the outset of WIA and resulted in a change of fiscal agents from the County of Aroostook to the Northern Maine Development Commission (NMDC). Funding issues for the Local Area continued under NMDC. The Tri–County WIB was in the process of identifying a new fiscal agent for their area and the Chief Elected Officials (CEOs) of Aroostook/Washington and Tri–County entered into an agreement with Northern Maine Development Commission to act as the fiscal agent for both Local Areas. This was intended to create savings, but because the two local areas had not merged, each had the burden of conducting administration of funds separately, which actually continued to require duplicate accounting, duplicate service agreements, duplicate monitoring, fiscal evaluations and audits. In essence the expected savings did not materialize and other financial issues emerged that placed both local areas in high–risk status. A series of meetings between the Fiscal Agent, CEOs, Local Board staff (Chairs/Director) and leads from the Maine Departments of Labor and Administrative and Financial Services ensued. Between October 2014 to the January 2016 over forty formal meetings and conference calls occurred to discuss consolidation of the two local areas. The discussion on consolidation also took place with each local board both during full meetings and with executive committee members alone. Also during this time, the Tri–County WIB had designated Penobscot County as its new fiscal agent. Each of the four Local Areas submitted requests for initial designation

under WIOA, but the Aroostook/Washington WIB and the Tri-County WIB rescinded their request and submitted a new request to be designated as a single local area under a new fiscal agent. Once all funds are cleared with the Northern Maine Development Commission, all funds for the new consolidated five-county area will be transferred to Penobscot County which will act as fiscal agent for the new Local Area. The requirements for Local Area Designation are more fully delineated in Appendix V.

Regions: With the assistance of the Local Boards and Chief Elected Officials, Maine has identified three planning regions; 1) Coastal Counties Region – made up of York, Cumberland, Sagadahoc, Lincoln, Knox and Waldo Counties; 2) Central Western Region – made up of Androscoggin, Franklin, Oxford, Somerset and Kennebec Counties; and 3) Northeastern Region – made up of Aroostook, Washington, Piscataquis, Penobscot and Hancock Counties.

Geographically Maine is very large; currently consisting of four local areas (Coastal, Central Western, Tri-County and Aroostook/Washington). The two northernmost counties are vast geographically but sparse in population, which presents a significant financial disadvantage for this local area because WIA/WIOA allocations are also sparse. As a result and in comparison to the other three local areas, this two county local area has historically had difficulty funding and implementing all of the required administrative activities, the requirements of which are equal to those of the other three areas that do receive adequate funding.

After months of consulting with local board members and chief elected officials in the Tri-County and Aroostook/Washington County local areas, it was determined that it would be in the best interest of both local areas to consolidate into a single local area. That consolidation is expected to occur in February, 2016. Once this occurs, the three local areas in Maine will coincide with the three planning regions. Historically, Local Boards have been actively engaged in regional planning with their economic development district and community development counterparts. The Local Boards play a significant role in the development of each district's Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). When the requirement for identifying regions was made known, the State and Local Boards took the following elements under consideration:

- Equal distribution of Maine's seven economic development districts;
- Equal distribution of WIOA formula funds;
- Equal distribution of post-secondary education institutions;
- Inclusion of a major urban hub;
- Similar labor force distribution and commuting patterns;
- Equal share of Maine's traditional industry sectors;
- Equal distribution of emerging and technology-based industries;
- The fact that regional partnerships have already been formed and active for the purpose of workforce, economic and community development.

While the southern part of the State is more densely populated with workers, businesses and financial capital, it was critical that the State not be divided into two regions. The three region configuration is beneficial on a number of scales, not only for the reasons considered above, but also because of the previously established relationships between workforce development stakeholders. Please see APPENDIX IV – for the policy on designating regions.

Local Areas: As stated above, the Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment Services (a.k.a. State Workforce Agency), consulted with local boards and chief elected officials regarding the requirements for initial local area designation under WIOA. Local Areas were reviewed as to whether they had:

- Been designated as a local area under WIA;
- A common economic development area;
- The Federal and non-Federal resources, including appropriate education and training institutions, to administer activities under WIOA Title I-B
- Performed successfully; and
- Sustained fiscal integrity.

To see the full definitions of requirements please see APPENDIX V for the policy on local area designation.

Local areas were evaluated as to whether they met each of the requirements for local area designation. All four local areas requested initial designation using the procedure identified in policy PY15-01, which was to submit a formal request for initial designation to the Commissioner of Maine Department of Labor, on behalf of the Governor, to include a statement from the Local Board Chair and Chief Elected Official that they are in agreement with the request and that the local area has met each of the requirements.

Because it was clear that the Aroostook/Washington local area did not receive sufficient funds to cover the cost of all required administrative functions, discussions ensued regarding consolidation of the Aroostook/Washington and Tri-County local areas, which would result in a five-county area. The Aroostook/Washington local area has been working to consolidate with Tri-County for almost six months. There are a number of contractual and financial issues that must be worked out for a smooth transition, but it is expected these two local areas will be consolidated in January, 2016 and will be known as the North-eastern Local Area and will be comprised of Aroostook, Washington, Hancock, Piscataquis and Penobscot Counties, which are the same counties identified for the Northeastern Region designation explained above.

C. PROVIDE THE APPEALS PROCESS REFERRED TO IN SECTION 106(B)(5) OF WIOA RELATING TO DESIGNATION OF LOCAL AREAS.

Appeal Process: The appeal process for denial of local area status is outlined in Policy PY15-01 which states that if a request is not granted, any existing local area or local government entity requesting initial designation may, within thirty (30) days of denial, submit a written request for appeal to the State Board. The appeal must include a copy of the original request, a copy of the

denial letter, and document sufficient evidence to establish that it meets the requirements for local area designation under WIOA and State Policy. Appeals must be submitted via certified mail to the director of the State Board. Once the director receives the appeal the formal appeals process is initiated which is comprised of the following steps: 1. A hearing will be scheduled with an impartial hearings unit within 45 days of receipt of the appeal, during which the additional evidence in support of local area designation will be reviewed and considered. 2. A formal response to the appellant will be provided by the hearings unit via certified mail, within 45 days of the hearing. The formal response will cite the criteria considered in either approving or denying the appeal for local area designation. 3. If the appeal does not result in local area designation, the local board may appeal to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor as follows: 4. Appeals to the Secretary must be filed, via certified mail – return receipt, no later than 30 days after receipt of notification of denial by the State Board and must be submitted to: Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor, 200 Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20210, Attention: ASET. A copy of this request must be submitted simultaneously to the State Board. 5. In the appeal to the Secretary, the appellant must establish that it was not accorded procedural rights under the appeal process set forth in the State Policy/Plan, and establish that it meets the requirements for designation in WIOA Sections 106(b)(2) or 106(b)(3) and 20 CFR 679–250. 6. The appellant will also be informed that if the Secretary determines that the appellant has met the burden of establishing that it was not accorded procedural rights under the appeal process set forth in the State Plan, or that it meets the requirements for designation under WIOA, the Secretary may require that the local area be designated as a local workforce investment area. The appellant will also be informed that the Secretary may consider any comments submitted by the State Board in response to the appeal made to the Secretary. 7. The appellant will also be informed that the Secretary will issue a written decision to the Governor. The appellant will be informed that the Commissioner of the Maine Department of Labor, on behalf of the Governor, will abide by the decision of the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor.

D. PROVIDE THE APPEALS PROCESS REFERRED TO IN SECTION 121(H)(2)(E) OF WIOA RELATING TO DETERMINATIONS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING.

APPEAL PROCESS PERTAINING TO INFRASTRUCTURE COSTS –Policy is being developed

Requested Revision;

The Bureau of Employment Services has been working to educate Local Board Directors and Required Partners on all aspects of the required MOUs, including introducing them to the requirements for cost sharing agreements. The Bureau has been made aware that there will be forthcoming guidance in the form of a TEGL regarding infrastructure cost sharing.

The Bureau will develop the appeals process once it has thoroughly digested the guidance around cost sharing so that it can provide an appropriate series of steps for appeal. The appeals process will likely follow a standard format, with the required partner being requested to submit a written appeal to the State Board, within 30 days of the local board cost-sharing negotiations, documenting the rationale for the appeal. The State Board will review the appeal and decide if the local area was able to negotiate cost sharing agreements with the majority of partners without issue and will work with the local area to address the single partner appeal.

In the event multiple partners appeal it will be noted that the local area was unable to negotiate cost sharing agreements in general and the Governor's cost sharing formula will be implemented. This is also still in the process of development and awaiting the expected TEGL. Once the Infrastructure cost sharing agreement policy has been drafted and reviewed by the State Board and the

Governor's Cost Sharing Formula outlined and reviewed by the State Board these and a copy of the appeal process will be forwarded to USDOL and added to the State Unified Plan. MDOL appreciates any guidance that can be provided on this requirement.

2. STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES

A. PROVIDE STATE POLICIES OR GUIDANCE FOR THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM AND FOR USE OF STATE FUNDS FOR WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES.

Policies: A number of policies in place under WIA are in the process of review and revision to ensure they comply with WIOA requirements. A new standing committee to the State Board has been established and is referred to as the WIOA Implementation and Policy Committee (WIPC). The role of the WIPC is to:

- Identify, develop, review, and approve policies and guidance issues required by WIOA;
- Assure the needs and interests of customers are the key beneficiaries of the policy agenda;
- Recommend policy to the State Board that informs system providers and supports the strategic goals of the State and Local Areas and Regions;
- Ensure that policies generated do not infringe on the authority of local areas or system partners. Members of this committee include leads from Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Title I-B formula funded programs (Local Board Directors and Service Provider Directors), and Wagner Peysers; other partners or subject matter experts may be included in the policy review processes as deemed appropriate by the members of the WIPC. The WIOA Implementation Policy Committee (WIPC) is committed to reviewing and updating the following existing policies:

- Individual Training Accounts to be revised to include new ETPL and use for Youth program participants
- On-the-Job Training to be revised to include ETPL requirements and further spell out WIOA goals and requirements
- Monitoring and Oversight to be revised to accommodate specific compliance items identified under WIOA and strategies identified in the State Plan
- Sanctions to be revised to incorporate all appeals references
- Conflict of Interest to be revised to include demonstration of specific items that would be deemed to be conflict of interest
- Non-Discrimination to be revised to more fully incorporate new definitions, including same sex spouse in definition of "family" and gender identification stipulations
- Supportive Services to be revised to reference WIOA vs. WIA
- Needs Related Payments for Participants to be revised to reference WIOA vs. WIA
- Administrative Cost Limitations to be revised to reference uniform regulations under 2 CFR 200
- Work Opportunity Tax Credit to be revised in accordance with changes in the law
- Veteran's Priority of Service to be revised to reference WIOA vs. WIA and to reference Adult priority of service policy and referral of Veterans with SBEs to DVOPs
- Referral of Veterans with SBEs to DVOPs to be established as a separate policy requiring local policy.
- Chambers of Commerce as Required Partners to be revised to reference State Workforce Board vs. SWIB.
- Promotion of Entrepreneurship to be revised to reference State Workforce Board vs. SWIB.
- Incumbent vs. Employed Worker Services to be revised to reference new requirements under WIOA and new separate policies on Incumbent and Underemployed Workers
- Customized Training to be revised to reference WIOA vs. WIA
- High-Risk Grantee Requirements to be revised to reference WIOA vs. WIA
- U.I. Job Search Waivers to be revised to reference WIOA vs. WIA
- Youth Requiring Additional Assistance Local Area Policy Requirements as required under WIOA
- Rapid Response Additional Request for Assistance Requirements and Process to be revised to reference WIOA vs. WIA

The following new WIOA required policies are in the process of development and review and some are already approved and in place:

- Local Area Designation spells out specific requirements under WIOA
- Local Board Membership spells out specific requirements under WIOA
- Local Board Certification spells out specific requirements under WIOA
- Priority of Service Adult Formula Funds spells out specific requirements under WIOA
- Eligible Training Provider Process spells out specific requirements under WIOA
- Establishing WIOA Regions spells out specific

requirements used to identify planning regions as required under WIOA • Accessibility Requirements to be developed and to spell out accessibility requirements as identified in the State Plan in regard to individuals with barriers such as disabilities, other languages, other cultures, and rural access. • Incumbent Worker • Underemployed Worker • Transitional Jobs • Integrated Intake to be developed by and between four core partners • Shared Assessments to be developed by and between four core partners • Shared Customer Service Plans to be developed by and between four core partners • Shared Infrastructure Cost Plans to be developed by the State Workforce Board to direct local areas in processes that must be implemented if they are unable to attain agreement on local workforce development system infrastructure cost sharing. • AJC Certification Criteria to be used by Local Boards in the process of development to be presented to the State Board • Youth Service Provider Procurement Requirements in the process of development to be presented to the State Board • Adult and DW Funds Transfer already developed and in the process of approval of the State Board • Co-enrollment to be reviewed and agreed to by the four core partners • Some policies that were in draft form but never fully implemented will be revised or be rescinded: • Local Board Recognition – this policy has incorporated into the Local Board Certification Policy • Use of Electronic Signature – this policy will need to be revamped to meet requirements of the new MIS system that will be in place in July 2016, the America’s Job Link Alliance or AJLA system. • Grant Collaboration – this policy was perceived as punitive rather than collaborative. A new initiative is being promoted under this strategic plan that will encourage collaboration on accessing grants leveraging funds. Policies to be rescinded: • OSOS Email User Accounts – this policy will be replaced with new policy associated with the new MIS system to be used for WIOA Title I–B case management and reporting and customer tracing under AJLA • Date of Exit Requirements – this policy was implemented to ensure compliance with the 90 day no service exit criteria that our MIS system (OSOS) was unable to accommodate, the new AJLA system already assures exit after 90 days without service voiding the need for this policy. • Minimum Training Expenditure Rate – Maine imposed a minimum spending threshold for the Adult and Dislocated worker programs which required service providers to utilize 40% of their funding on training (tuition, books, fees, OJT wages and support service costs while in training). Areas with the most funding were able to meet the requirement; however, some areas had to reduce staff and operating hours in order to meet the requirement. Not all local areas had the same level of overhead (number of CareerCenters) or funding (Maine is a small-funded state) so they had to make choices that negatively impacted staff-assisted services; which for some participants are of equal or greater importance. The requirement was intended to ensure higher credential attainment and earnings gains; however, regardless of amounts spent, the completion rates and credential attainment rates did not change significantly. Dislocated workers often didn’t complete because they were enticed back to work and adults actually required more staff-assisted services to be successful. While we still feel it is important to set a goal, we now know that the specific amounts to be set may have to differ from one local area to another depending upon the differences in infrastructure costs and percentage of harder to serve customers involved. Most importantly when we reviewed the percentage of participants enrolled in formal training before imposing the spending requirement and the numbers didn’t change, regardless of the amount spent, with approximately 97% of all WIA customers enrolled training activities. We did find that the cost per participant went up significantly with the requirement. We also learned that in some cases the requirement limited service provider flexibility in service planning because they would have to establish the 40% spending minimum up front regardless of the populations they would be serving. We now feel the best policy is to work with local areas to establish service spending goals and to focus on promoting program design that will result in desired outcomes such as training completion and credentials gains. Policies regarding Title I–B funds and service provision under WIA were to be found in several different locations. Participant tracking and reporting requirements and some related policies were identified in the One–Stop Operating System Tracking Manual – this manual contained directives regarding use of the MIS system to achieve compliance with Federal and State funded programs. Topics covered everything from how to document participant eligibility, referrals and

service activities, to placing job orders and documenting employer services and Registered Apprenticeship requirements. The manual will be replaced with the tools to be provided by AJLA the new MIS system for service tracking and reporting. In addition to the Tracking Manual, the Maine Department of Labor published the MDOL financial manual, which included all directives and requirements for financial activity from allowable costs to reporting and spending requirements and processes for sanctioning non-compliance. Policies that had been developed along the way and that were issued as individual directives were compiled separately and provided to impacted audiences, such as Local Boards and Service Providers as appropriate. These policies had been placed on the Maine DOL intranet site along with the financial and tracking manuals. It is the goal of the WIPC that all policies pertaining to Maine's workforce development system for both Federal- and State-funded programs will reside on the internet, so that they will be able to be accessed by all workforce development professional staff and the public. The rules and policies of State-funded programs, including the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program and the Maine Apprenticeship Program, will also be included on this site; and in the future all policies and services pertaining to partner provided services and co-enrollment activities for core and other required partners will be included.

B. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE INTENDS TO USE GOVERNOR'S SET ASIDE FUNDING. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL UTILIZE RAPID RESPONSE FUNDS TO RESPOND TO LAYOFFS AND PLANT CLOSINGS AND COORDINATE SERVICES TO QUICKLY AID COMPANIES AND THEIR AFFECTED WORKERS. STATES ALSO SHOULD DESCRIBE ANY LAYOFF AVERSION STRATEGIES THEY HAVE IMPLEMENTED TO ADDRESS AT RISK COMPANIES AND WORKERS

Use of Governor's Set Aside Funding: Maine will utilize the Governor's Set-Aside funds for required and allowable statewide employment & training activities to facilitate the successful transition and implementation of WIOA, Statewide employment & training activities include:

- o Rapid Response activities;
- o Providing assistance to State entities and agencies, local areas, and one-stop partners in carrying out the activities described in the State plan, including the coordination and alignment of data systems used to carry out the requirements of this Act;
- o Disseminating the State list of eligible providers of training services, including eligible providers of nontraditional training services and of apprenticeship programs, and information identifying eligible providers of on-the-job training, customized training, incumbent worker training, internships, paid or unpaid work experience opportunities, or transitional jobs;
- o Operating a fiscal and management accountability information system and carrying out monitoring and oversight of activities;
- o Implementing innovative programs and strategies designed to meet the needs of all Maine employers, as well as developing strategies for effectively serving individuals with barriers to employment and for coordinating programs and services among one-stop partners;
- o Improving coordination of employment and training activities with child support services, programs that serve individuals with disabilities, adult education and literacy activities, including financial literacy and activities in the corrections system that assist ex-offenders in reentering the workforce;
- o Conducting research and demonstration projects related to meeting the employment and education needs of adult and dislocated workers in Maine.

C. IN ADDITION, DESCRIBE THE STATE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO PROVIDE RAPID RESPONSES IN CASES OF NATURAL DISASTERS INCLUDING COORDINATION WITH FEMA AND OTHER ENTITIES.

Rapid Response is a shared responsibility between the State Rapid Response Team, the Dislocated Worker Program service providers, and other state and local stakeholders. The Maine Department of Labor is responsible for developing components of statewide and local Rapid Response activities; which include: providing resources to deliver Rapid Response services at the local level, developing

budgets, structuring the Rapid Response process, coordinating the development of National Emergency Grant Applications, negotiating alliance-based contracts that support Rapid Response capacity, and providing policy direction for Rapid Response delivery and its integration with Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) and WIOA dislocated worker programs. Regional Rapid Response services are coordinated by the Rapid Response Coordinator through the Bureau of Employment Services central office. At the local level, two full-time regional Rapid Response representatives and staff from six local CareerCenters provide services to employers and workers affected by lay-offs and mass closures occurring throughout the state. The coordinator has developed important alliances, including a partnership with Maine AFL-CIO that pro-motes Rapid Response services to affected union officials and their workers, helps conduct workshops, and co-manages the statewide Peer Support Worker program jointly with the Bureau. In addition to provision of policy direction and functional oversight, the coordinator also provides statewide staff development and training. Local Rapid Response staff make initial and follow-up contacts with employers, provide referral services to economic development agencies, document visits and communicate them to appropriate local and State agencies, conduct reemployment orientations and workshops, and facilitate transition into training and job development activities offered by the local one-stop system. Regional Rapid Response representatives are responsible for coordinating all Rapid Response sessions and ensuing transitional services for the affected workers. However, the full team of representatives may be called upon to act as a statewide team and respond in partnership on behalf of any local area or region that requires expanded assistance with Rapid Response service delivery and initial worker adjustment services.

Early Intervention: Maine has built an extremely effective communication system for identifying and responding to potential and actual dislocations. A number of avenues exist for identifying companies that may be impacted by downsizing, including:

- A confidential list that identifies companies from which UI has documented 20 or more initial claims;
- Formal notices required by the WARN act or the Maine Severance Law that are submitted by the affected company to the Dislocated Worker Unit and the Bureau of Labor Standards;
- Websites that monitor and package information about mergers, downsizing, development or in-vestment in offshore facilities that affect the corporate parent companies of Maine subsidiaries are scanned on a regular basis, along with state and local press releases that provide similar information;
- Credible rumors and disclosures are routinely followed up on; and
- Early information sharing from economic development and other business assistance entities at the state, regional and local levels is also encouraged; they are usually the first to know when companies are facing issues that may result in job loss.

• WARN notices and credible rumors, or any information generated from the above sources; trigger an immediate contact with the affected company by the local representative, who gathers information about the nature and size of the layoff. A formal Plant Brief guides the initial interview with the company and collects information that prompts specific response steps, as follows:

- Gathering of general company information, including type and sector that is used to track industry patterns;
- Reason for downsizing, which prompts a referral to one-stop system business assistance services.

• If trade adjustment assistance for firms is warranted a direct referral to NETAAC (A federal program that provides business assistance to trade-affected companies hoping to avert additional layoffs) may be triggered along with other services that may avert additional layoffs;

- Affirmative responses to Trade Petition questions result in facilitation of a petition for trade certification;
- Information regarding severance packages (i.e., number of weeks of vacation pay, average cost of health insurance and types of health packages to be offered by the company) provide guidance to prepare UI representatives for specific employee questions that may be fielded;
- Demographic information is gathered about the workers who will be attending the session in order to customize each session to the particular worker audience (i.e., age and education levels, length of time with company, language or other barriers and whether any affected are on active duty);
- Worker task statements are requested and used to scan for skill demand (or lack thereof) in the local labor market and to determine the anticipated retraining or skill development action steps that may be necessary for reemployment purposes; and
- Company is asked to facilitate a worker needs survey that is examined

for coordination of transitional re-sources and need for allocation of financial resources. State Rapid Response staff determines the mix of appropriate responses. Businesses are informed of layoff aversion possibilities, such as employee buyouts, skill retooling where appropriate for layoff aversion purposes, and linking needs of the employer with State and local economic development programs and services. Private-sector local board members and elected officials could be asked to facilitate resolution of problems when there may be an opportunity to intervene to avert a lay off or shutdown. Information from the first contact is also provided directly to the Governor's office for similar reasons. Finally, the information is used to develop a customized package of services from Rapid Response orientations and workshops to training and then job development. Maine has incorporated a "Jump Start" approach to Rapid Response allowing workers to pursue immediate readjustment/reemployment pathways. At the close of each initial Rapid Response session, participants are encouraged to sign up for next steps. For those who feel confident to immediately seek new employment, a series of workshops designed to support this goal is offered. This series explains the labor market and how individual knowledge, skills, and abilities transfer to jobs in demand. It also informs the workers about where and how to look for job openings, how to complete applications, develop resumes, and how to excel at interviewing. Outplacement is conducted almost immediately via referral to the jobs that have been identified through the initial labor market scan conducted usually by the Center for Workforce Research and Information and via customized job fairs – now also a part of the Rapid Response Jump Start for larger companies. Maine CareerCenters promote the customized job fairs as a service to the affected company. Often affected companies are inundated with calls from other companies wishing to hire their exiting workers. The affected company is usually too overwhelmed to coordinate such services. The CareerCenters have been instrumental in taking on this additional task by coordinating job fairs that link the interested employers with the specific laid off workers. In several instances these have been offered right at the worksite of the affected company. These job fairs have proved successful with over 25 percent of employees gaining immediate reemployment and company allowing affected workers to attend the job fairs and workshops while on company time. The second transition pathway is targeted to those who may have greater difficulty dealing with job loss and/or have broader barriers to immediate reemployment. This pathway links workers to a series of work-shops covering such topics as coping with job loss, career decision making and understanding labor market trends, and gaining perspective through individual assessments leading to opportunities and resources for skills upgrade and retraining that will prepare them for demand occupations. The "Jump Start" model uses the individual needs surveys to customize and schedule the above series prior to the initial session by requesting that the company encourage completion of the surveys in advance. Many companies have provided long term advance notice; in cases like these, the Rapid Response team is able to work with the company and affected workers on an ongoing basis to provide info sessions, workshops and/or TAA briefings at appropriate times and generally on company site and on company time. The model also allows for exceptional information gathering for NEG request purposes and/or linkage with economic development activities that may benefit large numbers of affected workers. MDOL has also developed a formal NEG application process. Affected workers from smaller layoffs, are offered similar service pathways, but may be referred to existing workshop series offered on an ongoing basis by their local CareerCenters. If the layoff occurs without our notification, each worker is contacted individually and invited to a formal Rapid Response info session or to an orientation to services offered on a regular basis by their regional CareerCenter. It is the goal of Maine's Rapid Response program to contact every laid-off worker regardless of size of company closure or down-sizing; each will be invited to access the full array of available services. In addition to reemployment related services, it has been the custom of Maine's Rapid Response team to link with the local community to launch or participate in Community Transition Teams on behalf of the affected workers. The activities of these teams include the following: • Production of resource booklets that feature local community programs and services, printed and provided to each of the affected workers; • Coordination of resource fairs that provide an

opportunity for affected workers to access a range of services from heating and housing assistance to small business development assistance all in a One-stop location; • Coordination of fundraising events from dinners and barbecues to dances and auctions from which the proceeds can go toward an emergency services fund for affected workers; and • Coordination of a variety of non-employment related workshops such as consumer debt workshops offered by the regional credit union to health clinics and stress management workshops offered by local health service providers. Maine's congressional staffers have been outstanding partners in this effort and recent collaboration between MDOL and congressional staffers had culminated in a formal plan for implementation of Community Action Teams across the state. In the event of a natural disaster: In addition to utilizing community transition teams, the State Rapid Response lead and team members will work in collaboration with the Maine Emergency Management Association (MEMA), the State Agency with responsibility for lessening the effects of disaster on the lives and property of the people of the State through leadership, coordination and support in the four phases of emergency management: mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. MEMA currently has a system in place that includes year round training of County level emergency management teams in emergency management techniques, processes and requirements. The Rapid Response team will deploy Rapid Response funds as appropriate for activities in support of MEMA, including outreach, response and recovery. Training funds will be deployed to hire temporary emergency workers as appropriate. Companies affected by the natural disaster will be provided with Rapid Response information and affected workers will be apprised of information on disaster unemployment assistance.

D. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE PROVIDES EARLY INTERVENTION (E.G., RAPID RESPONSE) TO WORKER GROUPS ON WHOSE BEHALF A TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE (TAA) PETITION HAS BEEN FILED. (SECTION 134(A)(2)(A).) THIS DESCRIPTION MUST INCLUDE HOW THE STATE DISSEMINATES BENEFIT INFORMATION TO PROVIDE TRADE-AFFECTED WORKERS IN THE GROUPS IDENTIFIED IN THE TAA PETITIONS WITH AN ACCURATE UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROVISION OF TAA BENEFITS AND SERVICES IN SUCH A WAY THAT THEY ARE TRANSPARENT TO THE TRADE-AFFECTED DISLOCATED WORKER APPLYING FOR THEM (TRADE ACT SEC. 221(A)(2)(A) AND SEC. 225; GOVERNOR-SECRETARY AGREEMENT). DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE FUNDS THAT HAVE BEEN RESERVED FOR RAPID RESPONSE TO PROVIDE SERVICES FOR EVERY WORKER GROUP THAT FILES A TAA PETITION.

Coordination with Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA): Members of the Rapid Response team also implement processes to initiate Trade Adjustment services on behalf of affected firms and workers. Team members assist firms and/or affected employees in submitting trade petitions. Affected workers are provided with cursory information about TAA during regular Rapid Response session and are apprised of informational activities that will take place if the firm is certified for trade adjustment assistance. Rapid Response and CareerCenter staff members are trained to provide information and ongoing services to trade affected workers and to work collaboratively with staff of the Adult and Dislocated worker programs to coordinate services for trade eligible participants. Prospective participants are informed about timeframes and deadlines and options for weekly TAA benefits and other services such as Alternative Trade Adjustment Assistance, Reemployment Trade Adjustment Assistance and TAA Relocation Allowance. Informational materials are provided directly to affected workers for whom a trade petition is pending; these materials explain what the Trade Adjustment Assistance program is and outline the prospective benefits the program can provide and the criteria that affected workers must meet to avail themselves of the services. Once their firm has been certified a series of forums are provided to affected workers to explain the program in full and to answer questions and schedule next steps. Firms that have been affected are also referred to

employer trade adjustment assistance for firms and other services as appropriate. Local areas in need of additional Rapid Response funds to serve affected workers while a trade petition is pending can make a formal request for additional funds using a process identified in Policy PY13-11. This policy identifies the requirements of the Rapid Response Additional Assistance (RRAA) funds which state that funds requested can only be used for program and not administrative costs and that Local Areas must have expended at least 70% of local area DW funds and document that they have insufficient funds to serve the newly affected population. The RRAA funds may be used to bridge funding gaps pending approval of a trade petition. Local areas may also apply for RRAA funds when the local area has experienced a steady increase in the number of unemployed individuals within a 120 day period due to natural disasters, plant closings, mass layoffs, or other events that don't qualify for a Trade Petition or a National Dislocated Worker Grant.

B. ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKERS PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

1. IF THE STATE IS UTILIZING WORK-BASED TRAINING MODELS (E.G. ON-THE-JOB TRAINING, INCUMBENT WORKER TRAINING, TRANSITIONAL JOBS, AND CUSTOMIZED TRAINING) AS PART OF ITS TRAINING STRATEGY AND THESE STRATEGIES ARE NOT ALREADY DISCUSSED IN OTHER SECTIONS OF THE PLAN, DESCRIBE THE STATE'S STRATEGIES FOR HOW THESE MODELS ENSURE HIGH QUALITY TRAINING FOR BOTH THE PARTICIPANT AND THE EMPLOYER.

Adult and Dislocated Worker Services: Local providers of Adult and Dislocated Worker services work collaboratively with Wagner-Peyser providers, Veterans programs, Registered Apprenticeship and other State funded programs, such as the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program. Access to basic career services is available to all interested individuals at any of Maine's comprehensive and satellite one-stop centers. Formula and Wagner-Peyser providers also collaborate to deliver Individualized Career Services and to ensure appropriate referrals to and from core and other WIOA required partner programs. Each of the core programs provides intake, assessment and individualized plan development services to eligible participants and have agreed to collaborate by sharing information resulting from these processes with each other on behalf of shared clients. It is anticipated that the new America's Job Link Alliance case management and job bank system may provide a format for universal intake that can be used and accessed by each of the four core WIOA partners. Training services provided under the formula programs will be integrated with services of the Adult Education and Literacy and Vocational Rehabilitation providers as appropriate and on behalf of shared participants. Traditional training venues will continue to be provided such as Individual Training Accounts, but a stronger emphasis will be placed on utilization of employer-based training methods such as on-the-job training (OJT), customized training (CT), transitional jobs, registered apprenticeship, paid and unpaid internships and work experience for youth.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL INCORPORATE REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP INTO ITS STRATEGY AND SERVICES.

Registered Apprenticeship: Utilization of registered apprenticeship will continue to be a strategic priority for the State and will be emphasized as a required component of local area service delivery design. The Maine Apprenticeship Program has worked closely with high-growth industry sectors in Maine, such as health care, and have been instrumental in establishing career pathway approaches for low wage high demand occupations, such as Certified Nurse Assistant, that provide an upward mobility path. These approaches have included blending of resources from the Maine Apprenticeship Program tuition assistance funds, Title 1-B programs, the Competitive Skills Scholarship Program and the industry partners. The programs have also incorporated integrated education training modules that link work readiness, occupational skills, and academic skill components into a single cohesive program that has been co-designed by the employer. This type of approach has been promoted as a key approach in the Job-Driven and Sector-Partnership National Dislocated Worker Grants Maine has received. Apprenticeship sponsors are invited to list their programs on the Eligible Training Provider List; however, many of Maine's apprenticeship sponsors are very small businesses and prefer to stay off the list when they are not actively recruiting new apprentices. As identified in the strategic portion of this plan, new approaches will be promoted using the Title 1-B pro-gram funds, including upskill/backfill that will require utilization of resources that leverage employer funds and that include use of WIOA formula funds identified for incumbent worker training. Follow-up services will also be stressed, as an integral component of a participant's service plan, to ensure proposed performance objectives will be met for those individuals who entered the

program with significant barriers to employment and others who would benefit from follow-up services.

3. PROVIDE THE PROCEDURE, ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA, AND INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS FOR DETERMINING TRAINING PROVIDER INITIAL AND CONTINUED ELIGIBILITY, INCLUDING REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS (WIOA SECTION 122).

Eligible Training Provider List: The list of eligible training providers will be expanded to include apprenticeship sponsors that have elected to be on the ETPL and employers that have partnered successfully to provide on-the-job training (OJT), customized training (CT) and other employer-based training initiatives that have resulted in long-term employment and improved earning for participants. The current ETPL list resides on the Maine CareerCenter Website where it is accessed by participants. The new ETPL list will re-side on the America's Job Link system currently being developed and expected to be in place by July 2016. The Governor has designated the State Workforce Agency (the Maine Department of Labor – Bureau of Employment Services) to assist in carrying out the processes and procedures for determining eligibility of training providers and programs. Providers who are currently listed on the ETPL will be informed of the transition period and requirements for continued eligibility under WIOA and their ability to remain on the list until June 30, 2016, after which the timeline and procedure for continued eligibility will commence. The procedure for initial and continued eligibility is in draft form at the present time. Initial discussions have taken place with the Local Boards who have agreed that the State Workforce Agency should continue to take the lead on processing and maintaining providers and programs on the ETPL. In the event that a request be submitted for a program that does not directly support the occupations or sectors identified as in-demand, the provider applicant will be required to seek approval from the Local Board in whose area the course of study or program will be offered. Local Boards will be able to ascertain from local service providers whether the program of study will result in attainment or retention of employment of a WIOA participant or registered apprentice; such a program and provider will be admitted to the list with conditional approval only as determined by the Local Board and this will be signified on the ETPL website. The State Board was informed of the ETPL requirements under WIOA at the November 2015 meeting and at which time they were apprised that research was being conducted regarding establishing minimum performance criteria for ETPL provider programs. Bureau staff members researched the minimum criteria that other States had established and requested input directly from Maine's Community College System (MCCS). It was identified that currently providers of post-secondary education submit program completion information into the National Student Clearinghouse and that they have specific definitions of completion that include data pertaining to student transfers, which does not equate easily to how WIOA tracks participant completion rates. The minimum measures were all across the board from 20% completion to 75% completion rates as minimum requirements. Input from the MCCS reinforced the difficulty in both reporting and establishing minimum acceptable completion rate criteria when so many variables would not be able to be appropriately accounted for. In addition, most States did not incorporate quantitative minimum performance criteria into their ETPL requirements. As such, Maine will not be requiring any additional State minimum performance thresholds for eligible training providers. The draft ETPL policy will be put out for public comment in February, 2016 at the same time that the Unified Plan is also distributed for public comment. The list of eligible providers are currently downloaded into the workforce MIS system–OSOS, which allows staff to link a WIOA participant to a specific provider and to record the name of the program of study the participant is engaged in; however, the report link currently only ties the participant to the provider and not the program. Once Maine implements the new America's Job Link Alliance system in July 2016, it is expected that both the provider and program of study will be tied to the participant

for reporting purposes as required under WIOA. Providers applying for initial eligibility for their programs to be listed on the ETPL will be required to submit an application to the Maine Department of Labor, which includes the following verifiable information that: 1. Describes the program of training services to be offered; 2. Explains the length, cost and other pertinent information on how to access the program; 3. Indicates the degree to which the educational program relates to in-demand occupations and industry sectors in Maine; 4. Assures that the program meets meet educational licensing requirements of the Maine Department of Education or other required licensing entity; 5. Describes the type of industry-recognized credential (degree, diploma, certificate, license etc.) that pro-gram completers will achieve; 6. Explains the how/whether employed persons and individuals with barriers to employment can access the program and/or the ability of providers to provide the services directly to employed individuals; 7. Identifies whether the program can be accessed at alternatives locations or via the internet; 8. Provides verifiable performance information pertaining to one or more of the following: a. the percentage of individuals who successfully complete the program; b. the percentage of individuals who attain employment within one year of successful completion of the program; and/or c. the median earnings of individuals who attain employment in training-related fields within one year successful completion of the program.

Requested Revision;

The State ETPL policy below identifies how Registered Apprenticeship Sponsors will be included in the ETP List. The Maine Department of Labor (MDOL) has responsibility for approving ETPs at the State level and for publishing the ETP list; in addition, MDOL oversees registered apprenticeship programs for the State of Maine. All apprenticeship sponsors will be listed on the ETPL unless they have individually requested to be removed from the program or if they have been deregistered or are no longer an active sponsor. State ETPL Policy is as follows:

Purpose:

This policy establishes the requirements for attaining status as an Eligible Training Provider (ETP) and outlines the process that providers of education and training services must follow to request initial and subsequent eligibility. The Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) is used by training-eligible WIOA participants to select appropriate programs for which to utilize their, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I-B funded, Individual Training Accounts (ITAs). ITAs are used to pay tuition and other education-related costs using WIOA ITA funds can only be spent on programs that are listed as WIOA-Approved on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).

Background:

Maine's ETPL site can be found at: <https://joblink.maine.gov/ada/r/training>. WIOA participants use performance information supplied by providers to select a program that best meets their needs. WIOA participants receive guidance from career consultants on how to use the ETPL to compare training programs by: cost, credential to be attained, rates of completion and employment and earnings outcomes.

PROVIDER / PROGRAM APPROVAL PROCESS:

Providers and programs are reviewed to identify if they meet the basic criteria, will prepare students for occupations that are in-demand in Maine, will result in attainment of industry-recognized credentials. If approved, the program will remain on the ETPL website for a period of one year. At the end of the initial year, the provider must reapply to keep the program active on the ETPL and must report specific performance information, on all students exiting the program study.

An Approved Program of Training is defined as one or more courses or classes, or a structured regimen, that provides occupational training and education services that lead to:

- (a) An industry-recognized certificate or certification, a certificate of completion of a registered apprenticeship, a State or Federally recognized license, an associate or baccalaureate degree;
- (b) A secondary school diploma or equivalent when such academic education is combined with occupational training consistent with 20 CFR 680.350;
- (c) Employment in an occupation that is in-demand in Maine; or
- (d) Measurable skill gains toward a credential described in (a), (b) or (c) above.

An Eligible Provider of Training is a provider that:

- (a) Is listed as WIOA-Approved on the Maine Eligible Training Provider List;
- (b) Provides an approved program of training services as defined above; and
- (c) Is one of the following:
 1. An institution of higher education that provides a program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential;

2. An entity that carries out a program registered under the National Apprenticeship Act (29 U.S.C.501 et seq.)

3. A public or private provider of training services, which may include:

i. A community-based organization;

ii. A joint labor-management organization; and

iii. Eligible providers of adult education and literacy activities, under Title II of WIOA, if such activities are provided in combination with occupational training as per 20 CFR 680.350.

INITIAL ELIGIBILITY

With the exception of Maine providers of Registered Apprenticeship which are automatically listed on the ETPL, providers that have not previously listed programs on the ETPL must fully complete the provider application questionnaire on <https://joblink.maine.gov/ada/r/training> and provide:

1. A description of the program and the CIP Code Classification of Instructional Programs;

2. Complete information regarding:

a. The occupation(s) the program prepares students to enter employment in;

b. Whether the program meets the requirements of a Federal or State educational licensing, accreditation, or approval agency;

c. The cost of tuition, fees, books, labs, and other program costs;

d. The location(s) the program is offered;

e. Whether the program is offered via technology;

f. The percentage of participants who successfully complete the program and earn a credential;

g. The percentage of participants who attain employment after program completion;

h. The median earnings of participants who attain employment after completion of the program;

i. The level of engagement with business or industry in program development, approval, support;

j. The level of demand by Maine employers for the occupations the program prepares students for;

k. The type of credential, degree, diploma, certificate, or license the program prepares students for;

l. The level at which individuals, with disabilities, barriers to employment, or those who live in rural areas of the State and/or who are employed, can access the program;

- m. The commitment to submit accurate performance reports required for continued eligibility; and
- n. Any additional information regarding the program that should be considered for approval purposes.

Initial Approval Process Steps:

1. Create an account on Maine JobLink site at: <https://joblink.maine.gov/ada/r/training> and establish a user name and password;
2. Enter all of the required program information and submit for approval
3. The MDOL approval review process may take from 1 to 15 business days. Inquiries may be forwarded to ETPLInfo.DOL@maine.gov
4. The provider will receive approval or denial status information
5. Initial approval is valid for one year from the date of approval, after which the provider must reapply for continued eligibility and submit the required performance data.
6. If a program is not initially approved, the provider may:
 - a. Consult with the Local Workforce Development Board to identify if there are extenuating circumstances that would support program approval at the local level; or
 - b. File an appeal to the MDOL by following the appeal process defined below.

CONTINUED ELIGIBILITY:

Continued eligibility is dependent upon whether the program of study is still deemed necessary to prepare students for jobs that are in-demand in Maine and the provider's ability to submit accurate and timely performance information on all students exiting the program of study as required below.

Eligible Training Provider (ETP) performance reports are intended to provide critical information regarding the employment, earnings, and credentials outcomes attained by individuals in the programs of study deemed eligible to receive funding under WIOA Title I-B Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. The purpose of these reports is to assist WIOA participants, and members of the general public, in identifying effective training programs and providers. It is expected the reports will also benefit providers by widely disseminating information on their programs.

Eligible Training Provider Annual Performance Reports:

For continued eligibility, providers must report the following information on an annual basis, on all individuals engaged in the approved program of study:

1. The total number of students exiting the program of study;
2. The percentage that were in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after program exit;

3. The percentage that were in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after program exit;
4. The median earnings of those in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after program exit; and
5. The percentage that attained a recognized post-secondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within 1 year after exit from the program.

Programs receiving continued eligibility/approval will remain on the ETPL for a period of two years.

Assistance with Annual Performance Reporting:

Providers that don't already have valid performance reporting mechanisms in place to provide the employment outcome data as required above may request technical assistance from the MDOL. The Center for Workforce Research & Information (CWRI) is working to expand capacity to conduct wage match criteria and produce the required reports for eligible providers. For more information on this process and required data-sharing agreement please see the contact information below.

MDOL Reporting of WIOA Title I-B participants:

The MDOL will provide required performance reports on enrolled WIOA participants in each of the approved programs, disaggregated by count of participant with respect to barriers to employment, age, sex and race and ethnicity.

REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS:

Apprenticeship Programs registered with the USDOL or the MDOL are automatically eligible to be included on the ETPL as long as they remain registered or until the program sponsor notifies the State they no longer want to be included in the list. Programs will be reviewed once every two years to ensure they are still registered. Registered Apprenticeship programs that are deregistered or no longer active will be removed from the ETPL.

In order for a WIOA eligible individual to utilize WIOA Title I-B training funds toward the cost of apprenticeship training, the Registered Apprenticeship program must be listed on the ETPL. WIOA participants may use Title I-B training funds toward the cost of:

- a. Pre-apprenticeship training (a program or set of strategies designed to prepare an individual to enter and succeed in a registered apprenticeship program in partnership with one or more registered apprenticeship sponsors);
- b. Tuition for required related instruction courses;
- c. Supportive services to enable the individual to participate in training activities; and
- d. Costs of work-based training options such as partial wage reimbursement for initial On-the-Job Training.

Apprenticeship program sponsors who do not wish their programs to be listed on the ETPL can submit a request for removal from the list to the contact person listed below.

STATE and LOCAL ROLES:

The approval process is a coordinated effort between the Local Workforce Development Boards and the Maine Department of Labor.

Northeastern WDB

Aroostook, Hancock, Penobscot,

Piscataquis, & Washington Counties

JRussell@northeasternwdb.org

Central Western Maine WDB

Androscoggin, Franklin, Kennebec,

Oxford, & Somerset Counties

Jeffrey.R.Sneddon@maine.gov

Coastal Counties WDB

Cumberland, Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc

Waldo, & York Counties

AMancusi@coastalcounties.org

Local Boards play a critical role in this process by approving specific training programs for their local areas, and in determining initial and subsequent eligibility criteria tied to performance outcomes. Local Boards determine whether there are sufficient eligible providers of training services in their area, make recommendations to the MDOL regarding the approval process, and may require additional criteria or set higher levels of performance for their local areas as they deem appropriate. Local areas work to ensure the dissemination of the ETPL throughout the local one-stop system and its appropriate use.

MDOL, as the State workforce agency, is responsible for: establishing ETPL criteria, identifying the roles of State and Local areas in the approval process, governing the eligibility of providers to receive WIOA Title I-B funds, overseeing the approval process, maintaining the ETPL and disseminating it via the Maine JobLink website, coordinating performance reporting assistance between providers and the Center for Workforce Research and Information (CWRI), establishing and overseeing that ETPL performance levels are appropriate, verifying the accuracy of information provided, and removing programs for which it is determined the provider has intentionally provided inaccurate information or substantially violated the requirements of WIOA.

EXCEPTIONS:

Providers of training that occurs through training contracts, such as On-the-Job Training, Customized Training, Incumbent Worker Training, Transitional Job Training or other specially contracted training services are not required to be listed on the ETPL.

DENIAL / LOSS OF ELIGIBILITY

Programs may be denied if they do not meet the definition of an "Eligible Provider" or if it is determined the program of study will not result in employment in an occupation that is in high-demand in the State or Local Area.

Providers that have intentionally supplied inaccurate performance information or that have substantially violated any WIOA regulations will be terminated from the list for a period of not less than 2 years and may be liable to repay the training funds it has received on behalf of WIOA eligible students.

OUT OF STATE RECIPROCITY

Programs approved in other States, will be considered eligible to receive WIOA Title I-B training funds from Maine, provided the MDOL has a reciprocity agreement with that State. Out of State, Internet-Based programs will only be considered for inclusion on the ETPL with a special approval from the Local Board Director of each local area.

ETPL APPEAL PROCESS:

Programs that have been denied WIOA eligibility by both the MDOL and the Local Board, may appeal in writing to the contact person listed below, within 30 days of the Local Board denial. The appeal must provide specific documentation on how the provider and/or program meet requirements for eligibility and inclusion on the ETPL laid out in this guidance. A decision by the Executive Committee of the State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) will be rendered within 15 working days from receipt of the appeal. The SWDB decision will be final.

Contact:

Ginny Carroll, Division Director

Bureau of Employment Services

55 SHS, Augusta, Maine 04333-0055

207-623-7974

Virginia.A.Carroll@maine.gov

4. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR THE PRIORITY FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS, OTHER LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS, AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF WIOA SEC. 134(C)(3)(E), WHICH APPLIES TO

INDIVIDUALIZED CAREER SERVICES AND TRAINING SERVICES FUNDING BY THE ADULT FORMULA PROGRAM.

Priority of Service: A draft policy has been put before the WIOA Implementation and Policy Committee that articulates the requirements for providing priority of service to adults who are recipients of public assistance, low income individuals or who are basic skills deficient. The policy requires that Local Board in turn, initiate a policy regarding priority for adult participants that may include individuals with additional barriers to employment. The Bureau of Employment Services (BES), on a quarterly basis, will review the percentage of adult participants who are enrolled and fall within the priority parameters in each local area. The percentages will be reviewed against previous quarters. During the last four quarters cumulatively, 97% of individuals enrolled in the Adult program under WIA met one or more of the three priority criteria. Please see APPENDIX–X for the policy on priority of service for Adults.

5. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S CRITERIA REGARDING LOCAL AREA TRANSFER OF FUNDS BETWEEN THE ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAMS.

Local Area Fund Transfer: The State has implemented a policy on transfer of funds between the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. The policy explains the process for requesting the transfer and for tracking expenditures accordingly. The policy also requires that the evidence that the Local Board has been informed of and approved the proposed transfer and that a rationale be provided regarding the benefits to participants resulting from the transfer. Please see APPENDIX–XIV for the policy on transfer of funds.

C. YOUTH PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

With respect to youth workforce investment activities authorized in section 129 of WIOA,—

1. IDENTIFY THE STATE-DEVELOPED CRITERIA TO BE USED BY LOCAL BOARDS IN AWARDING GRANTS FOR YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES AND DESCRIBE HOW THE LOCAL BOARDS WILL TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE ABILITY OF THE PROVIDERS TO MEET PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES BASED ON PRIMARY INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE YOUTH PROGRAM AS DESCRIBED IN SECTION 116(B)(2)(A)(II) OF WIOA IN AWARDING SUCH GRANTS.*

* Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(i)(V)

Youth Program Services: The WIOA youth committee is in the process of compiling and formalizing a recommendation to the State Workforce Board regarding criteria that Local Boards will be required to use in awarding grants to service providers for provision of youth workforce investment activities and services, on a competitive basis. Youth Service Criteria: At a minimum, providers must be able to provide some or all of the required services and activities expected under WIOA, including: providing basic information and referrals to prospective youth participants and ensuring that any youth applicant that does not meet enrollment requirements is provided with referral for further assessment as necessary and referral to appropriate programs; maintaining Out-of-School (OSY) and youth work experience minimum spending thresholds; providing access to all of the WIOA youth program service elements; determining youth eligibility for program services, ensuring that you services inform or establish the youth on or along a career pathway, provision of assessments, including assessment of basic skills, occupational skills, prior work experience, employability, occupational interests and aptitudes (including aptitudes and interest in non-traditional jobs), need for supportive services and need for any of the youth service elements; development of service strategies for each youth participant that is directly linked to one or more of the performance indicators and that incorporate two or more of the youth service elements; and provision of activities that lead to attainment of a secondary school diploma or its equivalent or prepare the youth for entry into post-secondary education training opportunities. Local Boards will be encouraged to consider the following qualities when selecting youth service providers: • Program offers service that are age and needs appropriate; • Program involves youth and family members in program design; • Program provides significant opportunity for youth to interact with positive, adult role models; • Program emphasizes responsibility and accountability and holds participants to high standards; • Program has already established relationships with business and community member who play a direct role in the program design and delivery; • Program places a strong focus on youth leadership and civic and community responsibility; • Program ensures accessibility for all youth.

Requested Revision;

Purpose: To provide guidance to local areas and local youth committees regarding additional youth service provider criteria established by the State Workforce Development Board.

Background: In addition to the requirements delineated under WIOA Section 129 and Final Regulations 20 CFR 681.400-510 the State Workforce Development Board has identified that the following criteria be met by Youth Service Providers:

A. For the purpose of identifying appropriate youth service elements and career pathways for each youth participant, the youth provider must be able to provide an objective assessment of each youth that includes an assessment of:

- a. Academic and literacy levels, including English language proficiency;
- b. Pre-employment competencies and employability skills;
- c. Prior work experience;
- d. Occupational Skills, aptitudes (including occupational interests, work preferences, and aptitude for and interest in non-traditional occupations for women);
- e. Development needs;
- f. Supportive services needs that will enable them to successfully participate in all aspects of the youth program;
- g. Barriers to employment and/or barriers to transitioning successfully into post-secondary education.
- h. Need for specific youth service elements;
- i. Need for and referral to any of the following programs/services:
 - i. Mental health services
 - ii. Substance abuse counseling
 - iii. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
 - iv. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
 - v. Housing and Homeless Assistance Programs
 - vi. Programs that address juvenile recidivism
 - vii. Programs providing assistance to individuals with disabilities
 - viii. Parenting and childcare programs
 - ix. Programs that provide guidance to youth whose parent/guardian is incarcerated or affected by addiction or mental illness.

B. Offer services that are age-, needs-, and ability-appropriate, including appropriate accommodations for individuals with disabilities.

C. In partnership with the youth, develop a youth employment plan that clearly identifies goals and benchmarks, and activities and service elements that will launch the youth on a career pathway and

that will result in the youth meeting or exceeding locally negotiated performance measures, including skills gains, credential attainment, employment or transition to post-secondary training or education.

D. Establish opportunities for the involvement of family members, community service members, and others who play a critical in the youth's success.

E. Establish opportunities for the youth to practice leadership and citizenship skills, including providing peer mentoring, project leadership, and community service activities.

F. Demonstrate strong business/employer involvement including specific examples of long-term relationships with employers who provide:

a. Work experience opportunities that include regular assessment of work readiness and employment competency skills;

b. Opportunities for job shadowing or informational interviewing;

c. Occupationally specific internships or On-the-Job Training opportunities;

d. Practice employment interviews that result in constructive feedback for youth;

e. Adult mentoring;

f. Actual employment opportunities;

g. Apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship opportunities;

h. Participation in youth career exploration events and job fairs;

i. Participation in youth committees and other youth advisory boards.

G. Demonstrate a strong outreach plan that identifies examples of significant outreach to targeted youth populations such as Juvenile justice system, foster care system, Adult Education programs serving youth without secondary diplomas, high-school truancy officers, etc.

H. Demonstrate an atmosphere of inclusion, appreciation of diversity and commitment to youth advocacy through examples and anecdotal evidence of such.

I. Demonstrate significant relationships with, and ability to package the services of, a variety of community organizations that serve at-risk youth through memoranda of understanding, contracts or other documentation of such relationships, including relationships with Adult Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Juvenile Justice System, DHHS, Post-secondary Education, Employer organizations, and other.

J. Demonstrate the ability to offer work-based learning experiences that clearly emphasize the connection between academic knowledge and work activities, through examples of work-site agreements and youth WE task statements.

K. Provide evidence of ability to provide accessible facilities, programs and accommodations for special needs youth.

L. Provide evidence of establishing high expectations for youth participants including evidence showing the majority of youth participants complete who enter the program participate in and complete all activities identified on the youth employment plan or youth service strategy.

M. Clearly identify how all required youth service elements will be made available to youth participants, either through direct provision or through partnerships, MOUs, or other methods, to include provision of:

a. Tutoring and/or Study Skills;

b. Access to drop out recovery programs or alternative education;

c. Work-based learning;

d. Occupational Skills Training;

e. Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as occupational training;

f. Leadership development;

g. Adult Mentoring;

h. Support Services;

i. Follow-up Services;

j. Comprehensive guidance and counseling;

k. Financial Literacy;

l. Entrepreneurial Skills/ Training;

m. Labor market information and career guidance and counseling; and

n. Activities that prepare youth for entry into post-secondary education.

N. Provide evidence of high level of professionalism of youth service staff, including specific education credentials and experience of youth service staff and a commitment to provision of staff development opportunities.

2. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL USE TO ACHIEVE IMPROVED OUTCOMES FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH AS DESCRIBED IN 129(A)(1)(B), INCLUDING HOW IT WILL LEVERAGE AND ALIGN THE CORE PROGRAMS, AND COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN, REQUIRED AND OPTIONAL ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS, AND ANY OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE.

Youth Program Services: The WIOA youth committee is in the process of compiling and formalizing a recommendation to the State Workforce Board regarding criteria that Local Boards will be required to use in awarding grants to service providers for provision of youth workforce investment activities and services, on a competitive basis. Youth Service Criteria: At a minimum, providers must be able to provide some or all of the required services and activities expected under WIOA, including: providing basic information and referrals to prospective youth participants and ensuring that any youth applicant that does not meet enrollment requirements is provided with referral for further assessment as necessary and referral to appropriate programs; maintaining Out-of-School (OSY) and youth work experience minimum spending thresholds; providing access to all of the WIOA youth program service elements; determining youth eligibility for program services, ensuring that you services inform or establish the youth on or along a career pathway, provision of assessments, including assessment of basic skills, occupational skills, prior work experience, employability, occupational interests and aptitudes (including aptitudes and interest in non-traditional jobs), need for supportive services and need for any of the youth service elements; development of service strategies for each youth participant that is directly linked to one or more of the performance indicators and that incorporate two or more of the youth service elements; and provision of activities that lead to attainment of a secondary school diploma or its equivalent or prepare the youth for entry into post-secondary education training opportunities. Local Boards will be encouraged to consider the following qualities when selecting youth service providers: • Program offers service that are age and needs appropriate; • Program involves youth and family members in program design; • Program provides significant opportunity for youth to interact with positive, adult role models; • Program emphasizes responsibility and accountability and holds participants to high standards; • Program has already established relationships with business and community member who play a direct role in the program design and delivery; • Program places a strong focus on youth leadership and civic and community responsibility; • Program ensures accessibility for all youth. Youth Service Elements: The Bureau of Employment Services will incorporate all of the required components into its monitoring processes to ensure that youth are assessed for and provided with access to each of the fourteen youth service elements and that staff of the providers of those services have the required skills and proficiencies. The one-stop certification process will also include assessment of quality of youth service design and delivery. Over the last three program years Maine has achieved or exceeded all of the required levels with the exception of PY14 in which it failed to achieve the negotiated Literacy Numeracy measure for youth. The following steps are being taken to improve the literacy numeracy rate of Maine's youth participants: • Best practice sharing takes place on a bi-monthly basis at the Younger Workers Committee meetings. The members of this committee include leaders from Maine's WIOA youth service providers, Job Corps, Secondary Career and Technical Education programs, Adult Education, DHHS foster youth programs and more. • In addition to this meeting, BES has initiated a regular WIOA youth lead meeting that also takes place on a bi-monthly basis. This team is made up of WIOA Core service provider leads serving youth and includes WIOA youth service staff, Adult Education and Vocational Rehabilitation. Activities for this team include: identifying and sharing best practices, understanding new requirements under WIOA, understanding how core partners work with youth, and brainstorming solutions to challenges. • In identifying a solution to the Literacy/Numeracy gains issue, it was found that youth that are not fully engaged in a group cohort are less likely to come in for post-testing requirements as are homeless youth and

youth involved with corrections. One strategy discussed was to incorporate more academics into activities, like work experience (as is required under WIOA), and to do so at a level that is appropriate for the particular youth participant; another is consideration of using incentives that reward youth who stick to and achieve the goals in the service strategy, which must include goals and methods for attaining skills gains and for post-test requirements. • Finally, formal professional development for youth staff has been identified as a critical need for Maine's system, mainly because staff turnover is higher than ever (many long-term staff are retiring, and the wage levels for entry level youth case managers are not high enough to retain the special talent required of a youth counselor). These teams have also discussed strategies and partnerships to engage more out-of-school youth. A list of partners who refer youth has been identified and shared, the WIOA youth team has also shared a list of formal agreements they have with outside partners who serve the same youth participants. Some team members also sit on the Maine Youth Transition Council, which coordinates services for youth transitioning out of foster care.

3. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THAT ALL 14 PROGRAM ELEMENTS DESCRIBED IN WIOA SECTION 129(C)(2) ARE MADE AVAILABLE AND EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENTED.*

* Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(i)(I)

The Bureau of Employment Services will incorporate all of the required components into its monitoring processes to ensure that youth are assessed for and provided with access to each of the fourteen youth service elements and that staff of the providers of those services have the required skills and proficiencies. The one-stop certification process will also include assessment of quality of youth service design and delivery.

Requested Revision;

Please see the Youth Service Provider Criteria Policy attached in the response to VI.C.1 which identifies requirements for providing youth with required program elements.

4. PROVIDE THE LANGUAGE CONTAINED IN THE STATE POLICY FOR "REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO ENTER OR COMPLETE AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT" CRITERION FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(B)(III)(VIII) AND FOR "REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO COMPLETE AN EDUCATION PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT" CRITERION FOR IN-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(C)(IV)(VII).

The policy on youth who require additional assistance in place under WIA is in the process of being revised; Local Areas will be required, in turn, to revise their policies on this subject.

Requested Revision;

STATE OF MAINE

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

BUREAU OF EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

55 STATE HOUSE STATION

AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0055

MAINE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

Subject of Policy: Youth Requires Additional Assistance Policy No. PY16-05

To: State WDB

Local WDBs

Chief Elected Officials

From:

Edward D. Upham, Director

Bureau of Employment Services

Issuance Date: 08-28-16 Status: ACTIVE

Reference: WIOA §129(a)(1)(B) (iii)(VIII); 129(a)(1)(C)(iii)(VII); and 129(a)(3)(B); 20 CFR 681.300 and 681.310

Purpose: To provide guidance to Local Boards and WIOA Youth Service Providers regarding youth eligibility under the Youth barrier: "Low income individual who requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment."

Background: Under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) local boards were required to implement policy that defined eligibility using the barrier for "youth who requires additional assistance," referenced then as the sixth barrier. Local board definitions were required to identify barriers that were different from those already articulated in WIA and to list documents that would be required to validate the specific youth barrier(s) defined.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) identify additional barriers for eligibility for In-school (ISY) and Out-of-School (OSY) Youth programs.

Policy: Local Boards must:

1. Review and revise their current policy for "Youth requires additional assistance..." to ensure that the local definition does not duplicate any youth barriers already identified by WIOA and to ensure that youth service providers are made aware of the limitation on use of the locally defined barrier for In-School Youth.
2. Refer to the policy as the Local Definition of Youth Requires Additional Assistance and not the "sixth barrier" as it is no longer the sixth barrier.

3. Articulate the specific barrier definition and the documentation providers must use to validate the barrier.
4. Identify that the new policy goes into place as of July 1, 2016.
5. Identify that the local barrier can only be used as an eligibility barrier for up to 5% of In-School Youth and must establish a method of tracking to ensure that the barrier is not used for more than 5% of ISY participants.
6. Must provide a copy of the new policy to Maine Department of Labor once it has been reviewed and approved by the Local Board
7. Must provide evidence that local area youth service provider staff have been made aware of the new policy and are able to implement it accordingly.

Contact:

Ginny Carroll, Division Director

Bureau of Employment Services

Maine Department of Labor

55 SHS, Augusta ME 04333-0055

207-623-7974 Virginia.A.Carroll@maine.gov

5. INCLUDE THE STATE DEFINITION, AS DEFINED IN LAW, FOR NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL AND ATTENDING SCHOOL AS SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(B)(I) AND SECTION 129(A)(1)(C)(I). IF STATE LAW DOES NOT DEFINE “NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL” OR “ATTENDING SCHOOL” INDICATE THAT IS THE CASE.

The Maine Department of Education does not have a definition entitled: not attending or attending school; however, under State Statute Title 20–A, Part 3, Chapter 211, Subchapter 1, Section 5001–A compulsory attendance is defined as: “Attendance at school shall be required of person in the State as follows: 1. Requirement – Persons 7 years of age or older and persons under 17 years of age shall attend a public day school during the time it is in regular session. 2. Exceptions– Attendance at school shall not be required of the following: A. A person who graduates from high school before that person’s 17th birthday; B. A person who has: 1. Reached the age of 15 years or completed the 9th grade; 2. Permission to leave school from that person’s parent; 3. Been approved by the principal for a suitable program of work and study or training; 4. Permission to leave school from the school board or its designee; and 5. Agreed in writing with that person’s parent and the school board or its designee to meet annually until that person’s 17th birthday to review that person’s educational needs. When the request to be excused from school has been denied pursuant to this paragraph, the student’s parent may appeal to the commissioner. C. [2003, c. 688, Pt. H, §3, (AFF); 2003, c. 688, Pt. H, §2 (RP).] D. A person who has matriculated and is attending an accredited, post–secondary degree–granting institution as a full–time student. An exception to attendance in public school under this paragraph must be approved by the commissioner; or E. A

person enrolled in an online learning program or course. The State does not have a specific definition of “Basic Skills Deficient” and defers to the definition provided under WIOA.

6. IF NOT USING THE BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT DEFINITION CONTAINED IN WIOA SECTION 3(5)(B), INCLUDE THE SPECIFIC STATE DEFINITION.

N/A

D. SINGLE-AREA STATE REQUIREMENTS

In States where there is only one local workforce investment area, the governor serves as both the State and local chief elected official. In such cases, the State must submit any information required in the local plan (WIOA section 106(d)(2)). States with a single workforce area must also include:

1. ANY COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD THAT REPRESENT DISAGREEMENT WITH THE PLAN. (WIOA SECTION 108(D)(3).)
2. THE ENTITY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISBURSAL OF GRANT FUNDS, AS DETERMINED BY THE GOVERNOR, IF DIFFERENT FROM THAT FOR THE STATE. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(15).)
3. THE TYPE AND AVAILABILITY OF WIOA TITLE I YOUTH ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING AN IDENTIFICATION OF SUCCESSFUL PROVIDERS OF SUCH ACTIVITIES. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(9).)

N/A

E. WAIVER REQUESTS (OPTIONAL)

States wanting to request waivers as part of their Title I-B Operational Plan must include a waiver plan that includes the following information for each waiver requested:

1. IDENTIFIES THE STATUTORY OR REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS FOR WHICH A WAIVER IS REQUESTED AND THE GOALS THAT THE STATE OR LOCAL AREA, AS APPROPRIATE, INTENDS TO ACHIEVE AS A RESULT OF THE WAIVER AND HOW THOSE GOALS RELATE TO THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;
2. DESCRIBES THE ACTIONS THAT THE STATE OR LOCAL AREA, AS APPROPRIATE, HAS UNDERTAKEN TO REMOVE STATE OR LOCAL STATUTORY OR REGULATORY BARRIERS;
3. DESCRIBES THE GOALS OF THE WAIVER AND THE EXPECTED PROGRAMMATIC OUTCOMES IF THE REQUEST IS GRANTED;
4. DESCRIBES HOW THE WAIVER WILL ALIGN WITH THE DEPARTMENT'S POLICY PRIORITIES, SUCH AS:
 - A. SUPPORTING EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT;
 - B. CONNECTING EDUCATION AND TRAINING STRATEGIES;
 - C. SUPPORTING WORK-BASED LEARNING;
 - D. IMPROVING JOB AND CAREER RESULTS, AND
 - E. OTHER GUIDANCE ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT.
5. DESCRIBES THE INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER, INCLUDING HOW THE WAIVER WILL IMPACT SERVICES FOR DISADVANTAGED POPULATIONS OR INDIVIDUALS WITH MULTIPLE BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT; AND
6. DESCRIBES THE PROCESS USED TO:
 - A. MONITOR THE PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE WAIVER;
 - B. PROVIDE NOTICE TO ANY LOCAL BOARD AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER;
 - C. PROVIDE ANY LOCAL BOARD AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER AN OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON THE REQUEST;
 - D. ENSURE MEANINGFUL PUBLIC COMMENT, INCLUDING COMMENT BY BUSINESS AND ORGANIZED LABOR, ON THE WAIVER.
 - E. COLLECT AND REPORT INFORMATION ABOUT WAIVER OUTCOMES IN THE STATE'S WIOA ANNUAL REPORT

The Secretary may require that States provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the existing waiver in cases where the State seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver;

N/A at this time.

TITLE I-B ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:

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

**PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR WAGNER-PEYSER PROGRAM
(EMPLOYMENT SERVICES)**

All program-specific requirements provided for the WIOA core programs in this section must be addressed for either a Unified or Combined State Plan.

A. EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PROFESSIONAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT.

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL UTILIZE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF TO ENSURE STAFF IS ABLE TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES TO BOTH JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS.

Employment Service Professional Staff Development: Maine will develop and maintain Employment Service staff knowledge and skills through program-specific training activities. To ensure staff is able to provide high quality services to job seekers and employers, regular informational and training sessions will be delivered both in-person and using distance learning technology. Sessions will be delivered yearly at minimum, and as frequently as quarterly depending on the program and staff needs. A yearly assessment of skill development needs will be done to identify future training sessions on topics such as interviewing, use of social media as a job search tool, resume styles, assessment tools, and career development, packaging services for job seekers and employers, and presentation skills. Population-driven training such as deaf culture, approaches to best serve those with mental illness, assisting those with criminal records, etc. will be identified and delivered to assist staff in providing the best possible service to all customers. These training activities will enable staff to assist job seekers with knowing and improving their skills and finding the best career path/job option available as well as assisting businesses in finding and/or developing a skilled workforce.

2. DESCRIBE STRATEGIES DEVELOPED TO SUPPORT TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACROSS CORE PROGRAMS AND THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE PROGRAM, AND THE TRAINING PROVIDED FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND WIOA STAFF ON IDENTIFICATION OF UI ELIGIBILITY ISSUES AND REFERRAL TO UI STAFF FOR ADJUDICATION.

Strategies Supporting Training and Awareness across Core Programs and U.I.: The State Bureau of Unemployment Compensation and the Bureau of Employment Services (Wagner-Peyser, Trade, Veteran Program, and State Monitor Advocate) staffers have a strong working relationship. Unemployment team members meet with Employment Service CareerCenter Managers on a monthly basis to discuss how the bureaus can best collaboratively serve the claimant population and support the Unemployment Insurance Program. A minimum of two front-line staff as well as the Employment Services' CareerCenter Manager in each one-stop are fully trained on UI eligibility and UI issue identification as a result of intensive WPRS and RE-SEA/REA staff training. Staff members have received training on Maine's UI Web Portal and are competent in assisting individuals with filing for UI and accessing their accounts through the portal.

In addition, Maine's Bureau of Unemployment Insurance has five UI-related videos on their website that staff members have access to and are encouraged to view. The State will develop a training plan to ensure one-stop staff members are familiar with UI basics as well as the UI work requirements and penalties of noncompliance. Training will also be developed to ensure that UI workers are familiar with one-stop services and can make appropriate referrals at the time of initial or subsequent claims.

B. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE WILL PROVIDE INFORMATION AND MEANINGFUL ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUALS REQUESTING ASSISTANCE IN FILING A CLAIM FOR UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION THROUGH ONE-STOP CENTERS, AS REQUIRED BY WIOA AS A CAREER SERVICE.

One-stop Provision of Meaningful Assistance in Filing Claims for Unemployment Compensation: Maine will meet the needs of customers requesting assistance with UI claims in a two-pronged approach. Appropriately informed one-stop staff will provide basic information and assistance in the one-stop by answering basic questions, assisting customers with creating a UI Portal account, filing a web claim, filing a claim via phone through Maine's interactive voice response system, filing claims with a claims representative, accessing individualized information, and managing their UI accounts through the UI web portal. If an individual is unable to file a UI claim due to significant barriers that prevent the utilization of online tools (such as language or disability), the customer will be assisted by one-stop staff or be directed to a phone line dedicated to serving the needs of customers requiring more meaningful and personal assistance. The Bureau of Unemployment Compensation (BUC) will provide a dedicated phone in each of the one-stop centers to help customers with claims and to answer specific questions about individual claims. The BUC staff assigned to the phone line will be able to respond to inquiries about such things as overpayment debts, work search audits, how to access accounts online and use the self-service tools on the web or how to connect with a specific claim adjudicator to respond to a fact-finding notice. When the phone is picked up it automatically dials directly to the claim center contact line. A dedicated staff person will be assigned fulltime to answer the incoming calls. In instances where the staff person is on the telephone with another customer the caller may need to leave a message but a return call will be made to the caller within a short period of time.

C. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S STRATEGY FOR PROVIDING REEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE TO UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE CLAIMANTS AND OTHER UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS.

Strategy for providing reemployment assistance to UI claimants and other unemployed individuals: A major component of Maine's Employment Services focuses on the UI population. Maine's Bureau of Un-employment Compensation and Bureau of Employment Services are committed to working collaboratively to ensure that unemployed workers are treated as job seekers and not just claimants. Claimants are required to register for Maine's Job Bank (Maine's labor exchange system) and to actively use the system to look for work. Both UI and Employment Services are undergoing system transitions that will result in an immediate connection to labor exchange for all UI claimants. Upon implementation of the two systems, a claimant's work history will be matched with available jobs in Maine's Job Bank and the claimant will be notified of the job potential during the initial claim. Maine's UI team is actively involved in decision-making regarding Maine's new job bank design to ensure it best compliments and enhances efforts to improve claimant job placement rates and reduce average benefit durations. Beginning with implementation of the new job bank, claimants and other job seekers will develop a resume as part of their registration for labor exchange. The resume will be printable for use in job search and it will be added to a resume bank available to employers to search for potential employees. This feature will ensure claimants and other job seekers start their efforts with a professionally appearing resume and an automatic connection to employers in need of workers. Maine is implementing a common triage process to ensure that all visitors to a one-stop are given individual attention, made aware of available services, and referred to appropriate information and/or services. This process centers on information that a one-stop staff will gather from each visitor. Answers to questions will trigger what information, services, and/or referrals are immediately offered. Staff across the state will use the same staff interview guide which was developed with suggestions on how to respond to needs identified during interview. Ex: Need: Identify what career(s) best suited to me. Response: O-Net, CWRI, My Skills My Future, My Next Move, Careerinfontet, Career workshop. All customers will be informed of the menu of services available to them including information on: • Upcoming Job Fairs • Job Search workshops • Job Search tools • Self-Employment • Training/college options/opportunities • Apprenticeship • On The Job Training Information and Referrals • Veteran Services • College Financial Aid Information & FASFA Workshop Referrals • Vocational Rehabilitation • Housing • Child Care • Unemployment Compensation • Temporary Assistance For Needy Families (TANF) • Preparation for Hi-Set Exam • Health Care / Affordable Care Act • General Assistance Program Information & Referrals

The State recently transitioned from delivering Reemployment Eligibility Assessment (REA) to Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) in fifteen of sixteen counties and continues to deliver RES under the Worker Profiling and Reemployment system (WPRS) in one county (Washington). These programs focus on rapid reemployment by providing information and support to learn about the labor market and conduct an effective, structured job search. Through continued collaboration between the BUC and the BES one-stops, Employment Services staffers provide targeted claimants with relevant reemployment services and eligibility review assessments to help minimize the length of unemployment. All services are delivered through specific group workshops and one-on-one meetings held at the one-stops. The outcomes include shorter unemployment durations, cost savings to the Unemployment Trust Fund, lower exhaustion rate and a higher reemployment rate than those who do not receive these services. During their first pay week, RESEA participants are selected and notified by the BUC that they are required to attend an initial RESEA orientation. The initial RESEA is comprised of both a group informational session and individual one-on-one which results in an individual Eligibility Review Interview (ERI), the development of an Individual Reemployment Plan (IRP), and a relevant referral. Results of the ERI

including potential issues are identified and sent to BUC workers for follow-up and possible adjudication. The Employment Services' electronic system sends attendance reports to BUC's electronic systems and individuals who fail to report for the RESEA are automatically issued fact-findings. The ERI serves to protect program integrity and focus the claimants on their responsibilities for receiving benefits, but stops short of getting them reemployed faster. Maine's RESEA program expands the ERI process, to include the evaluation of the participant's reemployment efforts and the provision of tools and information to hone and refine their work search strategy and action plan. Through the RESEA process, participants gain an introduction to a broad array of one-stop services including:

- Staff assistance in acquiring needed services;
- Counseling in career decision-making and higher learning;
- Common intake and eligibility determinations for Workforce Investment Act and other programs;
- Access to job related computer applications, such as key boarding, word processing, and computer boot camp;
- Information about Maine Labor Laws;
- Information on how to access one-stop services including supportive services, career counseling, and training;
- Access to Maine's Job Bank, and other internet-based job search tools;
- Core assessments that link vocational aptitudes and abilities to jobs.

D. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE W-P FUNDS TO SUPPORT UI CLAIMANTS, AND THE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN W-P AND UI, AS APPROPRIATE, INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:

1. COORDINATION OF AND PROVISION OF LABOR EXCHANGE SERVICES FOR UI CLAIMANTS AS REQUIRED BY THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT;

Use of Wagner-Peyser Funds to Support UI Claimants: Maine requires all UI claimants to register for Maine's Job Bank. Once registered, job seekers will receive notification of job matches, browse for jobs, up-load their resume, and receive job referrals. In addition, job bank registrants are sent e-mail blasts notifying them of job fairs, special recruitments, critical need jobs, and other job search related information. UI call centers are regularly informed of job orders on the job bank and use this information during claim calls to steer claimants toward immediate job openings and one-stop services. Each one-stop information center offers an 'unemployment compensation' section dedicated to UI resources. Claimants visiting one-stops can partake of self-service activities by using resources such as computers and phones to conduct job searches, respond to employment opportunities, and manage their UI claim through Maine's UI portal. In addition to self-service options, claimants can also receive staff-assisted services, such as: job search workshops, assistance accessing and navigating Maine's Job Bank and the UI web portal, individualized labor market information, referral to veteran services, and referral to education, training, and supportive services. There is a dedicated, auto-dial UI phone in each one-stop that is monitored by UI staff and available to claimants who have specific UI issues that cannot be addressed by one-stop staff. Maine's one-stop workers provide the public face-to-face interaction for the Maine Department of Labor. Because Maine's UI system is web and call-center-based, claimants who desire or require in-person interactions or assistance will visit a one-stop. Wagner-Peyser field staff provide a great deal of UI assistance such as: answering basic questions, supplying written UI information, assisting claimants in creating their UI web portal accounts, filing a claim, using computer or phone to contact the claims center, sorting out paperwork to send/fax to claims center, and providing hope and encouragement to claimants. In addition, the Bureau of Unemployment Compensation and the Bureau of Employment Services have a strong working relationship. Unemployment staff members meet with Employment Service Managers on a monthly basis to discuss how the bureaus can best collaboratively serve the claimant population and support the Unemployment Insurance Program. UI staff and Employment Services staff are familiar with each other's programs and often communicate on strategies as well as program-specific issues and questions. UI staff members have privileges to the Employment Services' one-stop operating system (case management system) as well as the staff-side of Maine's Job Bank. Access to these systems allows UI staff to monitor claimants' Wagner-Peyser/Job Bank work search activities.

2. REGISTRATION OF UI CLAIMANTS WITH THE STATE'S EMPLOYMENT SERVICE IF REQUIRED BY STATE LAW;

Registration of UI claimants with the State's employment service if required by State law: Maine Revised Statutes Title 26, Chapter 13, Subchapter 6, Section 1192, sets requirements for UI claimants to be registered for work with the employment office as evidenced by the following excerpt from Statute: "Has registered for work: The individual has registered for work at, and continued to report at, an employment office in accordance with rules the commission adopts, except that the commission may, by rule, waive or alter either or both of the requirements of this subsection as to individuals attached to regular jobs and as to such other types of cases or situations with respect to which the commission finds that compliance with the requirements would be oppressive, or would be inconsistent with the purposes of this chapter. A rule under this subsection may not conflict with

section 1191, subsection 1. The individual must actively seek work each week in which a claim for benefits is filed unless the individual is participating in approved training under subsection 6 or work search has been waived in accordance with rules adopted by the commission and provide evidence of work search efforts in a manner and form as prescribed by the Department of Labor. Failure to provide required work search documentation results in a denial of benefits in accordance with section 1194, subsection 2 for the week or weeks for which no documentation was provided unless the department determines there is good cause for the individual's failure to comply with this requirement;"

3. ADMINISTRATION OF THE WORK TEST FOR THE STATE UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION SYSTEM, INCLUDING MAKING ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENTS (FOR REFERRAL TO UI ADJUDICATION, IF NEEDED), AND PROVIDING JOB FINDING AND PLACEMENT SERVICES FOR UI CLAIMANTS; AND

Administration of the Work Test for State UI system: Claimants are required to register with Maine's Job Bank (Maine's labor exchange system) and to actively use the system to look for work. Through interfaces between Maine's UI and job bank systems, UI claims takers and web application processes allow the UI staff to determine whether a claimant is registered with Maine's Job Bank. Claimants who are not registered are directed to the job bank to register before they can file a claim. Both UI and Employment Services are undergoing system transitions that will result in an immediate connection to labor exchange for all UI claimants. Upon implementation of the two systems, a claimant's work history will be matched with available jobs in Maine's Job Bank and the claimant will be notified of the job potential during the initial claim. Through RESEA sessions, one-stop staff members conduct Eligibility Review Interviews with claimants to determine whether or not requirements are being met. Results of the ERI are forwarded to BUC with a 'clean', no issues identified, or a 'dirty', issues identified label. Fact findings are scheduled to investigate any issues identified. Claimants are given information on work search requirements and the topic is included in workshop presentations.

4. PROVISION OF REFERRALS TO AND APPLICATION ASSISTANCE FOR TRAINING AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES.

Provision of Referrals and Assistance with Access to Training and Education Programs: All customers visiting the one-stop centers have access to available resources including training and education. Information is available in orientation packets passed to customers, printed materials stocked in information centers, software, links, and documents available on information center computers and on Maine's Career-Center website. A new triage process is being implemented that makes immediate referrals to services and asks the customer to register in Maine's Job Bank. Currently, the job bank registration uploads into the State's One-stop Operating System and provides the beginning of a WIOA Title I application. Once Maine's new job bank/case management system is implemented, customers will complete an initial application that will register them for the job bank, determine eligibility for WIOA title I programs, and create a resume. Workshop curriculum, including RESEA curriculum, includes orientation to CareerCenter services and an opportunity for referral to one-stop and other community services.

E. AGRICULTURAL OUTREACH PLAN (AOP). EACH STATE AGENCY MUST DEVELOP AN AOP EVERY FOUR YEARS AS PART OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN REQUIRED UNDER SECTIONS 102 OR 103 OF WIOA. THE AOP MUST INCLUDE--

1. ASSESSMENT OF NEED

Provide an assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers in the area based on past and projected agricultural and farmworker activity in the State. Such needs may include but are not limited to: employment, training, and housing.

To ensure that all services are focused on the customer's needs, services are provided through a case-management approach. Services received may include: basic and individualized career services, training services and support services including emergency assistance. Key issues negatively impacting this population are lack of education, poverty, unstable employment, access to housing, transportation and healthcare and limited English proficiency. Individuals who have earned more than 50% of their income from agricultural labor are encouraged, along with their dependents, to apply for services.

A. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY IN THE STATE MEANS: 1) IDENTIFYING THE TOP FIVE LABOR-INTENSIVE CROPS, THE MONTHS OF HEAVY ACTIVITY, AND THE GEOGRAPHIC AREA OF PRIME ACTIVITY; 2) SUMMARIZE THE AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS' NEEDS IN THE STATE (I.E. ARE THEY PREDOMINANTLY HIRING LOCAL OR FOREIGN WORKERS, ARE THEY EXPRESSING THAT THERE IS A SCARCITY IN THE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE); AND 3) IDENTIFYING ANY ECONOMIC, NATURAL, OR OTHER FACTORS THAT ARE AFFECTING AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE OR ANY PROJECTED FACTORS THAT WILL AFFECT AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE.

Assessment of Need: Maine's Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFWs) cycle through various crop harvests including blueberry, broccoli, field vegetable, apple, and poultry industry operations during Maine's short agricultural production season. MSFWs also work off-season as it relates to holiday wreath making and seafood processing. The chart below shows the numbers of MSFWs that were provided with some level of service during 2014-15. This assistance includes job referral information, answering questions on worker wage deductions, provision of housing standards information and working conditions requirements and issues pertaining to discrimination. TABLE 14 SERVICES PROVIDED TO MIGRANT SEASONAL FARM WORKERS 2014-2015

2014-15	Registered In MJB (self-identified)*	Referred to jobs	Provided Services	Referred to Supportive Services	Case Management	Counseling	Received Job Development	Contact	Contacted by SMA
July-Sept 2014	91	0	18	0	6	4	250	Oct-Dec 2014	216
0	34	1	9	7	36	Jan-Mar 2015	430	2	79
3	19	16	0	April-Jun 2015	507	5	113	7	25
19	140								

The numbers above are based on service transactions provided to job seekers who register and self-identify as MSFW and are active on the Maine Job bank (MJB). Job seekers on the MJB that do not receive services for 90 days, become inactive. Returning job seekers who reactivate their accounts count as new registrants with new service transactions. Total number of services is always equal to or greater than the number of individuals served. The quarters above are 'rolling-quarters' in that services reported each quarter are an accumulation of the quarters preceding the reporting period.

Maine's agricultural sector is large and diverse, contributing significantly to Maine's overall economy. Data in the 2012 Census of Agriculture by the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service lists 8,173 farms in Maine. Most Maine farms are small family-operated enterprises employing few people beyond family members; the median size of farms is 67 acres. The 2012 census lists 2,415 Maine farms reporting a total of 15,072 workers (hired farm labor excluding contract workers). However, 4,229 farms reported 10,698 un-paid workers (agricultural workers not on the payroll who performed activities or worked on a farm or ranch), essentially reflecting the number of family members working on farms and leaving 4,374 paid workers. In light of this, 125 farms reported hiring 2,706 migrant workers. In effect, nearly 62% of paid hired farmworkers reported by Maine farm operations are migrant workers. Comparing last year to this year, the State Monitor Advocate sees that increasing mechanization is causing a slight decrease in the annual number of MSFWs needed by the blueberry harvesting sector and a shift of workers to the freezing/packing plants. A good example of this is reflected in an ad-hoc survey of largest blueberry growers conducted in the fall of 2014 after the harvest. The nine employers surveyed reported hiring a total of 1,522 MSFWs for harvesting and processing purposes. Broccoli producers reported that their labor needs have remained constant and they do project the need for additional labor next year. Apple orchards and packing houses also report flat numbers and do not foresee increasing labor need. The larger Apple producers use the H-2A program for harvest purposes and rely on returning local seasonal and permanent help in the packing houses. Throughout the state, a select number of growers of diversified crops, including vegetables, use foreign H-2A labor in small quantities to supplement the available returning local seasonal field help. Overall many sectors of Maine's agricultural producers are hiring fewer workers even when it comes to local seasonal labor. This is evident in the conversion of family and larger farms turning to 'agro-tourism' and 'pick-your-own' systems as a strategy to sustain farms. The conversion to 'pick-your-own' also makes it unnecessary to plan for additional labor needs, with farms able to rely on a small static number of permanent and local seasonal labor. TABLE 15 SERVICE TRANSACTIONS FOR MAINE MSFWS

Crop	Total MSFWs 2015 Agricultural Season April – November	Projected MSFWs 2016 Agricultural Season April – November
Blueberries	1652	1600
Broccoli	289	290
Seafood processing	25	30
Apple	172	175
Diversified Crop, mixed vegetable	93	100

Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC), the National Farmworkers Jobs Program (NFJP) grant operator in Maine (WIA Section 167) was awarded PY 2014 funding to help address the myriad of critical issues faced by farmworkers and their families. NFJP served 283 MSFWs during PY2014. The NFJP is a required partner of the one-stop delivery system and is responsible for making the full range of services available through the one-stop nearest to farmworkers.

B. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS MEANS SUMMARIZING MIGRANT AND SEASONAL FARM WORKER (MSFW) CHARACTERISTICS (INCLUDING IF THEY ARE PREDOMINANTLY FROM CERTAIN COUNTRIES, WHAT LANGUAGE(S) THEY SPEAK, THE APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF MSFWS IN THE STATE DURING PEAK SEASON AND DURING LOW SEASON, AND WHETHER THEY TEND TO BE MIGRANT, SEASONAL, OR YEAR-ROUND FARMWORKERS). THIS INFORMATION MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT DATA SUPPLIED BY WIOA SECTION 167 NATIONAL FARMWORKER JOBS PROGRAM (NFJP) GRANTEES, OTHER MSFW ORGANIZATIONS, EMPLOYER ORGANIZATIONS, AND STATE AND/OR FEDERAL AGENCY DATA SOURCES SUCH AS THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (DOL) EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION.

Link to 2015 MSFW Demographic Survey;
http://www.maine.gov/labor/labor_laws/migrantworker/summary.html

2. OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

The local offices outreach activities must be designed to meet the needs of MSFWs in the State and to locate and contact MSFWs who are not being reached through normal intake activities. Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:

Outreach Activities: Services provided to migrant and seasonal farm workers and agricultural employers are supported by Wagner–Peyser Act funds. The State Monitor Advocate, along with merit staff, provides a full range of services in the one–stops throughout the state. Approximately \$100,000 of Wagner–Peyser Act funding is used to support the cost of one State Monitor Advocate and activities provided by employment and training staff throughout Maine’s one–stop CareerCenters to provide services to MSFW and agriculture employees. Wagner–Peyser Act funds are applied to salaries, fringe benefits, communications, travel and other staff–related expenses required to conduct outreach and deliver services. In a PY14 Agricultural Out–reach Plan modification MDOL proposed, and was approved to restructure the State Monitor Advocate position. As such, the State Monitor Advocate (SMA) position is now a half–time position. SMA duties continue to be the same, including outreach required of all SMAs. The SMA also manages the Employment Service (ES) Complaint System under W–P funding. In addition, the person in the half–time SMA role spends the other half of the time: attending to the Foreign Labor Certification (FLC) related job orders for H–2A and H–2B; providing reviews of Agricultural Clearance Orders (ETA–790) intended for H–2A, and providing guidance and oversight to H–2A unit staff conducting farm labor camp inspections related to H–2A FLC applications. The combination of SMA duties, ES Complaint system and Foreign Labor related activities, as proposed in the modification, substantively support one full–time employee (FTE). The chart below shows the projected numbers of MSFWs projected to receive services under Wagner–Peyser in upcoming 2015/2016. As discussed earlier, farmworker numbers in general and MSFW numbers have remained static, with no anticipated change over the next five years. One–stops throughout the State are the primary source for provision of services to the MSFW population. Examples of these services include: registration with the Maine Job Bank (MJB), job referrals, job counseling and referrals to supportive services. TABLE 16 WAGNER–PEYSER SERVICE GOALS FOR 2015–2016

2015–16 Registered in MJB (self–identified)	Referred to Jobs Provided	services Referred to Supportive services Case management counseling	Received Job Development Contact	Contacted by SMA through outreach
July–Sept*	101	3	28	0
Oct–Dec	6	4	281	230
Jan–March	5	44	2	6
April–June	5	20	400	7
July–Sept*	30	2	15	8
2015–16 Registered in MJB (self–identified)	475	10	75	6
Referred to Jobs Provided	20	35	75	

*this Quarter actual reported value

Outreach activities will be consistent with 20 CFR Part 653.107 and will serve to implement strategies aimed to identify, document, and track MSFWs as they access the full range of employment and training services within the one-stop centers. The SMA's outreach will focus on locating and contacting farm workers not reached through normal intake activities. The outreach efforts will implement compliance requirements in providing qualitative equivalent and quantitatively proportionate service delivery to MSFWs. The SMA will coordinate MSFW outreach plans with local offices nearest the greater area of agricultural activities relative to the crop's peak season. For example, the Machias Career Center based in Washington County with close proximity to the blueberry barrens, sends two staff members to labor camps. The SMA will contact MSFWs during the agricultural peak harvest season of blueberry, apple, and broccoli, while conducting field visits in Androscoggin, Oxford, Washington and Aroostook counties. These counties see the bulk of Maine's MSFW population. Additional outreach may take place in other counties as based on employer needs and the influx of workers into those areas, with particular areas with H-2A local offices whose neighboring agricultural employers file H-2A job orders and may have referrals to those orders. The local offices are encouraged to carry out active referrals until the employer's H2A workers depart for the work site (at least two days before the employer's set Start date for work on the job order). During field visits, worker rights and support services and informational brochures in Spanish, English, and Haitian Creole are distributed. Information on agricultural employment, as well as referral to other services such as health services are made available to the workers and their families as needed. The table below shows the State Monitor Advocate's schedule for field visits during PY15-16 and the number of MSFWs estimated to be contacted.

TABLE 17 STATE MONITOR ADVOCATE FIELD VISIT SCHEDULE

	July	September	October	– December	January	– March	April	–June	Total
Field Checks	35	28	0	15	78				MSFWs contacted 400
									275
									0
									75
									750

Outreach staff will gain extensive knowledge of farm work in order to ensure high levels of awareness and sensitivity to the socio-economic and cultural nuances that exists within the agricultural communities. The SMA is bilingual (English/Spanish) which remains representative of the farm worker population in the Maine's service delivery areas though there is an increase of Haitian speaking migrant crews finding work here. The State Monitor Advocate and outreach staff will partner with organizations and agencies serving the agricultural employment community to ensure that the needs and concerns of these workers receive consideration in the development and implementation of integrated service plans. Strategies will include:

- Increase the number of MSFWs who participate in labor exchange activities;
- Increase the number of agricultural employers utilizing the labor exchange services;
- Promote the use of the Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS);
- Encourage participation of MSFW's seeking transition to higher-wage jobs and permanent non-agricultural employment; and
- Enhance collaboration with MSFW service provider organizations.

The State Monitor Advocate and members of a nearby one-stop centers, NFJP, Maine Migrant Health Pro-gram (www.mainemigrant.org), Pine Tree Legal Assistance, (www.ptla.org), Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) food stamp program, Downeast Health Services' Women Infants and Children (WIC) program (www.downeasthealth.org), and Maine Department of Education's Migrant Education Pro-gram (<http://www.maine.gov/doe/migrant/index.html>) coordinate a collaborative resource center called "The Raker's Center" which is open from the end of July until mid-August. Located in the center of the blue-berry barrens, the Raker's Center is where blueberry field workers (rakers) find a wide array of educational, occupational, health, and social service supports. MSFWs visiting the Raker's Center may receive food assistance, gas vouchers, emergency auto repair, emergency lodging, tents, clothing and personal care items, job search services, and referrals to social services.

A. CONTACTING FARMWORKERS WHO ARE NOT BEING REACHED BY THE NORMAL INTAKE ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED BY THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE OFFICES.

The number of MSFWs to be contacted each year, over the next five year term, by Wagner–Peyser staff is expected to be around 1,100 workers. These contacts occur during outreach and field checks, including random unannounced visits to labor camps and work areas where MSFWs may be present. The State Monitor Advocate looks to identify issues that may include: apparent violations in working conditions, the proper display of mandatory/informational posters, wages, housing standards, water quality, and more. The number of worksites visited, locations, and supervisor contact names are recorded along with the time of the visit, observations made, available services discussed with MSFWs, number of MSFWs contacted, names of MSFWs requesting services, and follow-up arrangements established. A copy of the field report is filed at the administrative office of the Bureau of Employment Services. Outreach functions are tied to the service delivery areas where farm workers and agricultural employers live, work and/or congregate. Service delivery strategies aim to assist farm workers efforts to achieve integration and self-sufficiency. Outreach efforts seek to provide a full range of services and resources to the agricultural communities including, but not limited to, skills assessments, career guidance, basic skills re-mediation and vocational training, educational opportunities, job search assistance and supportive services.

B. PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO OUTREACH WORKERS. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MUST INCLUDE TRAININGS, CONFERENCES, ADDITIONAL RESOURCES, AND INCREASED COLLABORATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS ON TOPICS SUCH AS ONE-STOP CENTER SERVICES (I.E. AVAILABILITY OF REFERRALS TO TRAINING, SUPPORTIVE SERVICES, AND CAREER SERVICES, AS WELL AS SPECIFIC EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES), THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE COMPLAINT SYSTEM, INFORMATION ON THE OTHER ORGANIZATIONS SERVING MSFWs IN THE AREA, AND A BASIC SUMMARY OF FARMWORKER RIGHTS, INCLUDING THEIR RIGHTS WITH RESPECT TO THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT.

Outreach staff will gain extensive knowledge of farm work in order to ensure high levels of awareness and sensitivity to the socio-economic and cultural nuances that exists within the agricultural communities. The SMA is bilingual (English/Spanish) which remains representative of the farm worker population in the Maine's service delivery areas though there is an increase of Haitian speaking migrant crews finding work here

Requested Revisions;

Outreach activities will be consistent with 20 CFR Part 653.107 and will serve to implement strategies aimed to identify, document, and track MSFW's as they access the full range of employment and training services within the One Stop Career Centers. In accordance with Part 653.107 (k), outreach workers will be trained in local office procedures and in the services, benefits, and protections afforded MSFWs by the ES. They will also be trained in procedure for the informal resolution of complaints. The program for such training shall be formulated by the State Administrator, pursuant to uniform guidelines developed by ETA, and each state's program shall be reviewed and commented in advance by the State MSFW Monitor Advocate (SMA). The SMA attends annually scheduled training conferences on a national level offered by the office of the National Monitor Advocate, and on a Regional level offered by the Regional Monitor Advocate. Both venues provide opportunity to engage with Federal agencies collaborating with MSFW activities,

provide resource materials for reference, and while reviewing statutory requirements. The SMA is bilingual (English/Spanish) which remains representative of the farm worker population in the Maine's service delivery areas though there is an increase of Haitian speaking migrant crews finding work here.

Requested Revision;

Outreach activities will be consistent with 20 CFR Part 653.107 and will serve to implement strategies aimed to identify, document, and track MSFW's as they access the full range of employment and training services within the One Stop Career Centers. In accordance with Part 653.107 (k), outreach workers will be trained in local office procedures and in the services, benefits, and protections afforded MSFWs by the ES. They will also be trained in procedure for the informal resolution of complaints. The program for such training shall be formulated by the State Administrator, pursuant to uniform guidelines developed by ETA, and each state's program shall be reviewed and commented in advance by the State MSFW Monitor Advocate (SMA). The SMA attends annually scheduled training conferences on a national level offered by the office of the National Monitor Advocate, and on a Regional level offered by the Regional Monitor Advocate. Both venues provide opportunity to engage with Federal agencies collaborating with MSFW activities, provide resource materials for reference, and while reviewing statutory requirements. The SMA is bilingual (English/Spanish) which remains representative of the farm worker population in the Maine's service delivery areas though there is an increase of Haitian speaking migrant crews finding work here.

C. INCREASING OUTREACH WORKER TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACROSS CORE PROGRAMS INCLUDING THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) PROGRAM AND THE TRAINING ON IDENTIFICATION OF UI ELIGIBILITY ISSUES.

N/A

Requested Revision:

The SMA coordinates MSFW outreach plans with local offices nearest the greater area of agricultural activities relative to the crop's peak season. For example the Machias CareerCenter, based in LWIB Region I covering Washington County, and due to its proximity to the blue berry barrens, sends two staff members to labor camps. The two are merit-staff are full-time members of the One-Stop having full knowledge of local office procedures and of the services, benefits, and protections to be afforded to MSFWs. Staff are trained during the annually scheduled One-Stop office review by the SMA*. Training includes review of the Judge Ritchey Court Order, definition and identification of MSFWs, basic outreach field methodology, including making oral presentations to groups of MSFWs at their working, living, or gathering areas on the services available at the local One-Stop. At their local office, Staff are provide with laminated "At a Glance" fact sheets, one on the ES complaint System, the other on "Identifying MSFWs and Migrant Food Processing Workers". In the field, staff conducting outreach will have available printed CareerCenter informational material to provide to MSFWs, log sheets to record contacts, as well as ES complaint information to inform MSFWs of their rights to file complaints. Staff is familiar with and works very closely with non-governmental organizations providing services to MSFWs, as well as the NFJP 167 Grantee. Several of those organizations often use extra space at the Machias CareerCenter to conduct meetings with MSFWs.

The outreach staff will gain extensive knowledge of farm work in order to insure high levels of awareness and sensitivity to the socio-economic and cultural nuances that exists within the agricultural communities. However, it must be underscored that the two local office staff of the Machias CareerCenter that go out to the blueberry labor camps are first and foremost staff of the CareerCenter and not full-time or part time Outreach Workers, as such regularly attend trainings and are provided resources on the ES system, across core programs including the UI program. In effect, due to Maine's low MSFW population, even during peak agricultural season, there are no regularly active outreach workers assisting the SMA.

* The table below shows the Monitor Advocate's annual schedule for monitoring local offices.

SMA Local Office Monitoring Schedule

ES OFFICE Monitoring Timeframe

Presque Isle June-July

Calais August

Machias August

Bangor August

Skowhegan September

Wilton September

Rockland May

Brunswick May

Portland July

Augusta June

Lewiston September-October

Springvale April-May

Norway September

D. PROVIDING STATE MERIT STAFF OUTREACH WORKERS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES TO ENSURE THEY ARE ABLE TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES TO BOTH JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS.

Outreach staff will gain extensive knowledge of farm work in order to ensure high levels of awareness and sensitivity to the socio-economic and cultural nuances that exists within the agricultural communities. The SMA is bilingual (English/Spanish) which remains representative of

the farm worker population in the Maine's service delivery areas though there is an increase of Haitian speaking migrant crews finding work here

Requested Revisions;

Many years ago, Title I, II, III and IV staff were trained across the state to provide outreach and employer needs assessments and to package resources of both the WIA services and to make specific referrals to non-workforce related services as necessary. Over time, key staff has retired and administrations and local areas have changed resulting in the need to take a new look at staff development priorities.

The following is the vision for Employer Outreach Specialists for our system:

- Staff is aware of and understands industries and employers in the local area –is informed and can talk about their goods and services, know their challenges and opportunities, how they recruit, and what education and training is needed to fill their jobs.
 - Businesses know the services available through the one-stop system and how to contact a system business representative regarding their immediate AND longer-term workforce development needs.
 - System partners including local staff, LWDBs, and MDOL Program Managers are packaging each other's services in a seamless way.
- o OJT services often packaged with Apprenticeship, when appropriate for both the job seeker and employer
 - o Training opportunities for multiple openings are often funded by multiple funding sources (WIOA, grants, CSSP, apprenticeship, Quality Center Funds, DECD funds, etc.).
 - o Recruitment activities include Maine JobLink postings so Veteran's get priority and openings are made available to all populations.
 - o As a part of the overall outreach strategy, include activities to engage veterans, individuals with disabilities, new Mainers, adult learners, and other populations as part of the norm when filling job/training opportunities
 - o Hard to fill positions are topics of discussion with business reps from all partners – common brainstorming/problem solving.
 - o Education partners are at the table to hear challenges and develop educational/training responses to support businesses.
- System partners share responsibility for responding to businesses within 48 hours of receiving a referral, providing outstanding customer service, and achieving positive outcomes for each other's efforts.

Expectations of Business Relations Representatives include the ability to provide a customer-centric approach:

- Build strong relationships with businesses – get to know them.
- Ask many questions and listen rather than sell programs.
- Focus on needs of employers rather than our programs or open slots.
- Strive for best service to business regardless of whose program best meets needs.
- Learn and stay current with partner programs, grants, and offerings.
- Communicate with partners – Develop strong and consistent communications with each other – talk about plans for business outreach, what you are hearing, who you've talked to, etc.
- Collaboratively build response to business needs by integrating/packaging services.
- Trust each other – be trustworthy.

Outreach to Job Seekers –Wagner Peyser staff act as the initial interface with most job seeker participants entering the system, they conduct initial triage and provide resource navigation and referral services so it is imperative that they have the skills necessary to do this in a customer-centric way and in accordance with Section 188 and the requirements identified in the Local Area MOUs regarding referrals and access to system partner services. In addition, staff needs to be trained to effectively relay all of the required information such as that listed under Basic Career Services. To ensure all staff is adequately trained and have the professional skills necessary to provide services in this way a state-level professional development team was formed to evaluate WIOA-related staff development needs and identify and access resources to accomplish staff development goals identified.

The professional development team has been meeting for several months now. Staff members have been polled regarding what they perceive they need for professional development and WIOA related training and managers have also identified specific WIOA required knowledge. The following immediate training needs for Wagner Peyser staff some of which have already been addressed:

- WIOA intake & eligibility
- Confidentiality & Personally Identifiable Information
- Partner Services
- Accessibility Basics (Policies, Final Regulations, both individuals with disabilities and other languages/cultures)
- Resources
- Use of new outreach technology
- Basic Career Services
- Standardized initial assessment process

- Standardized referral process
- Understanding customer flow for integrated service delivery
- Equal Opportunity and Non-discrimination
- LMI for job seekers
- LMI for employers
- NTO Basics
- Apprenticeship Basics
- Adult Education Basics
- VR Basics
- ETPL for workforce professionals

Continued development on:

- O*NET & other online career guidance resources
- Professional Certifications for workforce professionals such as:
 - o Appreciative Advising
 - o Economic Development
 - o Workforce Development
 - o Program Evaluation
 - o Project Management
 - o Accessibility Certification
 - o Conflict Resolution
 - o Ethical Communications
 - o Understanding the Culture of Poverty
 - o E-Learning made easy
 - o Professional Writing

o And more.

E. COORDINATING OUTREACH EFFORTS WITH NFJP GRANTEES AS WELL AS WITH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COMMUNITY SERVICE AGENCIES AND MSFW GROUPS.

The State Monitor Advocate and members of a nearby one-stop centers, NFJP, Maine Migrant Health Pro-gram (www.mainemigrant.org), Pine Tree Legal Assistance, (www.ptla.org), Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) food stamp program, Downeast Health Services' Women Infants and Children (WIC) program (www.downeasthealth.org), and Maine Department of Education's Migrant Education Pro-gram (<http://www.maine.gov/doe/migrant/index.html>) coordinate a collaborative resource center called "The Raker's Center" which is open from the end of July until mid-August. Located in the center of the blue-berry barrens, the Raker's Center is where blueberry field workers (rakers) find a wide array of educational, occupational, health, and social service supports. MSFWs visiting the Raker's Center may receive food assistance, gas vouchers, emergency auto repair, emergency lodging, tents, clothing and personal care items, job search services, and referrals to social services.

3. SERVICES PROVIDED TO FARMWORKERS AND AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS THROUGH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM.

Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:

(A) PROVIDING THE FULL RANGE OF EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICES TO THE AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY, BOTH FARMWORKERS AND AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS, THROUGH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM. THIS INCLUDES:

- I. HOW CAREER AND TRAINING SERVICES REQUIRED UNDER WIOA TITLE I WILL BE PROVIDED TO MSFWs THROUGH THE ONE-STOP CENTERS;
- II. HOW THE STATE SERVES AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS AND HOW IT INTENDS TO IMPROVE SUCH SERVICES.

Services provided to MSFWs and Agricultural Employers through the one-stop Delivery System: The full range of employment and training services delineated under WIOA Title I-B are to be provided to MSFWs. One of the roles of the State Monitor Advocate and the WIOA 167 grantee is to make job opportunities available to workers. In addition to field visits, staff members monitor the local offices for compliance with regulations in serving MSFWs. The table below shows the Monitor Advocate's annual schedule for monitoring local offices. TABLE 18 STATE MONITOR ADVOCATE LOCAL OFFICE MONITORING SCHEDULE SMA Local Office Monitoring Schedule ES OFFICE Monitoring Timeframe Presque Isle June–July Calais, Machias & Bangor August Skowhegan, Wilton September Rockland May Brunswick May Portland July Augusta June Lewiston September–October Springvale April – May Norway September

Career Centers, in collaboration with the State Monitor Advocate, coordinate service delivery including, but not limited to: o Provision of a full range of employment services, benefit, and protections on a basis that is qualitatively equivalent and quantitatively proportionate to services provided to non-MSFWs; o Access to and use of job order information effectively; o Assistance in accessing self-assisted services via electronic technologies; o Individual referrals to agricultural and

non-agricultural jobs, occupational training and support services, as well as assessments and testing, career counseling and other job development services; o Provision of information on labor rights, protections, and responsibilities with respect to terms and conditions of employment; o Assistance in the preparation and filing of employment and non-employment related complaints; o Accepting and referring labor-related complaints and apparent violations in accordance with established policies and procedures; o Referrals of individuals and family members to supportive services for which they may be eligible; o Assisting with posting resumes on-line and conducting on-line job searches; and o Facilitating communication between Limited-English Proficient individuals referred to jobs and employers.

Requested Revision;

Local offices, or Maine's CareerCenters will continue to help agricultural employers in obtaining workers to harvest their crops, referring job seekers to regular job orders as well as H-2A related job order. U.S. workers must be given hiring priority to H2A related jobs. The range of services to Agricultural employers extends beyond assistance with job orders and referrals. Employers are invited to participate in job fairs, work with Career Center business liaison to create recruitment plans, potential training opportunities, and possible use of the Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS). Maine labor exchange system upgrade continues to connect employers to workers and is a bridge between local office staff and employer, facilitating direct service provision for employer account management, job seeker resume review, or job order enhancement.

The State Monitor Advocate (SMA) will also provide technical services and convene information meetings for foreign labor stakeholders, agricultural employers, and service providers interested in the H-2A foreign labor certification program. The SMA provides assistance to Agricultural Employers during field visits by distributing informational brochures as well as required posters; assessing employer's labor needs, and taking job information, and recommending the Agricultural Recruitment System should local workers not be readily available.

(B) MARKETING THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE COMPLAINT SYSTEM TO FARMWORKERS AND OTHER FARMWORKER ADVOCACY GROUPS.

The Bureau of Employment Services implements the Employment Service (ES) Complaint System (per 20 CFR Subpart E §658.400 – 658.418) for retrieval of complaints that are filed at local one-stops and at the Central Office. The State Monitor Advocate also functions as the Complaint Resolution Administrator and has direct responsibility of the ES Complaint System process, field check and Apparent Violation forms. The State Monitor Advocate files records of all complaints as well as correspondence between parties and notes from all investigations for a period of three years. The State Monitor Advocate reviews these files quarterly to ensure compliance with appropriate complaint resolution processes and adherence to customer satisfaction principles. The SMA prepares and submits the Quarterly Complaint System Activity Report, which includes local office complaint logs, to U. S. Department of Labor, ETA Region I Office and provides a copy of the report to the Bureau Director and the State EEO Coordinator.

(C) MARKETING THE AGRICULTURAL RECRUITMENT SYSTEM TO AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS AND HOW IT INTENDS TO IMPROVE SUCH PUBLICITY.

The State Monitor Advocate and outreach staff will partner with organizations and agencies serving the agricultural employment community to ensure that the needs and concerns of these workers receive consideration in the development and implementation of integrated service plans. Strategies

will include: • Increase the number of MSFWs who participate in labor exchange activities; • Increase the number of agricultural employers utilizing the labor exchange services; • Promote the use of the Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS); • Encourage participation of MSFW's seeking transition to higher-wage jobs and permanent non-agricultural employment; and • Enhance collaboration with MSFW service provider organizations.

4. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

(A) COLLABORATION

Describe any collaborative agreements the state workforce agency (SWA) has with other MSFW service providers including NFJP grantees and other service providers. Describe how the SWA intends to build upon/increase collaboration with existing partners and in establishing new partners over the next four years (including any approximate timelines for establishing agreements or building upon existing agreements).

The State Monitor Advocate and members of a nearby one-stop centers, NFJP, Maine Migrant Health Pro-gram (www.mainemigrant.org), Pine Tree Legal Assistance, (www.ptla.org), Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) food stamp program, Downeast Health Services' Women Infants and Children (WIC) program (www.downeasthealth.org), and Maine Department of Education's Migrant Education Pro-gram (<http://www.maine.gov/doe/migrant/index.html>) coordinate a collaborative resource center called "The Raker's Center" which is open from the end of July until mid-August. Located in the center of the blue-berry barrens, the Raker's Center is where blueberry field workers (rakers) find a wide array of educational, occupational, health, and social service supports. MSFWs visiting the Raker's Center may receive food assistance, gas vouchers, emergency auto repair, emergency lodging, tents, clothing and personal care items, job search services, and referrals to social services.

(B) REVIEW AND PUBLIC COMMENT.

In developing the AOP, the SWA must solicit information and suggestions from NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations. In addition, at least 45 calendar days before submitting its final AOP, the SWA must provide a proposed plan to NFJP grantees, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other organizations expressing an interest and allow at least 30 days for review and comment. The SWA must: 1) Consider any comments received in formulating its final proposed AOP; 2) Inform all commenting parties in writing whether their comments have been incorporated and, if not, the reasons therefore; and 3) Transmit the comments and recommendations received and its responses with the submission of the AOP. The AOP must include a statement confirming NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations have been given an opportunity to comment on the AOP. Include the list of organizations from which information and suggestions were solicited, any comments received, and responses to those comments.

The state solicited information and suggestions from the WIOA 167 National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantee, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations. The State provided a proposed plan to the following entities: the Maine Migrant Health Program, the Maine Department of Health & Human Services local offices in agricultural areas, the Refugee and Human Rights Clinic Program, the University of Maine School of Law, the Immigrant and Legal Advocacy Project, Mano (migrant

worker family center), the National Farmworker Jobs Program 160 grantee – Eastern Maine Development Corporation, the Maine Department of Education – English as Second Language program, the Pesticide Program, the Maine Board of Pesticides Control, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development – Bangor office (migrant housing program), and Pine Tree Legal (Farm worker’s Division). MDOL will execute an MOU with EMDC which is the 167 Grantee for the NFJP. The Memorandum of Understanding between MDOL and Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC), the WIOA 167 National Farmworker Job Program grantee, will facilitate the exchange of data pertaining to services provided to MSFWs.

(C) DATA ASSESSMENT.

Review the previous four years Wagner-Peyser data reports on performance. Note whether the State has been meeting its goals to provide MSFWs quantitatively proportionate services as compared to non-MSFWs. If it has not met these goals, explain why the State believes such goals were not met and how the State intends to improve its provision of services in order to meet such goals.

The chart below shows the numbers of MSFWs that were provided with some level of service during 2014-15. This assistance includes job referral information, answering questions on worker wage deductions, provision of housing standards information and working conditions requirements and issues pertaining to discrimination. TABLE 14 SERVICES PROVIDED TO MIGRANT SEASONAL FARM WORKERS 2014-2015

2014-15 Registered In MJB (self-identified)*	Referred to jobs	Provided Services	Referred to Supportive Services	Case Management	Counseling	Received Job Development Contact	Contacted by SMA outreach
July-Sept 2014	91	0	18	0	6	4	250
Oct-Dec 2014	216	0	34	1	9	7	36
Jan-Mar 2015	430	2	79	3	19	16	0
April-Jun 2015	507	5	113	7	25	19	140

The numbers above are based on service transactions provided to job seekers who register and self-identify as MSFW and are active on the Maine Job bank (MJB). Job seekers on the MJB that do not receive services for 90 days, become inactive. Returning job seekers who reactivate their accounts count as new registrants with new service transactions. Total number of services is always equal to or greater than the number of individuals served. The quarters above are ‘rolling-quarters’ in that services reported each quarter are an accumulation of the quarters preceding the reporting period.

(D) ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

The plan must include an explanation of what was achieved based on the previous AOP, what was not achieved and an explanation as to why the State believes the goals were not achieved, and how the State intends to remedy the gaps of achievement in the coming year.

(E) STATE MONITOR ADVOCATE

The plan must contain a statement confirming the State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved the AOP.

The State Monitor Advocate was directly involved with writing this Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP). Once the AOP is reviewed, the SMA will be afforded the opportunity approve the plan.

F. WAGNER-PEYSER ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:

1. The Wagner-Peyser Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time. (sec 121(e)(3)); Yes
2. The State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111 (State agency staffing requirements) if the State has significant MSFW one-stop centers; Yes
3. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and Yes
4. State agency merit-based public employees provide Wagner-Peyser Act-funded labor exchange activities in accordance with Department of Labor regulations. Yes

**PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY
LITERACY ACT PROGRAMS**

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

A. ALIGNING OF CONTENT STANDARDS

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

ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROGRAMS OVERVIEW Maine Adult Education (MAE) is best described as an education, life and career pathways system that prepares adults for postsecondary education and/or employment. Public school based adult education is part of the Maine Department of Education (MDOE) and administered by the State Office of Adult Education and Family Literacy. Over seventy-six statewide providers offer courses in literacy and adult basic education, English language acquisition, citizenship, high school completion, college transition, career preparation and personal enrichment. These local programs provide services at a variety of locations, including correctional facilities; use a variety of instructional strategies, including face-to-face and distance technology; and are funded by a combination of federal, state and local dollars. Programs use these funds leverage additional grants and contracts. In support of the mission and purpose of Maine Adult Education, the following language is included in State Statute. "Since education is a lifelong process, it is declared to be the policy of the State to provide and encourage the growth of educational opportunities and, where applicable, to ensure career, citizenship and college readiness for all adults." In 2012 a language change in statute made this clarification: "Adult Education" means an education program primarily operated for individuals beyond the compulsory school age that is administered by school administrative units through a career pathways and service system and includes intake, assessment, advising, instruction, and individual learning plans; is guided by data management and analysis, annual monitoring and annual professional development plans; uses appropriately certified staff; is designed to meet identified local needs; and makes use of partnerships and alignment with workforce development, postsecondary institutions and support services. To ensure that local providers receiving state and or federal dollars meet the requirements of Maine Statute Title 20-A, Chapter 315: Adult Education §8601-A, sub-§(2013), each eligible agency annually completes, and submits a Career Pathways (CP) Plan to the state office for approval. The plan outlines how the provider will meet the goals of Maine's Career Pathways system and WIOA. The Career Pathways goals are: 1) Making use of the Career Pathways Plan as a strategic planning tool; documenting comprehensive career pathway approaches that align and bridge training, education, employment and supportive services at the local and state levels; partnering with employers; and enabling individuals to move beyond adult basic education and succeed in postsecondary education, earn industry-recognized credentials, and advance along a career path; 2) Integrating adult basic education and occupational skills training to enable individuals to increase their educational learning gains and earn industry-recognized credentials while completing basic skills training; 3) Connecting the multiple systems and structures that serve individuals with lower skills through mechanisms such as coordinating Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funding for Titles I and II to support effective contextualized programs that result in increased mastery of basic skills and the attainment of credentials that are relevant to employers; and 4) Partnering with and leveraging resources from other federally and state funded programs as well as those identified in Partnerships and Alignment, Component 1 of Maine's CP plan. In actuality, inclusion of the required implementation of the career pathways system of practice laid the groundwork for the rigorous, research-based instruction, college and career readiness services, accountability, and collaborations that are integral to the successful implementation of the educational and employment goals of WIOA. When WIOA passed, the components of Maine's career pathways plans were adjusted to align with career pathways as defined in WIOA as well as the Title II Thirteen Considerations for Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) funding. Though not all local programs have the financial and staff resources

to provide comprehensive instructional and support services on their own, they must still document how they will partner with other adult education providers and partner agencies to fulfill the CP plan components and the Thirteen Considerations of WIOA. Maine Career Pathways Plan Components are:

- Partnerships and Alignment,
- Intake,
- Career Planning and Advisement,
- Individual Learning Plans,
- Ongoing Assessment and Learning,
- Rigorous Educational Programming that includes at least three of the following as well as details on how they align with WIOA requirements of transitioning to postsecondary and employment:

- o Literacy instruction or instruction in English as a Second Language – This instruction, based on individual needs and goals, is targeted for adults whose skills in reading, writing, numeracy, speaking or listening are below the 12th grade level. It includes adult basic education (focus on grade levels 0–8) and English as a second language. Together, these two groups represented over 80 percent of adult learners in Maine for FY15. Level is determined by administering the CASAS Assessment to both English as a second language and adult basic education learners within the first twelve hours of program entry. Courses are offered statewide at over seventy–six locations and delivered primarily through a managed enrollment model of small group instruction although one–on–one tutoring, language labs, and more traditional classes are also available depending on location. For FY15 over 5,000 learners were enrolled in these programs broken down as follows: ABE– 3,031 learners (53 percent), ASE – 1,078 learners (nineteen percent) and ESL – 1,621 learners (28 percent).
- o High school completion courses – Adult high school completion classes and preparation courses for high school equivalency assessment are available without cost to Maine adults. Instruction in both secondary completion pathways is aligned with CCRS and state learning results. Maine’s high school equivalency diploma is available to adults who are at least 18 years of age who have passed a standardized assessment. Test exceptions may be made for 17 year–olds if they have already been out of school for a year or have a superintendent’s recommendation due to immediate need. Equivalency candidates must participate in an approved preparation program or provide other evidence that they are adequately prepared to be test. Maine’s high school equivalency diplomas have the legal status of high school diplomas. In FY15 a total of 1,650 adults earned a high school credential through adult education. This includes 1,290 adults who passed a high school equivalency test and 360 adults who earned their adult education diploma. The required number of credits needed to graduate varies depending on the local school system. However, the state approved minimum is 16 credits for adult students born prior to October 15, 1970. For adults born after that date, the number of required credits must align with their local high school requirements. The minimum course of study and credits must include:
 - English – 4 credits
 - Social Studies – 2 credits
 - Mathematics – 2 credits
 - Science – 1 credit, with laboratory study recommended
 - Out–of–school experiences – 6 credits
 - Either Fine Arts, Computer, Health, Consumer Economics, or Career Exploration/Personal Development – 1 credit
- o College transition courses – Accessible to adults at all 76 local adult education sites on a class by class basis, or by enrolling in the comprehensive Maine College Transitions Program (MCT). MCT offers additional support to learners transitioning to college by integrating academic advising and career planning services, financial aid assistance, college planning and ACCUPLACER testing with academic instruction and preparation. In FY15, 1,996 learners participated in college transition courses. According to the most recent outcome data, 36 percent of Maine College Transitions learners went on to attend postsecondary within twelve months of leaving the program.
- o Enrichment courses – Hundreds of these classes are offered throughout the state year–round. They are often an entry point for adults to learn about our wide range of services. These courses reflect community interests, build support and are self–sustaining through user fees. In school year 2014–2015, there were 36,461 unique adults, many of whom register for multiple classes, who participated.
- o Adult workforce training and retraining – In the 2014–2015 school year, 4,089 learners participated in 953 workforce training courses ranging from short–term specialized certificate trainings to comprehensive credential programs at over 50 locations throughout the state. These courses include workplace activities offered in collaboration with an employer, employee organization or in combination with basic academic skills, critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and self–

management skills, including competencies in utilizing resources, using information, working with others, understanding systems, and obtaining skills necessary for successful transition into and completion of postsecondary education, training or employment; and o Adult Career and Technical Education– Involves organized educational activities that offer a sequence of academic and technical courses that prepare participants for further education and careers that do not need a baccalaureate, master or doctoral degree. • Research–based Instruction – STAR, Adult Numeracy Initiative, Integrated Education and Training, College and Career Readiness Standards, Reading Apprenticeship Program. • Support Services – Support services improve persistence and student success, especially for students with barriers, as they progress through education and training programs and transition into employment. Adult education programs are expected to have Memorandum of Understanding with related agencies capable of providing services such as; employment services, transportation, childcare, financial literacy and community linkages (i.e. substance abuse counseling, mental health system services and housing.), • Data Management – Maine Adult Education strives to promote the use of data to inform programming and instructional practices. Local programs are required to enter and maintain all program data in Maine’s managed information system, MaineSTARS, with the expectation that program services will be guided by student achievement and persistence data as well as current local labor market and employment data to ensure programming meets the needs of the local community. Learner data to be collected and maintained includes demographic, assessment, participation, and outcome data. Program data reports are due in the fall, in the spring, and at the end of the academic year. Local programs outline data management practices and needs as well as data driven programming decisions in the annual Career Pathways plan. • Program Monitoring and Evaluation – MAE uses a continuous improvement monitoring process at that state level to determine effectiveness of local programs. The State’s data system is National Reporting System compliant and allows for real–time viewing of program data. Complete details regarding the State’s assessment and monitoring system are included in the Assessing Quality section of this plan, page 20. • Professional Development for Instructors and Staff – Adult learners today require a higher level of academic rigor and support than previously required. This reality is based on such factors as the implementation of rigorous standards aligned to the Common Core State Standards, a more rigorous high school equivalency test, labor market changes, and technology developments. Maine’s adult education practitioners and programs need access to professional development that is responsive to this demand for increased academic rigor and support. Maine’s transition to a career pathways system of services is changing the perception of adult education services. It is no longer viewed as only a place for adults who cannot read or who need a high school credential. While those services remain at the core of adult education, the Maine Adult Education system is increasingly recognized as an essential partner in the pathway of adults to postsecondary credentials and employment. Adult Education is taking its place as the link to the life, educational, training and employment goals of Maine’s adults. Examples of this expanded role for adult education are seen in such programs as Maine Adult College Transition (MCT), and WorkReady, as well as in the ever expanding uses of technology for instruction. Maine College Transitions provides comprehensive academic preparation courses, academic and career advisement, financial planning, study skills and adapting to college culture services to assist students with their transition to college. In 2014, Maine College Transition was expanded to include all Maine Adult Education providers, including two correctional facilities. This expansion increased the capacity of the system and also made it possible for adults to access these college preparation classes and services regardless of their location. In the fall of 2014 there were 1,176 students enrolled in Maine College Transition, an increase of over 300 from the prior year. Longitudinal Maine College Transition data validates the ability of program graduates to successfully enter postsecondary and persist to credential attainment. In 2008, Maine Adult Education collaborated with the state’s four local workforce development boards to create WorkReady, a standards–based workforce preparation program of soft (employability) skills. Upon meeting WorkReady standards, participants are awarded a state–recognized credential issued by the Maine Department of

Education. There are currently 25 approved WorkReady programs with trained facilitators offering the training throughout Maine at adult education sites, career centers, correctional facilities, and health and human services offices. In the 2014–2015 academic year, 393 students were enrolled in WorkReady and 90 percent earned the credential. Going forward, the goal is to expand WorkReady and embed employability skills into Integrated Education and Training (IET) and other programs of study to increase the job readiness of program participants. Maine Adult Education programs make extensive use of technology to mitigate the common barriers to participation of childcare and distance. In addition to offering basic adult education services, local adult education programs are increasingly partnering with postsecondary institutions to offer college level courses via technology. In the last four years approximately 150 adult education teachers were trained in technology integration in the classroom, incorporating blended learning, and becoming proficient with other technology trends and best practices. The increased levels of comfort and expertise of instructors in resulting in students who are better prepared to navigate educational opportunities offered via technology.

(A) ALIGNING OF CONTENT STANDARDS Describe how the eligible agency will, by July 1, 2016, align its content standards for adult education with State–adopted challenging academic content standards, as adopted under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 6311 (b)(1). Alignment of adult education curricula and instruction with state–adopted academic standards (the Maine Learning Results since 1997) is not new to Maine Adult Education. Providers that issue an adult high school credential must align with the required standards and learning outcomes of their corresponding high school. In 2011, the Maine Learning Results were updated to include Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English language arts and math and were implemented in the 2013–14 school year. This presented a challenge for adult education as the CCSS were not normed for adult learners. In the spring of 2013, the U.S.D.O.E. Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE) released the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) for Adults. These research–based standards are drawn from those common core standards that are most relevant for adults to meet 21st century college and career readiness skills. Maine Adult Education adopted the CCRS with the goal of statewide integration into instructional practice by SY2016–2017. The College and Career Readiness Standards were approved by the Maine Department of Education Office of the Commissioner in March of 2014 and by the State Board of Education in October of 2014. Maine is also one of 12 states chosen to participate in OCTAE’s 2–year College and Career Readiness – Standards in Action project. Support and technical assistance from that participation has greatly enhanced the ability to move the standards work forward. Extensive professional development in the college and career standards for instructors in the areas of reading and language arts and mathematics began in the spring of 2014. Targeted professional development in these standards for instructors in the areas of high school equivalency and English language acquisition began in 2015. Professional development efforts will be ongoing. The adoption and implementation of College and Career Readiness Standards for Adults enables all providers funded by WIOA and state literacy funds to meet both the state and federal requirements for research–based, rigorous instruction that prepares adults for postsecondary education, training and employment. Implementation of CCRS also maintains alignment with State–adopted K–12 content standards and clarifies for students, institutions of higher education, as well as employers, that Maine Adult Education is a standards–based pathway to postsecondary education and training and career. The 2015–2016 Maine Adult Education State Transition Plan required local programs to transition toward full implementation of College and Career Readiness Standards. To satisfy this requirement, local program teachers and administrators attended CCRS professional development sessions and provided evidence of the use of the standards in the classroom. In addition to State offered training, local practitioners are informed of, and encouraged to participate in standards–training conducted by their local school district as well as regional and national opportunities. To receive state and federal funding, CCRS implementation must be apparent in lesson plans and instructional delivery during program monitoring. Maine Adult Education also requires local providers to contextualize instruction and

make use of research-based best practices in all content areas, including mathematics and reading, and in the implementation of Integrated Education and Training (IET) and Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IEL/Civics). In addition to adoption and implementation of college and career readiness standards in the K-12 and adult education systems, Maine has been moving toward a learner-centered, competency or proficiency-based system in which learners advance only when they have demonstrated mastery of defined learning outcomes. This has created a new imperative for alignment for all the stakeholders in education, including adult education programs. To meet these rigorous benchmarks, adult education providers are exploring and working with their local school administrative unit on how to move toward an aligned student-centered approach known as competency or proficiency-based pathways, through which student learning is marked by mastery rather than seat time. This system has the potential to open new opportunities for students to learn — and demonstrate their learning — in meaningful ways that build toward their ultimate readiness for college and careers. Students in competency-based learning environments should be able to access engaging learning opportunities that are grounded in application and relevant to their career aspirations and employment prospects. Competency-based strategies provide flexibility in the way that credit can be earned or awarded, provide students with personalized learning opportunities and in many cases, accelerate progress toward reaching their educational and learning goals. For Maine Adult Education, these strategies will include rigorous, standards-based classroom instruction; distance, online, and blended learning instructional environments; dual enrollment in postsecondary; and project-based and community-based learning, among others. The goal of these strategies, combined with contextualized content relevant to their unique needs, is to enhance student engagement.

B. LOCAL ACTIVITIES

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

ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY ACTIVITIES (SECTION 203 OF WIOA)

- Adult education;
- Literacy;
- Workplace adult education and literacy activities;
- Family literacy activities;
- English language acquisition activities;
- Integrated English literacy and civics education;
- Workforce preparation activities; or
- Integrated education and training that—
 1. Provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, and
 2. Is for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

(B) LOCAL ACTIVITIES Describe how the State will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA, fund each eligible provider to establish or operate programs that provide adult education and literacy activities, including programs that provide such activities concurrently. The Unified or Combined State Plan must include at a minimum the scope, content and organization of local activities. In the 2015–2016 Maine Adult Education State Transition Plan, local programs receiving federal funds were required to begin implementation of three major WIOA requirements as part of their 2015–2016 AEFLA Continuation Grants. Those three areas were: (1) Alignment and Partnerships, especially with Local Workforce Boards and other adult education programs. As part of the transition plan, each AEFLA program had to explain how they would work more closely with their Local Workforce Board, one–stop partners, and other adult education programs for education/workforce alignment. With limited resources amongst the core partners to meet Maine’s need for skilled workers, steps must be taken to increase alignment and collaboration. Many of Maine’s adult education programs are small, rural, and do not have the capacity on their own to address the varied educational and training needs of those they serve. Local programs detailed new, regional collaborations to share resources to ensure access to the educational and workforce services adults need regardless of the size or location of the service provider. (2) Rigorous, researched based instruction (CCRS, Integrated Education and Training (IET) and/or IEL/Civics. CCRS Implementation of College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) in Maine began in 2014. As noted in the section Aligning Content Standards (see page 158), all local adult education providers are to have CCRS in place by the conclusion of the 2016–2017 academic year. The 3–year implementation timeline was established to enable programs to begin their transition as local resources allowed. However, those programs receiving AEFLA funding had to meet the accelerated transition and implementation timeline outlined in the 2015–2016 Transition Plan. To support the inclusion of CCRS into EL Civics and ELL classrooms, special attention has been paid to supporting programs in these areas. Trainings on integrating CCRS into the ESL classroom and Sheltered Instructional Observation Protocol, a research–based and validated model that allows English learners to acquire academic knowledge as they develop English language proficiency are a part of Maine’s College and Career Readiness Implementation. These efforts are also a part of this Plan as

a focus of the State's leadership activities. Integrated Education and Training (IET) In alignment with WIOA, the Maine Adult Education Career Pathways system expects local programs to make use of an integrated education and training (IET) model that combines educational supports in a skills training program. In the summer of 2015, MAE issued a Request for Proposals for IET Pilot grants and received 11 proposals. Of those, five were funded using WIA incentive funds. The RFP defines the IET Service approach as follows: "provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement." Proposals were required to include strategies to:

- Develop and strengthen career pathways enabling entry-level workers to improve skills and advance to higher wage jobs;
- Partner with an employer(s) and postsecondary academic institution and/or training provider to develop and deliver the IET curriculum and delivery model based on identified employer needs;
- Inform and/or collaborate with the boards of the local workforce development areas designated pursuant to the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998, Public Law 105-220, business education partnerships, postsecondary educational institutions, and career counselors for the purpose of addressing the challenges of connecting disadvantaged adults to careers; and,
- Recruit and train a diverse pool of persons seeking jobs, including veterans, and individuals with barriers to employment; Integrate employability skills training that meet the needs of the employer (i.e. integrated WorkReady) The funded proposals address employment needs in the following industries: customer service, manufacturing, construction, healthcare and transportation and propose to train approximately 200 individuals for employment with the partner employers who have positions available. The proposals also included a mix of training for new hires and incumbent workers. All of the proposals describe a process for developing and strengthening the career pathway of the participants to improve skills and advance to higher wage jobs and include certifications and credentials such as: high school equivalency diploma, OSHA, CDL, CNA, Certified Residential Medication Aide (CRMA), National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER), Boiler Operators License and customized WorkReady (Maine's employability skills credential.) Some of the pilots also offer completers college credits. Data collected, maintained and reported by these 5 pilot projects will be used to increase potential for project replication in other programs and industries. In addition, the Maine Department of Adult Education will provide professional development to Adult Education programs and partners to help them support student success through integration of key academic content with other (usually occupational) courses by implementing common IET models, allowing programs to choose the best method to meet their students' needs. These include:

- Team teaching—a basic skills and/or ELL instructor paired with a content specialist simultaneously teaching in the same learning environment.
- Alternating Teaching – basic skills and/or ELL instructor and content specialist working with the same cohort at different times.
- Contextualized Teaching– basic skills and/or ELL instructor teaching academic subjects in the context of a specific vocation or industry. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education. Between 2000–2013, the foreign-born population in Maine increased by 22.7 percent, and in 2013, immigrants made up 3.4 percent of Maine's 1.3 million residents (approximately 45,000). Refugees in Maine have come from over 30 countries. According to the Migration Policy Institute, Maine's immigrant population is largest in the counties of: Cumberland, York, Penobscot, Androscoggin, Aroostook and Kennebec. Currently, Maine's federal English Literacy/Civics funds are divided between two major resettlement communities of Portland and Lewiston and serve 328 students. They deliver an integrated program of services that incorporates English Literacy and Civics Education. Because Maine's growing refugee and immigrant populations are beginning to move to many different communities in search of employment opportunities, local providers that do not receive EL Civics dollars are braiding state and local funds, private grant dollars, and making use of volunteers to provide English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Literacy classes, citizenship training, and other classes that address the communication skills adults use daily in their roles as worker, family member and citizen. In some areas, adult education programs have begun integrating employability skills and business

engagement in their ESOL programs. With the passage of WIOA and inclusion of IEL/Civics, local programs will be called upon to deliver effective program that combines literacy skills and citizenship education with workforce training. (3) Robust programming to align with their Local Workforce Board's plan, state requirements and 13 considerations. The working relationship and alignment between the 76 adult education programs and the three local workforce boards varies greatly across the state. Although some adult education providers and local boards have a history of working together to address local employer and training needs, there was never a general expectation to align local educational activities with workforce priorities. In the Transitional Plan, each AEFLA program had to explain the steps they would take to initiate or strengthen the relationship with their Local Workforce Board and one-stop partners for workforce alignment. In addition, local providers were expected to develop meaningful MOUs with their one-stop partners. Local providers also received training on how the Thirteen Considerations for AEFLA funding aligned with the components of the career pathways plans. Realizing that local programs would be unable to meet all of the requirements of the Thirteen Considerations in the transitional year, providers were required to explain how they would prepare for full implementation. In addition, local providers were required to describe in both the Transition Plan and Career Pathways plan the steps they would take to meet Maine Adult Education's targeted WIOA priorities in the 2015–2016 Transitional Plan. Continued funding for 2016–2017 will be dependent on how well the funded programs demonstrated progress toward satisfying the required WIOA targets and their plans to further enhance delivery of workforce training, employability skills and foundational skills. In the fall of 2016, Maine Adult Education will conduct an open competition for WIOA Title II Adult Basic Education and Literacy Services funds. Announcement of the availability of funds will follow State of Maine Division of Purchases guidelines. The notification of funds process includes a posting on the Division of Purchases website as well as a legal notice in the Kennebec Journal. The anticipated due date for Request for Proposals (RFPs) is late winter of 2017. Successful applicants will be notified in the spring of 2017. Grantees will receive a contract for July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018 with the option for continuation funding for three more years based on outcomes. In preparation for the competition, the state office will publicize and conduct information meetings regarding Maine's State Plan for Adult Education and the Thirteen Considerations for funding. The AEFLA award process will begin with the local workforce development board (LWD) review of the proposal for alignment with the workforce development and training priorities as outlined in the Local Workforce Development area plan. Signed documentation will be included as an Assurance of the submission and review. At least one eligible agency will be funded in each local workforce area. All applicants for the Title II Adult Basic Education and Literacy Services funds are expected to demonstrate how they will successfully implement activities and services that will address the following areas as defined in Section 203(2) as well as how they will align with the 13 Considerations in Section 231 (e) Adult education; Literacy; Workplace adult education and literacy activities; Family literacy activities; English language acquisition activities; Integrated English literacy and civics education; Workforce preparation activities; or Integrated education and training that provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, and is for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

Thirteen Considerations: 1. The degree to which the eligible provider would be responsive to – a. Regional needs as identified in the local plan under section 108: and b. Serving individuals in the community who were identified in such plan as most in need of adult education and literacy activities, including individuals – i. Who have low levels of literacy skills; or ii. Who are English language learners; 2. the ability of the eligible provider to serve eligible individuals with disabilities, including eligible individuals with learning disabilities; 3. past effectiveness of the eligible provider in improving the literacy of eligible individuals, to meet State-adjusted levels of performance for the primary indicators of performance described in section 116, especially with respect to eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy; 4. the extent to which the eligible provider demonstrates

alignment between proposed activities and services and the strategy and goals of the local plan under section 108, as well as the activities and services of the one-stop partners; 5. whether the eligible provider's program – a. Is of sufficient intensity and quality, and based on the most rigorous research available so that participants achieve substantial learning gains; and b. Uses instructional practices that include the essential components of reading instruction; 6. whether the eligible provider's activities, including whether reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, and English language acquisition instruction delivered by the eligible provider, are based on the best practices derived from the most rigorous research available and appropriate, including scientifically valid research and effective educational practice; 7. whether the eligible provider's activities effectively use technology, services, and delivery systems, including distance education in a manner sufficient to increase the amount and quality of learning and how such technology, services, and systems lead to improved performance; 8. whether the eligible provider's activities provide learning in context, including through integrated education and training, so that an individual acquires the skills needed to transition to and complete postsecondary education and training programs, obtain and advance in employment leading to economic self-sufficiency, and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; 9. whether the eligible provider's activities are delivered by well-trained instructors, counselors, and administrators who meet any minimum qualifications established by the State, where applicable, and who have access to high quality professional development, including through electronic means; 10. whether the eligible provider's activities coordinate with other available education, training, and social service resources in the community, such as by establishing strong links with elementary schools and secondary schools, postsecondary educational institutions, institutions of higher education, local workforce development boards, one-stop centers, job training programs, and social service agencies, business, industry, labor organizations, community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and intermediaries, for the development of career pathways; 11. whether the eligible provider's activities offer flexible schedules and coordination with Federal, State, and local support services (such as child care, transportation, mental health services, and career planning) that are necessary to enable individuals, including individuals with disabilities or other special needs, to attend and complete programs. 12. whether the eligible provider maintains a high-quality information management system that has the capacity to report measurable participant outcomes (consistent with section 116) and to monitor program performance; and 13. whether the local areas in which the eligible provider is located have a demonstrated need for additional English language acquisition programs and civics education programs. In addition to detailing how the applicant intends to fulfil the requirements of the Request for Proposal, applicants will provide evidence of their effectiveness in serving adult learners, especially those with barriers. Applicants will submit documentation for the past two years detailing learner outcomes in the areas of: educational gain; qualification of instructors in working with adult learners and especially those with barriers; learner transitions to employment, postsecondary educational and training programs; high school completion; implementation of college and career readiness standards and Integrated Education and Training; as well as all other Request for Proposal performance, organizational and financial requirements.

SPECIAL RULE No eligible agency shall use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

SPECIAL RULE

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

C. CORRECTIONS EDUCATION AND OTHER EDUCATION OF INSTITUTIONALIZED INDIVIDUALS

Describe how the State will establish and operate programs under section 225 of WIOA for corrections education and education of other institutionalized individuals, including how it will fund, in accordance with the requirements of Title II, subtitle C, any of the following academic programs for:

- a. Adult education and literacy activities;
- b. Special education, as determined by the eligible agency;
- c. Secondary school credit;
- d. Integrated education and training;
- e. Career pathways;
- f. Concurrent enrollment;
- g. Peer tutoring; and
- h. Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.

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

Maine Adult Education has a strong collaboration with correctional institutions and has increased both educational programming and instructor professional development opportunities within the past two years. Examples of this partnership include recent efforts between local adult education programs and department of corrections facilities to enhance coordination and delivery of educational and career pathway programming. As a result of this integrated Career Planning process, adult education programs providing services to Maine county jails have educational programs that are aligned, are using the same assessment tools, and are entering data in the State's adult education longitudinal data system, MaineSTARS. Adult Education services are available in state prisons, county correctional institutions, local jails, youth facilities and reentry centers. AEFLA funds are used to provide educational programming to eligible learners in the following areas: adult basic education, literacy, English language acquisition, adult secondary school completion and high school equivalency preparation, college transition, integrated education and training, and workforce preparation. Individuals expected to be released within five years receive priority of service. As of June 30, 2015 there were 998 individuals registered in MaineSTARS who were identified as being a student in a correctional facility. To better serve incarcerated individuals, Maine Adult Education is committed to making the partnership with corrections even stronger by focusing efforts on:

- o Increasing support and attention to reentry activities. Priority will be given to those who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program. Of those currently incarcerated in local and county jails, 100 percent are scheduled to leave the facility within five years. For those in DOC facilities, 90 percent were sentenced to five years or less. When all sentences to DOC are averaged, the average length of incarceration is 18 months.
- o Increasing capacity to serve low level learners. DOC has recently undertaken the goal of administering the CASAS appraisal in math and reading as part of the intake process for all prisoners entering the system. Currently 76 percent of prisoners tested were below the CASAS score of 236 in math and below 236 in reading. There is a need for more intensive service and supports to enable these learners to advance to Adult Secondary Education (ASE low).
- o Enhancing access to College and Career Readiness educational opportunities and workforce preparation activities.
- o Expanding access to support services that enable these individuals to transition to full,

productive members of our communities. Prisoners in Prerelease are served in five facilities that offer educational programming that offer them the opportunity to earn a high school credential. In 2014, 400 incarcerated individuals earned their high school equivalency credential. Depending on the facility, there are also a variety of vocational programs. Building on the successful integration of educational services, attention will now be given to increasing advising and career pathways services. As part of those career pathways services, WorkReady, a standards-based employment skills program leading to a state recognized credential is presently offered in the Maine State Prison, Maine Correctional Center, Bolduc Correctional Facility, and the Southern Maine Reentry Center as well as six county jails. To reduce recidivism, the goals of the adult education and DOC partnership includes a continued emphasis on an integrated and aligned approach to program services and skills training opportunities to ease the stress of transitioning back into the community, and to create a gentle handoff approach. Maine Adult Education is committed to increasing the integrated, professional development opportunities available to all workforce development partners, including corrections. At the same time, the Department of Corrections made the commitment to have its educational programs meet all the performance standards of an approved adult education program. Efforts to intensify the integration of professional development between adult education and corrections included a daylong Maine Corrections Education Forum. The forum brought together Corrections and Adult Education personnel and resulted in the establishment of several integrated workgroups charged with the mission of improving the coordination of intake, assessment, and reentry efforts between the agencies. For the first time in memory, DOC also organized an Education Steering Committee to bring state staff together for planning and training. Corrections personnel are invited to, and attend adult education professional development programs offered by the state office. Topics have included training in College and Career Readiness Standards, Maine College Transitions, high school equivalency preparation, and MaineSTARS. The Department of Corrections has also contracted with local adult education programs to provide assessment services in two of its "unfenced" prerelease centers, with plans in place to contract for those services at the remaining centers. Corrections educational personnel also attend, and present at the Maine Adult Education Association Annual Conference. To further establish successful alignment with adult education the Maine Department of Corrections Education Steering Committee also chose to use the Career Pathways Plan format and process as a strategic planning tool as they restructure educational programs for the State's correctional facilities. Additional Information:

AEFLA funds have been made available to corrections in two ways: through the same RFP process used for all eligible providers and as part of the funding allocated to local providers who provide services at correctional facilities. In the upcoming FY17 competition, there will be a separate application process for use by solely correctional providers. In addition, in the standard RFP, special consideration will be given to eligible applicants that indicate serving incarcerated individuals who will be released within five years of participation as a priority area. As part of the application process, correctional facilities will make clear the academic instructional areas they will focus on and how services will be delivered.

As described in the preceding paragraphs, the Office of Adult Education and Family Literacy work very collaboratively with the correctional education providers. There is cross training and professional development for instructors working with incarcerated individuals. Academic and career advising is offered, student learning plans are developed and employability skills are available in addition to academic instruction. Corrections data is entered into the statewide adult education data management system. The partners work together to increase the number of secondary credentials earned and to facilitate transition to postsecondary educational opportunities and employment.

Revision. In the upcoming FY17 competition there will be one RFP for adult education services, any eligible provider of demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult literacy instruction and services to incarcerated and other institutionalized individuals is eligible to compete for AEFLA funds.

D. INTEGRATED ENGLISH LITERACY AND CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL ESTABLISH AND OPERATE INTEGRATED ENGLISH LITERACY AND CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAMS UNDER SECTION 243 OF WIOA, FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS WHO ARE ADULTS, INCLUDING PROFESSIONALS WITH DEGREES AND CREDENTIALS IN THEIR NATIVE COUNTRIES.

Under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Maine's federal EL Civics grant was divided between the two major resettlement communities of Portland and Lewiston and served over 300 students annually. However, due to the influx of immigrants and refugees to adult education programs throughout the state, many English language learners have benefitted from braided federal, state, local and private grant dollars and received English language and citizenship services. There are a few Maine models in place where EL Civics programs combined with educational and training initiatives to award credentials and prepare participants for employment with local businesses. In the spirit of WIOA, adult education, New Mainers Resource Center, postsecondary institutions and Catholic Charities are working to address the foreign-earned credential issue.

Additional Information Immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers currently tend to take up residence in a few of Maine's larger communities where there are more access points to services as well as opportunities for employment. Given these conditions, it is reasonable to expect that current service providers who offered EL/Civics activities in the past under WIA will be prepared to establish Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education combined with integrated education and training activities. Due to the variety of other agencies providing support services to English language learners in areas where targeted population reside, there should be new providers interested in competing for the IEL/CE IET funds. Eligible agencies must be able to demonstrate effectiveness through the application narrative and data of their experience working with adults in assessing level of need of English language and literacy acquisition and providing civics education to develop appropriate contextualized and concurrent instruction. The narrative will also address instructional modalities, delivering adequate intensity of instruction, advisement, and engagement of appropriate partners to meet program goals. Citizenship curriculum should include a combination of on-and-off site instruction and the use of authentic materials (employment applications, review of actual job postings, medical forms) to help learners be successful in their roles as workers, family members and citizens. The program should also include details on how it will deliver such information as housing, consumerism and civic engagement, tenants' rights and responsibilities, safe use of appliances and utilities and reading posters about community events. There should be a description of how financial literacy will be addressed. In preparation for the citizenship assessment, applicants must describe how instruction in US history, vocabulary, and reading, writing, speaking and interviewing will be delivered in a civics context along with preparation for the citizenship test. In addition, prospective providers should also demonstrate in their application narrative and with data their successful experience working with local employers and postsecondary partners in meeting the employment and educational goals of program participants. The application narrative will also address how their program will align with workforce needs identified by the local workforce board.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL FUND, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF TITLE II, SUBTITLE C, INTEGRATED ENGLISH LITERACY AND CIVICS EDUCATION SERVICES AND HOW THE FUNDS WILL BE USED FOR THOSE SERVICES.

Included in the AEFLA Request for Proposals will be the requirement for applicants to explain how they will assist immigrants and other English language learners meet the integration of education, English literacy, civics education and training activities as described in Section 243 of title II. In adherence to the Thirteen Considerations on eligibility, the grant review process will take into consideration whether or not the applicant is located in an area that has a demonstrated need for additional English language acquisition programs and civics education programs.

Additional Information The establishment of English Literacy and Civics Education programs under Section 243 of WIOA will follow the same announcement of competition, state procurement procedures, application process and timeline as for the AEFLA grant. This will help ensure that all prospective eligible applicants have access to the same RFP information. How the applicant plans to meet the expectation of Section 243, which integrates English literacy, including English language services, and instruction in the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic partnership with integrated education and training activities will be detailed in the proposal narrative. Applicants must clearly explain their plan to provide contextualized and concurrent literacy, civics education and workforce training coursework that has been designed to prepare ELLs for and place them in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to self-sufficiency and integrate with the local workforce board development system.

E. STATE LEADERSHIP

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT THE REQUIRED STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA.

There is a precedent for collaboration, coordination and alignment of services amongst core and one-stop partners in Maine. For the last three years the Commissioners of Labor, Education and Health and Human Services have met monthly to address alignment of services. At the state level, adult education and postsecondary leaders are working together to address the issue of adult degree completion and identify what each institution can do to help solve the problem. The establishment of career pathways is seen as the most viable solution for creating awareness of employment and relevant training/education opportunities. Local adult education administrators have already been meeting with their colleagues from workforce development, DHHS and other support service agencies to collaboratively address local needs. Regional and state level training has been held to assist the groups in working cooperatively. One challenge to address is the inconsistent level of participation and effectiveness across the state. Currently, local adult education programs are required to have authentic, working MOUs in place with their area workforce and support service providers as well as with postsecondary institutions to satisfy that the requirements of the Career Pathway Plan. The commitment of the core partners to agency and program alignment has been a guiding principal throughout the past 11 months of working together. As a result of that commitment, Collaborating with core programs is clearly identified as a critical component of each Strategic Objective in the Unified Plan. Overarching strategies to align the core programs are found on pages 55 and 56 of the Unified Plan. Adult Education leadership funds will be directed to efforts that bring state and local administrators and staff from the core partners together for cross training on implementation of the workforce development system as outlined in the Unified State Plan, referrals, intake, orientation, common assessments, development of actionable and meaningful MOUs, data sharing, and other transition services. B) The establishment and operation of high quality professional development programs to improve instruction provided pursuant to required local activities, including instruction incorporating the essential components of reading instruction as such components relate to adults, instruction related to the specific needs of adult learners, instruction provided by volunteers or by personnel, and dissemination of information about models and promising practices related to such programs. The goal of Maine Adult Education's professional development system is to provide Maine's adult educators with the skills and supports they need to assimilate new learning and effectively implement new content/strategies. Technical assistance is delivered in a collegial environment that is intellectually stimulating, builds confidence, and values the participants. This type of continuous improvement model supports instructors, staff and administrators in their development of professional and leadership skills that in turn, maximizes the potential for success of the adults they serve. To make the most efficient use of leadership funds, a variety of professional development formats and delivery systems are utilized, including:

- Investing in a teacher-trainer model that builds local capacity;
- Supporting a State office professional development coordinator who creates, delivers, brokers and shares professional development and training opportunities for both paid and volunteer instructional staff;
- Offering a variety of delivery platforms. Webinars, video-conferences, blended learning formats, asynchronous courses, and regional meetings are used to help overcome the geographic challenges of delivering statewide training in a large, rural, state;
- Developing and supporting educational leadership in programs in order to build the capacity of administrators to effectively lead their staff and manage their programs;
- Using the State's adult education listserv to disseminate information about regional and national training opportunities, articles of interest, and encourage discourse and sharing of best practice among practitioners; and
- Utilizing the Maine Professional Development Portal, a web-based tool

used to list professional development opportunities, register participants and serve as a repository for participant transcripts (www.pdportal.maineadulted.org)

The goal of Maine Adult Education's professional development system is to provide Maine's adult educators with the skills and supports they need to be intellectually stimulated, have confidence in their abilities, and feel valued, all within a collegial atmosphere. This type of continual learning environment supports instructors, staff and administrators in their development of professional and leadership skills that in turn, maximize the potential for success of the adults they serve. Each year local programs survey staff to determine professional development needs. The results become part of the annual Career Pathways Plan that is submitted to the State. The State office uses the survey results to address the locally identified needs. In addition, the State office offers training in best practices to address areas of weakness evident from program monitoring and to align with federal adult education initiatives. Targeted professional development is planned to address the areas of CCR standards, distance learning and technology integration, IET, instructional strategies, use of data for program improvement and decision making, college transitions, IEL/Civics, and employability skills.

C) The provision of technical assistance to eligible providers of adult education and literacy activities receiving funds under this title, including –

- i. The development and dissemination of instructional and programmatic practices based on the most rigorous or scientifically valid research available and appropriate in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition programs, distance education, and staff training; Based on needs assessment of local program professional development surveys and compliance with federal and state requirements, MAE will offer training opportunities in rigorous and scientifically valid instructional practices and learning theories, data collection and management, assessment, academic and career advising, job skills and college transition. Technical assistance is also planned in:
 - CCRS implementation as approved in Maine's CCR–SIA Sustainability Plan
 - Research–based professional development in mathematics. Maine trained its first Adult Numeracy Instruction (ANI) cohort in SY2014–2015 and plans to train another ANI cohort along with another cohort focusing on algebraic concepts. ANI addresses all content strands at all levels: incorporating increasingly sophisticated concepts of number sense; geometry; data, statistics, and graphs; and algebra at each level of math instruction. Recent research has identified conceptual understanding in mathematics as a key concept in mastering the College and Career Readiness Standards. Technical assistance to address this will be provided to help instructors promote conceptual understanding with their adult students at all levels of mathematics.
 - Research–based professional development in reading. Maine will implement the Reading Apprenticeship Program (RAP), a research–based and research–proven instructional framework for improving adult reading. Through a train the trainer model, instructor capacity will be built in the essential components of reading instruction or the explicit and systematic instruction including the following: phonemic awareness; phonics; vocabulary development; reading fluency, including oral reading skills; and reading comprehension strategies. Maine will expand (currently 15) the number of local programs using Student Achievement in Reading (STAR). STAR supports evidence–based reading instruction, which integrates research–based principles with practitioner experience. Maine has one nationally certified STAR trainer (and will add a second) who provides STAR training to participating programs and to new instructors and programs. Regional booster trainings and follow–up support are provided around the state.
 - Research–based professional development in writing. The state will expand professional development for instructors regarding the rigors of writing to meet college and career readiness standards.
- ii. The role of eligible providers as a one–stop partner to provide access to employment, education, and training services – The core partners are committed to cross agency professional development efforts at both the state and local levels. Steps will be taken to ensure that staff at all agencies is informed of partner services and able to help adults seamlessly access employment and workforce services. and,
- iii. Assistance in the use of technology, including for staff training, to eligible providers, especially the use of technology to improve system efficiencies. Maine Adult Education will continue to make use

of technology to provide instruction and professional development. Local programs already use video conferencing technology to instruction students in their programs and also those adults enrolled who live in other parts of the state. Technical assistance will be made available related to the use and instructional possibilities of such equipment and also in the development of effective online courses and culture. Maine Adult Education also has access, availability and expertise with technology that surpasses the other partners. Adult education will provide technical assistance opportunities to the core partners for greater efficiency in serving clients. D) The monitoring and evaluation of the quality of, and the improvement in, adult education and literacy activities and the dissemination of information about models and proven promises within the State. Maine Adult Education implements a Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process for evaluating adult education programs. Conducted under a case management model with local programs divided amongst state staff, the monitoring process consists of three key components: on-going, data-based desk audits; educational program reviews; and on-site program monitoring. The case management approach results in deepened relationships between the state office and with local programs as well as better overall understanding of the programs. Annual Evaluations The State Office reviews each program for compliance with the Maine State Legislature's definition (LD 1780) of adult education as a system of career pathways services. Local programs annually complete Career Pathways Plans to detail how their programs will meet career pathways requirements. In addition to meeting the WIOA definition of Career Pathway, the Career Pathways plan is also aligned to AEFLA's Thirteen Considerations. Programs that aren't rigorously meeting Career Pathways Plan components are given additional technical assistance to help them to come into full compliance. Data-based Desk Audits Student performance data and other program information are reviewed regularly by the adult education state office data coordinator. This data review guides ongoing conversations with local programs. All programs receiving AEFLA or state funds must enter student data at least monthly into MaineSTARS, an NRS compliant managed information system. Local programs must collect and document student information regarding student goals, educational functioning level, progress and achievements. Programs review their data at least quarterly to ensure completeness, accuracy and to determine their standing progress in regards to projected program outcome targets. MaineSTARS generates annual reports on student performance measures for National Reporting Service measures. The State data coordinator creates and distributes program specific report cards which compare local program data with state targets. On-site Reviews The State Office conducts on-site reviews at least every five years using a peer participant model guided by a review instrument tailored to programs funded by AEFLA. The on-site program reviews provide an additional effective tool for continuous improvement. The key benefits of this monitoring strategy are: Self-assessment by local programs, Cross fertilization of information for best practices and strategies, Development of baseline for program improvement, and Staff development and technical assistance. An on-site visit may also be triggered based on the Maine Adult Education Risk-based Monitoring System indicators.

Additional Information

The Maine Department of Education Office of Adult Education and Family Literacy uses 12.5 percent of the AEFLA grant funds under Section 223 to provide professional development and technical assistance to service providers.

To enhance communication, collaboration and alignment of services with core partners, a member of the Office of Adult Education state team will participate as a member of the One-Stop operator partners group in each of the three local workforce board areas. The state director of adult education and the data/secondary completion coordinator will also serve on the state plan implementation committee. Leadership funds will be used to help support cross-training of workforce partner staff on the missions and services of each partner. WIOA 101 trainings will focus on building cross agency understanding of intake, orientations, eligibility, referrals, academic and vocational assessments and well as the missions, guiding principles and legislation under which each program operates. This knowledge is foundational to determining how to move forward to joint programming and integration of services.

In the preceding pages, the breadths of professional development activities that will be offered are reviewed. Topics for professional development are determined based on the annual submission by local service providers of their professional development needs. These needs are then prioritized and appropriate PD activities are designed and delivered. To overcome the challenges of Maine's large geographic area, professional development is delivered in a variety of modalities. Statewide and regional face-to-face trainings are offered as well as technology assisted offerings delivered through webinars, blended classes, and/or solely distance learning courses in both asynchronous and synchronous formats.

In addition to the professional development topics already mentioned, technical assistance will be made available on: math concepts; developing and delivering career infused curricula; the understanding of adult learners developed primarily for new teachers of adults through participation in book study groups; integrating college and career readiness content standards into the English language acquisition classroom; delivery of a series of interviews with instructors in successful college transition programs to share their best practices; an annual college transitions conference; semi-annual meetings for directors to develop their knowledge growth in the area of instructional leadership and WIOA requirements in order to better support instructors; and an academy for new local service provider agency directors.

Monthly Data Driven webinars focusing on collecting, analyzing, using and reporting data to ensure accurate student data and continuous improvement will be delivered to assist local service providers in learning how to more effectively monitor their own progress by better understanding their data. Through ongoing desk audits at the state level, the state adult education team will be more quickly able to address local data issues. In addition, the state office liaison to local programs will engage in ongoing conversations related to progress in meeting state benchmarks and local program career pathways goals. These steps will help inform next steps for professional development and technical assistance.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT PERMISSIBLE STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA, IF APPLICABLE.

(2) Permissible Activities A) The support of State or regional networks of literacy resource centers. Maine adult education leadership funds are used primarily to fund a state level professional development coordinator position and to implement the train the trainer model for required trainers. The state office has found this to be a much more effective system in terms of costs and use of resources than the former centralized literacy resource center. The current model will continue as it has demonstrative effective in building capacity. Local adult education programs are also grouped into regional alliances. The state supports the professional development needs within specific alliances through customized training. B) The development and implementation of technology applications, translation technology, or distance education, including professional development to support the use of instructional technology. Maine uses instructional technology as a conventional and standard modality for delivering professional development. Using an industry recognized learning management system, traditional professional development content is being translated into blended, synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities. The state office is modeling effective integration of instructional technology and supporting training for practitioners ready to incorporate this modality into instructional practice. Additionally, the state office has partnered with the Center for Applied Special Technology, or CAST. CAST is a recognized leader in the field of Universal Design for Learning. This partnership involves consultation and training in creating and delivering digital learning experiences that expand access to learning for all individuals. The state office and local programs also partner with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services. C) Developing and disseminating curricula, including curricula incorporating the essential components of reading instruction as such components relate to adults. Maine adult education is currently building capacity by training local teacher leaders in the research-based programs of STAR Reading and Reading Apprenticeship. Both programs are research-based and meet the highest standards for reliability and validity. Because Maine is a local control state and educational statutes assert it is the right of local school units and not the state to develop and/or adopt curricula, the adult education state office does not disseminate curricula, but does make recommendations and provide high quality professional growth opportunities. D) Developing content and models for integrated education and training and career pathways. For the last three years Maine adult education programs have been using a template to capture how they will address the components of a career pathways system. Extensive training was offered initially to convert the programs to this new service delivery approach. Plans are updated and submitted for approval each year. Local programs are now working with postsecondary partners and local workforce boards to determine appropriate alignment of educational pathways to career pathways. In 2015–2016, five local programs piloted IET activities. These pilots will be evaluated and presented to the field to take IET to scale. E) The provision of assistance to eligible providers in developing and implementing programs that achieve the objectives of this title and in measuring the progress of those programs in achieving such objectives, including meeting the State adjusted levels of performance described in section 116(b)(3). State assistance is provided to local programs to address required data elements and to implement best practices that will ensure measuring progress accurately. Monthly DATA DRIVEN webinars will be conducted by the state adult education data coordinator as well as regular in-person trainings to address data professional development needs as necessary. Program monitoring is also conducted and includes local site visits and real-time desk audits. Required data reports identify problems as they arise to ensure timely assistance is given to eligible providers. Funding to eligible providers is based on program outcomes including overall educational gain percentages and employment and college placement outcomes as defined in WIOA section 116 (b)(3). F) The development and implementation of a system to assist in the transition from adult education to postsecondary

education, including linkages with postsecondary educational institutions or institutions of higher education. The Maine College Transitions Program (MCT) is accessible to adults at all 76 local program sites. MCT offers college preparatory coursework and additional supports to learners. These include integrating academic advising and career planning services, financial aid assistance, college planning and tours, and ACCUPLACER testing. G) Integration of literacy and English language instruction with occupational skill training, including promoting linkages with employers. For the last two years Portland Adult Education has been operating a New Mainers Resource Center. They were integrating language and occupational skills while working with employers before they knew there was IEL/Civics combined with IET. The success of these programs will be shared with other local programs in our attempts to bring this model to scale in areas where there are enough English language learners.

H) Activities to promote workplace adult education and literacy activities. Maine adult education has offered a Department of Education WorkReady certificate since 2000. This 60–hours standards based curricula was prepared in cooperation with local workforce boards and employers. The core curricula can be enhanced with the addition of hard skills to fit the needs of specific employers. The program is offered by trained facilitators at a number of locations such as adult education programs, career centers, correctional facilities, high schools, career and technical education sites, and social service offices. The next area of focus for FY 2016–2018 is to broaden the approach to focus on employability skills and the embedding of these skills in all instructional areas. I) Identifying curriculum frameworks and aligning rigorous content standards that – i. specify what adult learners should know and be able to do in the areas of reading and language arts, mathematics, and English language acquisition; and take into consideration the following: state adopted academic standards; the current adult skills and literacy assessments used in the state or outlying area; the primary indicators of performance described in section 116; standards and academic requirements for enrollment in non–remedial, for–credit courses in postsecondary educational institutions or institutions of higher education supported by the state or outlying area; where appropriate, the content of occupational and industry skills standards widely used by business and industry in the state or outlying area. In 2014, Maine Adult Education adopted the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) with the goal of statewide integration into instructional practices by SY2016–17. These standards focus on high–level reading skills, critical thinking, comprehension of concepts, and applications to real world situations. In mathematics, this looks like mastering underlying concepts, procedures, and applications of math to real world problems. Math lessons are coherent as students develop skills, building on previous knowledge. In ELA/literacy, CCRS manifests itself in teaching for complexity, evidence and knowledge with more complex tests, confirming that students identify evidence in the text to support their ideas and responses. In English language acquisition, local programs are striving to support students in achievement of functional levels of literacy and numeracy that will enable them to gain employment and postsecondary training. State stress will now be on sustainability of CCRS concepts in programs where all teachers are training and becoming more adept and integrating these standards in their curricula and lessons. All local adult education programs in Maine are required to use CASAS tools for student assessment of educational functioning level and diagnostics. CASAS pretesting and post testing are used to document educational gain as described in Section 116 as a primary indicator of performance. Additional assessments include the CASAS Employability, ACCUPLACER and HiSET equivalency test to provide specialized diagnostic information for college and career readiness and high school equivalency. The goal of the Maine College Transition program is to transition adults into postsecondary without the need for remedial courses once they enroll. Local programs will be trained to develop courses and experiences that address being successful in the college culture, possessing sufficient levels of digital literacy, and how to finance postsecondary education and/or training in a responsible way. These topics are in response to requests from our postsecondary partners. In response to needs expressed by postsecondary partners. Additionally, within the Maine

Department of Education, the dialogue between adult education and Career and Technical Education will be expanded to allow for the exploration of career pathways and additional vocational inventories in advising adult learners. The Maine Unified Plan also points to new partnerships and activities between adult education and the Maine Department of Labor that will include cross agency professional development to enhance collaboration and alignment. J) Developing and piloting of strategies for improving teacher quality and effectiveness. Maine has developed two opportunities to orient new practitioners to the adult education profession. An asynchronous online course, Navigating the Waters of Maine Adult Education, offers a broad overview of the adult education landscape in Maine to new teachers, administrators and support staff. An extension activity of this course will be a book study launching Fall 2016 of the New Teacher of Adults, authored by two of Maine's leaders in adult education, Dr. E. Michael Brady and longtime adult education instructor and program director Allen Lampert. This four week study will build a community of practice for new practitioners and encourage dialog and sharing of best practices among the participants. Additionally, members of the state team, the PD Coordinator and the Director of Special Projects, have been following and attending the Teacher Induction Toolkit offered through LINCS with the intent to pilot the Induction Toolkit in 2017. K) The development and implementation of programs and services to meet the needs of adult learners with learning disabilities or English language learners, which may include new and promising assessments tools and strategies that are based on scientifically valid research, where appropriate, and identify the needs and capture the gains of such students at the lowest achievement levels. Partnerships are crucial in guaranteeing equal access to all learners and in providing high quality services to meet the needs of adult learners with disabilities and those at the most basic literacy levels. As core partners, the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services and Adult Education work more closely to cross develop an effective referral system and train staff to use it appropriately. Planning is already underway for the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services to provide professional development for eligible providers including accessibility workshops directed to local adult education program staff. The state office of adult education provides CASAS diagnostic training to help all eligible providers to identify skill needs to target instruction and increase the academic gains of learners at the most basic levels. Strengthening partnerships with Literacy Volunteers and the Barbara Bush Family Literacy Foundation will continue to be a focus to help local programs access both services and professional development opportunities. Literacy volunteers provide one-on-one learner instructional support to eligible providers. The Barbara Bush Literacy Foundation provides training opportunities including a day long literacy conference targeted to local adult education providers. L) Outreach to instructors, students, and employers. Due to its large geographic size and areas of low population density, Maine adult education will expand its outreach to instructors, students and employers through increased uses of technology. A professional development portal is maintained with current professional growth opportunities and training events. Practitioners can learn about, register, and track their professional growth experiences through this digital interface. The state office is developing a pilot for a calendaring and organizational feature that will enable users to see several months of planned activities at a glance. The offerings will be coded by professional role and by educational strand (i.e. foundational skills, English language acquisition, secondary, and workforce). A Maine Adult Education listserv, moderated by the state team, is a communication board where upcoming events, professional discourse, and relevant news and articles are posted and distributed to practitioners. Professional development on increasing the use of social media at the local program level to reach students will also be supported. A partnership with the Finance Authority of Maine on a marketing campaign designed to target students and inform them of postsecondary transition opportunities will be put into place. Coordinated outreach to employers revolves around core partnerships where a common objective is to sustain Maine's commitment to aligning resources with employer-identified needs. Both the state office and local programs will need to receive training on the tools being developed by the Maine Department of Labor to fulfill this commitment. Examples of these next steps are the annual job vacancy surveys that identify and quantify skill gaps and then align and guide local education efforts accordingly and

implementation of an outreach campaign that provides information on accessing workforce development services and resources including analysis of skill gaps, joint staff development with core partners and apprenticeship models. Local workforce development boards are key to coordinating the outreach efforts. M) Other activities of statewide significance that promote the purpose of this title.

1. The state team special projects coordinator will sit on the one-stop centers service provider committee for each local workforce board. This step expands the partnership between the state office and the local workforce boards in sharing information and alignment of services on a statewide basis. This is in addition to the inclusion of a local literacy program director on the board of each local workforce area.
2. Developing the capacity of the adult education professional development portal to display professional development opportunities offered by the other core partners. This major step will facilitate the deliberate cross training of staff and well as informally when staff chose a core partner professional development opportunity that fits their needs.
3. Active engagement of the state adult education office in the Adult Degree Completion Committee. This group, comprised of representatives from the university and community college system offices, philanthropy, industry and private groups, has as its purpose to increase the number of adults in Maine earning degrees and certifications. Involvement in this group will ensure the interests of thousands of Maine adults who need foundational skills to access postsecondary remain a part of the planning process as solutions and strategies are developed.

F. ASSESSING QUALITY

Describe how the eligible agency will assess the quality of providers of adult education and literacy activities under title II and take actions to improve such quality, including providing the activities described in section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA.

Local providers are required to meet all of the standards established in the RFP and in the Career Pathways plans. Ongoing desk monitoring informs the state regarding program progress. In addition, timely progress reports must be submitted. If a local program does not meet performance goals, reporting schedules, budget adherence, or delivery of funded services, the state office steps in to determine what steps might be needed for program improvement. Depending on the severity and type of quality issue(s) being addressed, a program might be involved in an improvement plan or a corrective action plan. An improvement plan program includes action steps a program must take to address items that are generally related to how the program is being operationalized and outcomes. The Corrective action plan is for more serious issues of state or federal non-compliance. The provider involved in a corrective action plan must should provide a response within 30 calendar days of the request and once approved, begin corrective steps.

Additional Information

As explained in Section (D) on monitoring and evaluation, the State Office conducts data-based desk audits and annual evaluations to assess the quality of services being provided. By accessing the managed information system, desk audits are conducted for each program to check for compliance to Maine's approved assessment policy as well as other state policies and rules. In addition, there is a risk-based monitoring protocol in place. Factors which prompt a risk-based monitoring visit may include the size of the federal grant, staff turnover, irregularities in financial reports, failure to submit data in a timely manner, and significant changes in performance.

During the quarterly audits, progress toward meeting performance measures is assessed. Emphasis is placed on the number of student attendance hours, educational gain, and post-testing percentage. Expenditures are also reviewed to determine whether or not program expenditures are in line with proposed budgets. If data illustrates that a program is underperforming, follow-up steps are taken that may include additional technical assistance and the development of an improvement plan by the local provider. Providers that fail to successfully deal with deficiencies will be at risk for losing funding. Each local provider is also assigned to a member of the State Office team who is responsible for staying in regular contact with the program, being available to answer questions and to provide resources.

Annual reviews take place with a thorough review of end of year data and narrative reports. Data is compiled for each program and entered into a program report card. Programs that fail to meet their projected outcomes will experience an on-site monitoring visit, participate in an action plan, and be ineligible for incentive funds.

Every three years, local providers are visited by a team of State Office staff, directors and instructors from other service providers. The team conducts a thorough review of student files; financial records; data reports; student intake, orientation practices and educational plans; reviews policies; examines facilities; reviews staff participation in professional development; observes classroom instruction; and meets with representatives of partner programs, instructors and students. The annual visit also provides each provider with the opportunity to highlight their achievements.

Follow-up to the visit includes a report that articulates findings, commendations and recommendations. The follow-up report also contains a list of archived training on NRS reporting, student assessment, high school equivalency administration, and other topics that program administrators may refer to. When remediation might be required, the local program is provided with a timeline for completion of their action plan to address each finding.

Each year local providers survey their staff for professional development needs. The provider then submits a professional development plan to the state office regarding how professional development needs will be addressed. The state office develops professional development offerings in response to those topics that are identified as most needed. In addition to local provider identified professional development needs, the state office also provides training to address federal initiatives, cross-training needs identified by the core partners, and areas of need as identified through desk audits of local data and monitoring visits. Evaluations are administered at the conclusion of each professional development activity to gather feedback and make any necessary adjustments. Student performance data is also used to assess teacher effectiveness and level of implementation of standards and other instructional best practices.

CERTIFICATIONS

States must provide written and signed certifications that

1. The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan. Yes
2. The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program. Yes
3. The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan. Yes
4. All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law. Yes
5. A State officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan. Yes
6. The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan. Yes
7. The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan. Yes
8. The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program. Yes

CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements

The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions.

(3) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, subgrants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly. This certification is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

STATEMENT FOR LOAN GUARANTEES AND LOAN INSURANCE

The undersigned states, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

Applicant's Organization **Maine Department of Education**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Dr. William Beardsley**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Acting Commissioner of Education**

SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (only if applicable)
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>). If applicable, please print, sign, and email to OCTAE_MAT@ed.gov

ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:

1. The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding supplement and not supplant provisions). Yes
2. The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA. Yes
3. The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not “eligible individuals” within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA. Yes
4. The Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be delivered in combination with integrated education and training activities; Yes
5. The Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to (1) prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency and (2) integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program; and Yes
6. Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program. Yes

**PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION
(GENERAL)**

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

* Sec. 102(b)(D)(iii) of WIOA

A. INPUT OF STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

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

1. INPUT PROVIDED BY THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, INCLUDING INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN, RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL'S REPORT, THE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION, AND OTHER COUNCIL REPORTS THAT MAY HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED AS PART OF THE COUNCIL'S FUNCTIONS;

Section (c) Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Development System

SRC: Why is the DOC MOU listed as in progress? Hasn't DVR been working with DOC for several years in terms of identifying pre-release individuals who qualify for VR? When will the MOU be completed?

(J) Statewide Assessment

SRC: The advocacy and advice of Client Assistance Program should be included.

(c) Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Development System

SRC: Regarding AgrAbility, the plan states that funding ended in 2014. A new AgrAbility award was secured by University of Maine. Does this plan indicate that DVR funding for AgrAbility support has ended?

(d) Coordination with Education Officials

SRC: Without exception, once a DVR client, DVR has 90 days to develop the IPE. This cannot be contingent on the student leaving school as implied in this section.

(d) Coordination with Education Officials

SRC: DVR should not be determining the appropriateness of a referral. The onus of long term support should be on DVR not the school.

(d) Coordination with Education Officials

SRC: How often does this occur?

(d) Coordination with Education Officials

SRC: Is this in compliance with WIOA?

(G) Coordination with Employers

SRC: Business Relations Specialist – plan indicates position has not been filled and duties have been suspended. Will this position be filled, and if not, how will DVR work to expand/improve outreach to businesses?

(H) Interagency Cooperation SRC: Training for Employment Specialists is offered a limited number of times during the year in Maine. Is there a plan to increase the number of ACRE trainings offered?

(H) Interagency Cooperation

SRC: Why has DVR decided to suspend the mentoring program?

(H) Interagency Cooperation

SRC: Why is the limited data from MDOL's unemployment insurance "the only data available"? What other options have been explored?

(H) Interagency Cooperation

SRC: In section on "Interagency Support of Benefits Counseling": Additionally through its collaboration with DHHS and specifically the coordination of Maine's benefits counseling network DVR has been able to develop opportunities and overcome barriers to competitive integrated employment for individuals with visual impairments who are eligible for MaineCare, the State's Medicaid program." How are these individuals being served through DBVI? What role does DVR play?

(I) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

SRC: Regarding high rate of turnover among VRC's (and other staff), DVR should consider adding a goal to address high turnover among VRC's. While retirement is an issue and certainly state pay for VRC's is lower than VRC's can make in the private sector, DVR must identify other ways to retain VRC's.

(I) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

SRC: Why is VR not reporting the number of VR counselor positions that were replaced in 2015?

(I) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

SRC: The projected number of the VRC II positions seems accurate if we are only looking at retirements; this number would be much higher if you looked at other factors such as resignations for other opportunities or medical leaves.

(I) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

SRC: How many rehab counselors were hired in FY 2015 and how many of those were fully qualified?

(I) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

SRC: Please elaborate on "offering personnel development opportunities that enhance the work environment and support service delivery." Has DVR examined with HR offering alternative work schedules, flexible scheduling, vacation, retirement options etc.? Has DVR developed any creative solutions to retaining and recruiting staff?

(J) Statewide Assessment

SRC: Please discuss in detail the "best practices" that emerged from the June 2015 review of the DVR Service Delivery System (Process Mapping).

(K) Annual Estimates

SRC: The State plan estimates that 20% of clients will be OOS 3 which would equate to 2000 clients. The state plan indicates that DVR is not in an order of selection for FY 16. This needs to be corrected to reflect that DVR has entered into an order of selection for category 3.

(K) Annual Estimates

SRC: The State Plan states that \$1.8 million is allocated to serve category 3. Given the waitlist in this category, will all of these funds go to serving category 3 or will some be rolled into categories 1 & 2?

(L) State Goals and Priorities (Goal 1)

SRC: Given the wait list in category 3 and a delay in realizing successful closures for transition students, would it be reasonable to decrease goal of successful closures? What are the expected numbers for 2017–2020?

(L) State Goals and Priorities (Goal 2)

SRC: Add "and significant disabilities" after "To serve all individuals with the most significant disabilities."

(M) Order of Selection

SRC: This reflects that, again DVR believes they're able to continue to serve all categories. Please edit to reflect waitlist.

(O) State's Strategies (Goal 1)

SRC: This goal is somewhat confusing. It does not indicate the goal for 2016 through 2018.

(O) State's Strategies (Goal 1 Objective 3)

SRC: Include a strategy that more closely tracks the effectiveness of both CRP's and the outcome based payment system. CRP's are no longer required to submit reports to VRC's or their clients; it may be helpful for all if CRP reports were required again.

(O) State's Strategies (Goal 2)

SRC: Please include data to support the statement that the career exploration workshop has been shown to decrease case length time.

(O) State's Strategies (Goal 2 Objective 4)

SRC: Has DVR collected evidence to support a 5% decrease in the statewide unemployment rate of people with intellectual disabilities? Why does this objective only address individuals with intellectual disabilities when Employment First Maine is a cross-disability initiative? (O) State's Strategies (Goal 2 Objective 4)

SRC: Why are there no strategies listed here?

(O) State's Strategies (Goal 3 Objective 2)

SRC: DVR should consider adding strategies for reaching "New Mainers."

(O) State's Strategies (Goal 3 Objective 3)

SRC: Please identify what I SPA is.

(O) State's Strategies (Goals 3, 4 and 5)

SRC: There is a lot of discussion of partnering with the various agencies and the development of MOU's. I am not seeing where or how this information is filtered down to the 65 VRC's.

(O) State's Strategies (Goal 4 Objective 3)

SRC: How will DVR work with WIOA core partners to support them in providing services with a "rehabilitation" component? .

(O) State's Strategies (Goal 4 Objective 4)

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(P) Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals (Goal 1 Objective 2 c)

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SRC: Why has DVR not collected baseline data on the above individuals served?

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General Comments

SRC: The DVR and DBVI State Plans appear to have several sections with exact or similar information. How will DVR and DBVI work together in light of the financial issues that have occurred as well as the strained relations between the two departments during the current year?

SRC: When reading the DVR State Plan, there is little indication that the department has reported a deficit of nearly \$1 million dollars for the current year. Please identify the problem as well as strategies for correcting the problem. Perhaps it would be appropriate to include a goal in this area.

SRC: The DVR draft plan released for public comment was incomplete and contained sections that were cut and pasted erroneously from DBVI state plan.

Section D – Coordination with Education Officials SRC: The SRC recommends increased training and clarification be provided to schools regarding the interagency agreement with VR, and specifically the collaborative role of both agencies in the transition planning process for youth with disabilities. There appears to be a need for increased information and clarification with school departments about the type and nature of Pre–Employment Transition Services which are available from VR, when a referred student becomes a “client” of VR, and the school department’s role in employment planning once VR is involved.

Section H – Interagency Cooperation SRC: The SRC supports and commends DVR in their efforts to foster collaborative relationships and coordinated services with the Office of Aging and Disability Services and the Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services, as well as in connecting VR consumers with Benefits Counseling Services. However, the SRC recommends that DVR undertake outreach efforts with the Office of Family Independence, which is responsible for determining eligibility for MaineCare, Maine’s state Medicaid plan. All services from OADS and SAMHS flow from MaineCare eligibility, and OFI policy changes and initiatives greatly impact service provision and employment outcomes for VR consumers. As such, VR consumers would benefit greatly from education and involvement of OFI officials in the coordination of services to support employment for people with disabilities. The continued absence of this department from all statewide efforts aimed at improving employment outcomes for people with disabilities is concerning.

Section J – Statewide Assessment VR staff turnover remains a challenge and affects clients in significant ways. While entry level salaries for VR counselors remain low and budgetary constraints are unlikely to change, the SRC recommends that DVR examine other strategies for retaining new counselors, including the availability of leadership opportunities, mentoring, or other incentives that may make counselors feel engaged, appreciated, and connected to their workplace.

Section P – Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals

Goal 1: Increase Successful Closures of VR Clients

SRC: Over the past several years, DVR has typically set a goal of increasing employment outcomes over the outcomes of previous years. Those goals have consistently been met, which speaks to the skill and dedication of DVR staff. These are excellent achievements. However, due to the projected budget shortfall, strained staffing resources, and newly entered Order of Selection for Category 3, expecting additional growth in the number of successful closures does not seem like a realistic goal. DVR should consider maintaining the employment outcome goal at the FY15 level, or even decreasing the successful closure number.

SRC: The SRC supports the objective of reducing the number of clients who drop out of services. The high number of clients who drop out of services remains an issue of concern. Towards that end, the SRC supports further policy changes and process streamlining based on the "Process Mapping" Project undertaken by DVR.

Goal 2: To serve all individuals with the most significant disabilities in a timely manner

SRC: The SRC notes that DVR has made significant progress in reducing the "time to plan" for VR clients, although the WIOA timeline of 90 days remains a challenge. We understand that training and projects to further reduce the time to plan are ongoing, and the SRC looks forward to further collaboration and discussion on this issue.

Goal 3: Increase clients from minority and underserved populations

SRC: The SRC requests an update on the status of installing VRI equipment at VR offices and Career Centers. A Request for Proposals on Video Remote Technology (VRI) went out in 2014, yet VRI remains unavailable at all VR and Career Center offices. The delay in implementing this communication access technology is concerning. VRI should be installed and staff trained in using VRI as soon as possible in order to guarantee accessibility to effective communication for Deaf clients. VRI availability will increase access for individuals living in remote areas of the state that are Deaf and have limited access to ASL interpreters. VRI will also increase client access for short or spontaneous meetings.

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

The State Rehabilitation Council for the Maine Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is pleased to offer the following comments to the 2016 VR portion of the Unified State Plan. Section (c) Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Development System

SRC: Why is the DOC MOU listed as in progress? Hasn't DVR been working with DOC for several years in terms of identifying pre-release individuals who qualify for VR? When will the MOU be completed?

AGENCY RESPONSE: In Section C of the Unified State Plan, this has been updated as follows: • Department of Corrections and VR MOU – Procedural Guidance The Maine Department of Labor–Bureau of Rehabilitation Services and the Maine Department of Corrections (DOC) have worked together to establish procedural guidance on collaboration between the two agencies. Work thus far has resulted in two procedural directives outlining how the two agencies will work together to best meet the needs of individuals who are currently incarcerated or on probation and may be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services. In each of the larger offices a DVR staff member has been

identified who serves as the liaison to the correctional agencies in their region. DVR corrections liaisons meet as a group on a quarterly basis with DOC staff to share updates and best practices.

(J) Statewide Assessment

SRC: The advocacy and advice of Client Assistance Program should be included.

AGENCY RESPONSE: Section J (Statewide Assessment) within the Executive Summary includes the following: Demand for community inclusion and access to employment by people with disabilities and their supporters continues to be strong across the country with consumer choice and opportunity for full participation being important for all. The advocacy and advice of the State Rehabilitation Council, Client Assistance Program, and Disability Rights Center, as well as groups such as Maine APSE and the Employment First Coalition, help to ensure that rights are being respected, laws are being followed, and practices are being improved to increase the successful employment of people with disabilities.

(c) Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Development System

SRC: Regarding AgrAbility, the plan states that funding ended in 2014. A new AgrAbility award was secured by University of Maine. Does this plan indicate that DVR funding for AgrAbility support has ended?

AGENCY RESPONSE: Section C (Cooperative Agreements) states the following: DVR does support staff involvement in the USDA's AgrAbility project. In Maine, the AgrAbility project is administered by Alpha One, Goodwill Industries of New England and the University of Maine. The liaison to the project ensures that DVR staff is knowledgeable about AgrAbility and related resources. Grant funding for AgrAbility is ending during 2014 and DVR anticipates development of a fee for service agreement for AgrAbility services.

(d) Coordination with Education Officials

SRC: Without exception, once a DVR client, DVR has 90 days to develop the IPE. This cannot be contingent on the student leaving school as implied in this section.

AGENCY RESPONSE: The language in this section comes from DVR's current Memorandum of Understanding with the Maine Department of Education. The MOU will be updated following the issuance of new regulations under WIOA.

(d) Coordination with Education Officials

SRC: DVR should not be determining the appropriateness of a referral. The onus of long term support should be on DVR not the school.

AGENCY RESPONSE: As above, the language in this section comes from DVR's current Memorandum of Understanding with the Maine Department of Education. This language will be rewritten in the new MOU. In section D (2)(A)3, the following is stated: 3. VR Counselors should be invited to attend IEP meetings for students who have been determined eligible for services, as well as in cases where the presence of the Counselor at the meeting would assist in determining the

appropriateness of a referral to VR. VR Counselors will provide support to the IEP team to facilitate the IEP process as appropriate. DVR will provide information as requested to school personnel on access to "Long Term Support." The statement included here does directly involve the VR Counselor in determining appropriateness of the referral and information on "access" to LTS, not the LTS determination.

(d) Coordination with Education Officials

SRC: How often does this occur?

AGENCY RESPONSE: in response to the question raised regarding the following in section D(2)(A)3: "DOE will provide guidance to schools on the release of information (including assessment, IEP, Summary of Performance etc.) for students who are working with DVR or who are in the eligibility process", DVR has regular communication with Schools and Education personnel by participating in IEP meetings and having a DOE representative on the SRC. Also, in section D(1) of the State Plan, DVR states the following: DVR will provide schools with an orientation video, brochures, and PowerPoint presentation on services for transition-age youth and a representative to serve as a member of the Maine IDEA Part B State Advisory Panel. DVR will also support VR counselors, with transition caseloads to join Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities (MADSEC) and participate in regional and state meetings and training. DVR will provide technical assistance to DOE and school districts on disability-specific information and resources issues and issues concerning eligibility and referral for services as requested. DVR will provide technical assistance and training as requested to DOE and school districts on the Americans with Disabilities Act in conjunction with the State ADA Coordinator. DVR meets monthly with DOE as part of DOE's State Personnel Development Grant's subcommittee on Transition. Additionally, the DVR Assistant Director serves as the Chair of the IDEA Part B State Advisory Panel.

(d) Coordination with Education Officials

SRC: Is this in compliance with WIOA?

AGENCY RESPONSE: This language is from DVR's current MOU which will be updated to reflect changes under WIOA as soon as regulations are released.

(G) Coordination with Employers

SRC: Business Relations Specialist – plan indicates position has not been filled and duties have been suspended. Will this position be filled, and if not, how will DVR work to expand/improve outreach to businesses?

AGENCY RESPONSE: One current position is charged with the responsibility of overseeing the Progressive Employment pilot project and the full-time position is being utilized in a half-time capacity. Maine DVR applied for and is participating in a learning collaborative with the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) to study and determine if the Vermont Progressive Employment model can be replicated in Maine. The Progressive Employment Model is a dual-customer strategy that is designed to assist job-seekers with significant barriers to employment and assist employers who may be averse to hiring employees with disabilities. The model coordinates rehabilitation counseling with job placement and business account management. Key components of Maine's Progressive Employment project will target transition-age youth within southern Maine service areas. Selected Community Rehabilitation

Providers (CRPs) will develop Progressive Employment opportunities within the catchment area identified. These activities include: informational interviews, job shadows, business tours, on-the-job training/apprenticeships and work experiences. Business Development during the pilot project includes identifying potential business leads based on the goals of the individual referrals and contacting the employer; requesting an informational interview; requesting a tour of the business or facility; sharing information about DVR and determining if the employer is willing to allow the Employment Specialist to conduct assessments, informational interviews, job shadows or on-the-job training. The secondary purpose of this business development process, as it is described, is to gain an understanding of the various positions which this business employs and to ascertain the work environment and work culture. CRPs will develop 125 new business contacts during the length of the pilot and the contact information will be added to the list of active partnerships currently in use, which will greatly enlarge our existing global employer network.

A Rehabilitation Consultant works closely with the Bureau of Human Resources to assist eligible individuals with disabilities to access Maine State Government's "Special Appointment" program. DVR has a number of staff with disabilities and provides appropriate accessibility accommodations to support employment. The State of Maine is an Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer.

The CareerCenters also provide a number of other employment programs that serve people with disabilities. The Maine Job Bank is an online accessible CareerCenter tool to allow job seekers from around the state to be matched with real-time available open positions.

Please see Goal 1 of this plan for more information about planned business outreach strategies.

(H) Interagency Cooperation SRC: Training for Employment Specialists is offered a limited number of times during the year in Maine. Is there a plan to increase the number of ACRE trainings offered?

AGENCY RESPONSE: The ACRE trainings are being provided in-person four times per year. A RFP for this work is currently out and it requests that an online option also be available for providers to consider.

(H) Interagency Cooperation

SRC: Why has DVR decided to suspend the mentoring program?

AGENCY RESPONSE: This decision was undertaken by the WDS partners based on the lack of interest by employment specialists and the availability of mentors.

(H) Interagency Cooperation

SRC: Why is the limited data from MDOL's unemployment insurance "the only data available"? What other options have been explored?

AGENCY RESPONSE: DVR is working with MDOL and partners to identify other data sources. Unemployment Insurance is a rich data source, but does miss some workers – particularly those in self-employment, federal employment, or employment out of state.

(H) Interagency Cooperation

SRC: In section on “Interagency Support of Benefits Counseling”: Additionally through its collaboration with DHHS and specifically the coordination of Maine’s benefits counseling network DVR has been able to develop opportunities and overcome barriers to competitive integrated employment for individuals with visual impairments who are eligible for MaineCare, the State’s Medicaid program.” How are these individuals being served through DBVI? What role does DVR play?

AGENCY RESPONSE: Just as DVR clients are able to access Benefits Counseling Services and be served with provisions through MaineCare, DBVI clients are able to participate in and benefit from these services. Some examples of utilizing MaineCare to overcome barriers to employment are mental health counseling; low vision evaluations; personal support services.

(I) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

SRC: Regarding high rate of turnover among VRC’s (and other staff), DVR should consider adding a goal to address high turnover among VRC’s. While retirement is an issue and certainly state pay for VRC’s is lower than VRC’s can make in the private sector, DVR must identify other ways to retain VRC’s.

AGENCY RESPONSE: DVR continuously explores various options for expanding human and fiscal resources. In a climate of economic fluctuations and increasing demands on public service systems, we agree completely that a high priority is creating and identifying ways to retain qualified staff. One of the ways we accomplish this is to support staff, through training and opportunities, to develop their skills as rehabilitation professionals. Also, Maine is now again offering merit or cost of living increases again after being discontinued in 2008. In addition, efforts are made through local and statewide recognition events, to acknowledge the contributions staff makes to improve the lives of Maine people with disabilities.

(I) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

SRC: Why is VR not reporting the number of VR counselor positions that were replaced in 2015?

AGENCY RESPONSE: During FFY 2015, 13 Rehabilitation Counselor II positions were filled. This number includes some individuals who promoted from within the agency as well as new hires from outside state government. One of those 13 was fully qualified at hire.

(I) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

SRC: The projected number of the VRC II positions seems accurate if we are only looking at retirements; this number would be much higher if you looked at other factors such as resignations for other opportunities or medical leaves.

AGENCY RESPONSE: Yes, we concur.

(I) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

SRC: How many rehab counselors were hired in FY 2015 and how many of those were fully qualified?

AGENCY RESPONSE: Please see above.

(I) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

SRC: Please elaborate on "offering personnel development opportunities that enhance the work environment and support service delivery." Has DVR examined with HR offering alternative work schedules, flexible scheduling, vacation, retirement options etc.? Has DVR developed any creative solutions to retaining and recruiting staff?

AGENCY RESPONSE: DVR offers regular training opportunities to agency personnel (employees) for professional development and personal growth. Currently, alternative work schedules and flexible work time is allowed depending on operational need with supervisory approval. All state employees receive paid vacation and sick time and retirement benefit options. Some of the ways DVR has recruited new staff is through our affiliation with Universities and provision of Internship opportunities. The DVR Director sits on the Advisory Board of the University of Southern Maine's Rehabilitation Counseling program, strengthening and coordinating the relationship between the two organizations. DVR invites USM and UMF faculty to participate in training opportunities throughout the year. Maine DVR has offered summer internships to UMF undergraduates to expose them to careers in vocational rehabilitation. UMF does expect to have three to eight students enrolled in their accelerated program beginning in January of 2016. Other means of recruitment are through participating in Regional and National Conferences and being involved with Rehabilitation organizations such as the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR).

(J) Statewide Assessment

SRC: Please discuss in detail the "best practices" that emerged from the June 2015 review of the DVR Service Delivery System (Process Mapping).

AGENCY RESPONSE: DVR is undertaking a targeted project due to be completed by July 2016 to further review and discuss which best practices listed in the report should be adopted and then a plan for how they can be adopted across other offices.

(K) Annual Estimates

SRC: The State plan estimates that 20% of clients will be OOS 3 which would equate to 2000 clients. The state plan indicates that DVR is not in an order of selection for FY 16. This needs to be corrected to reflect that DVR has entered into an order of selection for category 3.

AGENCY RESPONSE: Correct. This change will be made.

(K) Annual Estimates

SRC: The State Plan states that \$1.8 million is allocated to serve category 3. Given the waitlist in this category, will all of these funds go to serving category 3 or will some be rolled into categories 1 & 2?

AGENCY RESPONSE: As above, we have revised this number from an earlier draft of the state plan to reflect the implementation of an Order of Selection.

(L) State Goals and Priorities (Goal 1)

SRC: Given the wait list in category 3 and a delay in realizing successful closures for transition students, would it be reasonable to decrease goal of successful closures? What are the expected numbers for 2017–2020?

AGENCY RESPONSE: DVR is committed to improving services and increasing successful employment outcomes for our customers/clients. While it may be challenging for the next few years and these outcomes will be impacted by changes in legislation and the waitlist, it is our belief that the projected numbers are realistic and achievable.

(L) State Goals and Priorities (Goal 2)

SRC: Add “and significant disabilities” after “To serve all individuals with the most significant disabilities.”

AGENCY RESPONSE: This has been revised in the current draft.

(M) Order of Selection

SRC: This reflects that, again DVR believes they’re able to continue to serve all categories. Please edit to reflect waitlist.

AGENCY RESPONSE: This has been changed in the current draft.

(O) State’s Strategies (Goal 1)

SRC: This goal is somewhat confusing. It does not indicate the goal for 2016 through 2018.

AGENCY RESPONSE: This has been revised in the current draft.

(O) State’s Strategies (Goal 1 Objective 3)

SRC: Include a strategy that more closely tracks the effectiveness of both CRP’s and the outcome based payment system. CRP’s are no longer required to submit reports to VRC’s or their clients; it may be helpful for all if CRP reports were required again.

AGENCY RESPONSE: DVR plans to review data and information regarding how the outcome based payment system has been working during early 2016. The SRC will be provided with this information as well and offered an opportunity to provide feedback to it. Depending on this review, there may be some changes to this system.

(O) State’s Strategies (Goal 2)

SRC: Please include data to support the statement that the career exploration workshop has been shown to decrease case length time.

AGENCY RESPONSE: Updating CEW data is part of the current process mapping resource project. DVR is examining how increasing efficiency in career exploration can support meeting the requirement to move clients into plans within 90 days. Another promising data point is that for individuals who completed the CEW and then reached a successful employment outcome – the average case cost was nearly \$600 less compared to similar successful case closures without use of the CEW.

(O) State's Strategies (Goal 2 Objective 4)

SRC: Has DVR collected evidence to support a 5% decrease in the statewide unemployment rate of people with intellectual disabilities? Why does this objective only address individuals with intellectual disabilities when Employment First Maine is a cross-disability initiative?

AGENCY RESPONSE: DVR is mandated to prioritize services to serve those with the greatest significance of disability. Individuals with intellectual disabilities have historically experienced substantial barriers to competitive, integrated employment. (O) State's Strategies (Goal 2 Objective 4) SRC: Why are there no strategies listed here?

AGENCY RESPONSE: DVR will be adding strategies over the life of the plan.

(O) State's Strategies (Goal 3 Objective 2)

SRC: DVR should consider adding strategies for reaching "New Mainers."

AGENCY RESPONSE: Using data from the recently completed Needs Assessment, DVR will be developing strategies to address the needs of this population.

(O) State's Strategies (Goal 3 Objective 3)

SRC: Please identify what I SPA is.

AGENCY RESPONSE: The Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is proposing to make changes to some MaineCare services through a 1915 (i) State Plan Amendment, also known as an iSPA. In this iSPA, Maine intends to streamline delivery systems and prioritize community and work-based habilitation support for adults. An iSPA provides states with greater autonomy and flexibility for providing services to Medicaid members while maintaining compliance with the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). The proposed changes will affect the following sections of MaineCare policy: Section 2, Adult Family Care Services; Section 17, Community Support Services; Section 26, Day Health Services; Section 97, Private Non-Medical Institutions DHHS is also proposing to add the following services to the MaineCare Benefits Manual: Benefits Counseling; Career Planning; Psycho-Social Club House; Residential Habilitation; Supported Employment-Individualized (O) State's Strategies (Goals 3, 4 and 5)

SRC: There is a lot of discussion of partnering with the various agencies and the development of MOU's. I am not seeing where or how this information is filtered down to the 65 VRC's. AGENCY RESPONSE: DVR provides training through webinars, in services, "train the trainer" model of disseminating information and ensuring that all agency staff is informed and able to implement changes in policies and service delivery processes. In an effort to be efficient with time and funding, training may be provided through teleconference, use of the statewide Polycom system or by training the Regional Directors and Supervisors who in turn train regional staff.

(O) State's Strategies (Goal 4 Objective 3)

SRC: How will DVR work with WIOA core partners to support them in providing services with a "rehabilitation" component? AGENCY RESPONSE: VR is represented on the three local work boards and involved in regional meetings with all four core partners to now take the goals that have been outlined in the Unified Plan and determine how to translate and integrate those goals in day to day practice. (O) State's Strategies (Goal 4 Objective 4)

SRC: Is this a realistic objective given the long-standing vacancy in the Worker's Comp. position?

AGENCY RESPONSE: Yes, we believe this is a realistic objective given the number of referrals that DVR receives from the Workers Compensation Board.

(O) State's Strategies (Goal 4 Objective 5)

SRC: Why are there no strategies listed here?

AGENCY RESPONSE: DVR will be developing strategies to add as the plan goes forward.

(O) State's Strategies (Goal 5 – Performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA)

SRC: The plan outlines information as it relates to DBVI. How does it relate to DVR?

AGENCY RESPONSE: This was an error and has been corrected. Both DVR and DBVI are partners with entities mentioned and will be applying the new rules related to WIOA.

(P) Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals (Goal 1)

SRC: Could you please include specific data on dropouts for 2014 and 2015? Please list the numbers expected to achieve successful closures for each year of the new plan.

AGENCY RESPONSE: According to the most recent Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, there were 1627 individuals in FFY 2011, 1177 individuals in FFY 2012, 1580 individuals in FFY 2013 and 1263 individuals in FFY 2014 who were closed before IPE Services were developed. Our goal is to increase successful closures for DVR clients from 1000 in 2014 and 1100 in 2015 to 1200 in 2016

(P) Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals (Goal 1 Objective 2 c)

SRC: Is DVR surprised by the 22.5% increase in spending on CRP expenditures? Given that costs were higher, fewer clients served, and fewer successful closures achieved, does DVR plan to analyze this more extensively and reevaluate the effectiveness of the CRP outcome-based payment system?

AGENCY RESPONSE: There are increases to spending in services provided to clients through the Milestone payment process; likewise, there are benefits and improvements noted. A more thorough evaluation of the costs and benefit analysis and a determination to make adjustments to the existing process will be forthcoming. As noted earlier, DVR plans to review data and information regarding

how the outcome based payment system has been working for us in spring 2016. Depending on that review, there may be some changes to this system.

(P) Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals (Goal 1 Objective 3 a)

SRC: Is there a plan to recruit a Business Relations Specialist? Or will these positions continue to be unfilled?

AGENCY RESPONSE: Please see earlier response on this topic.

(P) Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals (Goal 1 Objective 3 d)

SRC: Is there a plan to renew this partnership? CNA and nursing positions seem to be in high demand. It would be advantageous for DOL to pursue this further.

AGENCY RESPONSE: DVR will not include this as a strategy at this time.

(P) Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals (Goal 2 Objective 1a)

SRC: Can you please provide more specific data on the impact of the CEW and days to plan? It seems that if people need to wait a month or possibly two to attend the CEW it may create a delay in developing an IPE. The CEW seems to have become the standard practice for career exploration. Please elaborate on other tools that can be used as an alternative rather than the CEW.

AGENCY RESPONSE: Training has been completed with VRC's that if the CEW is determined to be the best tool to use to assist with career exploration, then they can write a plan for employment that includes the use of the CEW and or other exploration. VR is also using Discovering Personal Genius™ in conjunction with DHHS, or paying for it as a standalone service if that tool is determined to be the best fit. VR also regularly refers for on the job assessments which can be included as part of someone's plan.

(P) Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals (Goal 3 Objective 2a)

SRC: Why has DVR not collected baseline data on the above individuals served?

AGENCY RESPONSE: VR has been collecting baseline data through the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. This new data will assist to inform goal-setting.

(P) Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals (Goal 3 Objective 2c)

SRC: Are these vignettes intended to replace the orientation to VR services video? The online orientation is difficult to find on the VR website, although the vignettes are very easy to access.

AGENCY RESPONSE: No, the intent of the captioned/audio video vignettes is to supplement the other web based and in person Orientations to VR.

(P) Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals (Provide a report on how the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized in FY 2015)

SRC: Edit SRC committees to include the following: DVR/SRC Policy Committee, Communication Committee, Membership Committee, State Plan Committee, Executive Committee and Business Committee.

AGENCY RESPONSE: Done

(Q) Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services (Page 61 lines 1–5)

SRC: Please include the SRC annual training in October 2014. TACE Facilitators provided training to SRC members on WIOA and Order of Selection. In 2015, DBVI SRC and DVR SRC held joint training on implications of WIOA.

AGENCY RESPONSE: DVR will review the request for potential inclusion.

General Comments

SRC: The DVR and DBVI State Plans appear to have several sections with exact or similar information. How will DVR and DBVI work together in light of the financial issues that have occurred as well as the strained relations between the two departments during the current year?

AGENCY RESPONSE: There are certain requirements of the Title I Vocational Rehabilitation Program that result in both State Agencies sharing similar or as mentioned the same information. However, the solution to each agency's budget/financial challenges has been and will be unique as a result of having different resources, missions, program goals and client needs. This being said, it makes sense to collaborate and share our efforts when our client's best interests are met more effectively and efficiently by doing so.

SRC: When reading the DVR State Plan, there is little indication that the department has reported a deficit of nearly \$1 million dollars for the current year. Please identify the problem as well as strategies for correcting the problem. Perhaps it would be appropriate to include a goal in this area.

AGENCY RESPONSE: DVR has been taking important and vital steps toward addressing the budget issues that surfaced in the recent months. We have categorized our responses into immediate, short term and long range actions to mitigate the shortfall in order to continue with provision of essential services to clients and provide a quality program. In the immediate, we have put a hold filling/expanding certain positions (i.e. Office Associates; Business Relations Specialist). Some of the short term solutions include the implementation of Process Mapping findings that will enable DVR to be more efficient and effective with both human and fiscal resources. Long term considerations include identifying and utilizing resources (human and fiscal) and working with WIOA partners to assist with preparing clients for employment and helping them to remain gainfully employed. Goal 2 of the plan addresses this topic.

SRC: The DVR draft plan released for public comment was incomplete and contained sections that were cut and pasted erroneously from DBVI state plan.

AGENCY RESPONSE: The new draft removes language that was inadvertently included.

Section D – Coordination with Education Officials SRC: The SRC recommends increased training and clarification be provided to schools regarding the interagency agreement with VR, and specifically the collaborative role of both agencies in the transition planning process for youth with disabilities. There appears to be a need for increased information and clarification with school departments about the type and nature of Pre–Employment Transition Services which are available from VR, when a referred student becomes a “client” of VR, and the school department’s role in employment planning once VR is involved.

AGENCY RESPONSE: Please see the current MOU with DOE

Section H – Interagency Cooperation SRC: The SRC supports and commends DVR in their efforts to foster collaborative relationships and coordinated services with the Office of Aging and Disability Services and the Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services, as well as in connecting VR consumers with Benefits Counseling Services. However, the SRC recommends that DVR undertake outreach efforts with the Office of Family Independence, which is responsible for determining eligibility for MaineCare, Maine’s state Medicaid plan. All services from OADS and SAMHS flow from MaineCare eligibility, and OFI policy changes and initiatives greatly impact service provision and employment outcomes for VR consumers. As such, VR consumers would benefit greatly from education and involvement of OFI officials in the coordination of services to support employment for people with disabilities. The continued absence of this department from all statewide efforts aimed at improving employment outcomes for people with disabilities is concerning.

AGENCY RESPONSE: As OFI has expressed increasing interest in promoting the employment of beneficiaries with disabilities, MDOL has been increasingly involved in strategic planning and collaborative efforts with the agency to support our mutual customers. DVR supervisors and managers in the field offices know and interact with their colleagues from ASPIRE, TANF, SNAP and other OFI–administered programs on a regular basis.

Section J – Statewide Assessment

VR staff turnover remains a challenge and affects clients in significant ways. While entry level salaries for VR counselors remain low and budgetary constraints are unlikely to change, the SRC recommends that DVR examine other strategies for retaining new counselors, including the availability of leadership opportunities, mentoring, or other incentives that may make counselors feel engaged, appreciated, and connected to their workplace.

AGENCY RESPONSE: Please see an earlier response on this topic.

Section P – Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals

Goal 1: Increase Successful Closures of VR Clients

SRC: Over the past several years, DVR has typically set a goal of increasing employment outcomes over the outcomes of previous years. Those goals have consistently been met, which speaks to the skill and dedication of DVR staff. These are excellent achievements. However, due to the projected

budget shortfall, strained staffing resources, and newly entered Order of Selection for Category 3, expecting additional growth in the number of successful closures does not seem like a realistic goal. DVR should consider maintaining the employment outcome goal at the FY15 level, or even decreasing the successful closure number.

AGENCY RESPONSE: Thank you for your comment and recognition of DVR staff.

SRC: The SRC supports the objective of reducing the number of clients who drop out of services. The high number of clients who drop out of services remains an issue of concern. Towards that end, the SRC supports further policy changes and process streamlining based on the "Process Mapping" Project undertaken by DVR.

AGENCY RESPONSE: DVR appreciates the support and participation of the SRC as we undertake this project.

Goal 2: To serve all individuals with the most significant disabilities in a timely manner

SRC: The SRC notes that DVR has made significant progress in reducing the "time to plan" for VR clients, although the WIOA timeline of 90 days remains a challenge. We understand that training and projects to further reduce the time to plan are ongoing, and the SRC looks forward to further collaboration and discussion on this issue.

AGENCY RESPONSE: DVR appreciates this recognition by the SRC. We agree that there have been improvements in this area, and we look forward to this as well.

Goal 3: Increase clients from minority and underserved populations

SRC: The SRC requests an update on the status of installing VRI equipment at VR offices and Career Centers. A Request for Proposals on Video Remote Technology (VRI) went out in 2014, yet VRI remains unavailable at all VR and Career Center offices. The delay in implementing this communication access technology is concerning. VRI should be installed and staff trained in using VRI as soon as possible in order to guarantee accessibility to effective communication for Deaf clients. VRI availability will increase access for individuals living in remote areas of the state that are Deaf and have limited access to ASL interpreters. VRI will also increase client access for short or spontaneous meetings.

AGENCY RESPONSE: VRI is soon to be deployed at CareerCenters, although some staff is already using it as needed. There are statewide master contracts, so VRI service is available to any State office. Equipment acquisition and training for all CareerCenter staff are coming this spring.

3. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S EXPLANATIONS FOR REJECTING ANY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT OR RECOMMENDATIONS.

We have addressed all the input and 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;

This agency has not requested a waiver of Statewideness. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is able to provide Vocational Rehabilitation services statewide under an Order of Selection. Therefore the waiver request is not necessary.

2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL APPROVE EACH PROPOSED SERVICE BEFORE IT IS PUT INTO EFFECT; AND

See above (a)

3. ALL STATE PLAN REQUIREMENTS WILL APPLY

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

see above (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;

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) works with other state agencies and many Councils and Committees whose focus is on individuals with disabilities. DVR has a long standing relationship and works very closely with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). DVR and DHHS have two memorandums of understanding (MOU); one MOU is with the Office of Aging and Disability Services, which serves individuals with developmental disabilities; the other MOU is with the Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHS) which serves individuals with mental health issues. The MOU's address the combined efforts that DVR and DHHS have initiated and clarify roles to improve the successful outcomes for these jointly served populations. • DHHS Office of Aging and Disability Services and DVR/DBVI MOU (updated November 2013) "This Memorandum is intended to guide the Maine Department of Labor's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), through its Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Office of Aging and Disability Services (OADS) in the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), through a system change planning process for the purpose of implementing an aligned service delivery system that promotes evidence-based practices. It contains information about policies and processes that pertain to maintaining and enhancing the relationship between these two entities. " • DHHS Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services and DVR MOU (updated August 2013) "This Memorandum is intended to guide the Maine Department of Labor's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), through its Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), through its Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHS), in the course of planning and implementing an aligned service delivery system that promotes evidence-based practices. It contains information about policies and processes that pertain to maintaining and enhancing the relationship between these two entities." Through these strong partnerships with OADS and SAMHS, DVR has been able to maximize federal and state funding to Maine by drawing down its full federal allotment for public rehabilitation services and accessing employment support services through Medicaid waivers. Additionally, DVR, OADS and SAMHS have developed and are implementing joint approaches to the workforce development of community rehabilitation providers and business engagement throughout the state.

• Interagency Support of Benefits Counseling – 2013

DVR continues to work closely with many other state partners to ensure that Maine's benefits counseling services remain available to beneficiaries of SSI/SSDI, and specifically, DVR applicants and eligible clients. This allowed the services to remain intact while a resolution was determined on a federal level as to the continuation of this critical service in 2013. DVR currently administers a single contract with Maine's approved WIPA provider, Maine Medical Center's Department of Vocational Services, which includes funding from four sources of state and federal funds, including from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services, and Office of Aging and Disability Services. The contract's scope of work includes direct service provision of benefits counseling, training of VR counselors and case managers, and service capacity building through quarterly system development

network meetings, which include representatives from the Disability Rights Center's Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS) and the Bureau of Employment Services' Disability Employment Initiative

- Memorandum of Understanding with PJCC (Penobscot Job Corps Center) – 2015

In June 2015, Maine DVR finalized a Memorandum of Understanding with PJCC. The purpose of the agreement is to set forth the commitments of PJCC and the Maine DVR to meet the needs of students and young adults with disabilities and in particular to better coordinate the process of student transition to employment.

- Veterans Administration and VR MOU, November 2011

A Memorandum of Understanding between the Maine Department of Labor – Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Division for the Blind & Visually Impaired, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services was finalized and signed in November 2011.

"The purpose of this MOU is to set forth the commitments of BRS and VA–VR&E to cooperate to meet the needs of veterans with disabilities... Through the efforts outlined in this agreement, BRS and VA–VR & E will strive to minimize duplication of services, improve information sharing and referral, and coordinate activities in accordance with all applicable statutes and regulations."

Maine DVR held its annual meeting with the Veterans' Administration Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services on February 24, 2016. The MOU is currently being updated to reflect new language from WIOA and other changes. Maine DVR has identified staff that operates as veterans liaisons in each office.

- Department of Corrections and VR MOU – Procedural Guidance

The Maine Department of Labor– Bureau of Rehabilitation Services and the Maine Department of Corrections (DOC) have worked together to establish procedural guidance on collaboration between the two agencies. Work thus far has resulted in two procedural directives outlining how the two agencies will work together to best meet the needs of individuals who are currently incarcerated or on probation and may be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services. In each of the larger offices a DVR staff member has been identified who serves as the liaison to the correctional agencies in their region.

DVR corrections liaisons meet as a group on a quarterly basis with DOC staff to share updates and best practices.

- Workers Compensation Board and DVR MOU, November 2012

During 2012, representatives of the Workers Compensation Board (WCB) and Maine Division of Vocational Rehabilitation worked together to create a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU was completed and signed, effective November 2012. DVR and the WCB are committed to working together to improve services and employment outcomes for individuals who, as a result of injury, are in need of vocational rehabilitation services to return to employment. Through the efforts outlined in the MOU, DVR and the WCB will strive to maximize employment opportunities for injured

Maine workers, minimize duplication of services, improve information sharing and referrals, and coordinate activities in accordance with all applicable statutes and regulations.

Since then, DVR has met annually to review the MOU and to share updates and successes.

2. STATE PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

Assistive technology services and assistive technology devices are provided to individuals with disabilities as determined by each individual's vocational goal, and appear as prescribed services on the respective individual's signed IPE. DVR services include assistive technology and assistive technology devices if required for the individual's IPE, necessary for the attainment of the individual's employment goal. DVR works closely with Maine cohorts, Alpha One and ALLTECH, assistive technology organizations which provide assistive technology technical assistance services as well as assistive technology devices.

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

The Division had meetings with USDA Rural Development a few years ago, but unfortunately loss of funding ended those discussions of formal cooperation. DVR is open to working with the USDA Rural Development in the future. DVR does support staff involvement in the USDA's AgrAbility project. In Maine, the AgrAbility project is administered by Alpha One, Goodwill Industries of New England and the University of Maine. The liaison to the project ensures that DVR staff is knowledgeable about AgrAbility and related resources. Grant funding for AgrAbility is ending during 2014 and DVR anticipates development of a fee for service agreement for AgrAbility services.

4. NONEDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH; AND

DVR will be addressing this area when the final regulations are promulgated.

5. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS.

The Division has implemented an outcome payment system for employment support services for DVR clients with both private non-profit and for-profit Community Rehabilitation Providers. DVR contracts with Maine's sole Center for Independent Living, Alpha One.

D. COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

Describe:

1. DSU'S PLANS

The designated State unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of VR services, including pre-employment transition services, as well as procedures for the timely development and approval of individualized plans for employment for the students.

DVR has a strong partnership with the Maine Department of Education (MDOE). Collaborative efforts have continued to expand over the last years. A MDOE staff member serves on the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and the DVR Assistant Director serves on the IDEA Part B State Advisory Panel.

The Cooperative agreement between the Maine Department of Education, Special Services, Career and Technical Education and Adult Education and the Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired December 2010 was amended September 2011 to update language and clarify funding responsibilities and establish an interagency dispute process. Maine DVR had an on-site 107 Review in June 2011. At that time, the review team made recommendations for changes to the MOU which were then accepted by all the parties. A new MOU with MDOE will be developed as soon as WIOA regulations are released.

Provide information on the formal interagency agreement with the state educational agency: DVR will assist in transition planning and in the development of student's individualized education program (IEP). For students eligible for services with an agreed upon vocational goal, DVR is expected to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) before the student leaves the school setting. In providing transition services, DVR will facilitate the use of available and appropriate community-based services. Services will be provided in the most cost effective manner. In recognition of the importance of promoting information sharing and in order to ensure an effective and timely system of referrals for DVR services, DVR requests that school personnel adopt the following process: When a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) begins the transition planning process prior to entering ninth grade, the student and his/her parents or guardians will receive general information about VR services. This information will introduce VR and will inform the parents/guardians when it is appropriate to make a VR referral. When the student to be referred is within two years of school graduation or exit, the services offered by VR should be re-introduced at the student's IEP or 504 meeting. Both the student and the parents/guardians should have an opportunity to receive materials outlining VR services and to ask questions concerning the referral. If during or after the meeting, they (or the adult student) are interested in having a referral made for services the school will assist in doing so. Provide information on the formal interagency agreement with the state educational agency with respect to 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 Cooperative Agreement between the Maine Department of Education, Special Services, Career and Technical Education and Adult Education and the Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired was written during FY 2010. The amended MOU was signed in September 2011. The purpose of the Cooperative Agreement is to set forth the commitments of DOE and DVR to cooperate to meet the needs of students with disabilities

and in particular to better coordinate the process of student transition. The Agreement also sets forth that consultation and technical assistance will be provided to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services. The mission of the MOU is to help students with disabilities achieve full participation in society by ensuring equal opportunity and access to education, employment and community. To achieve this mission: • People will work together for the student's benefit • Students and families will be included and respected • Regular and meaningful communication will be established • Personnel Development will be collaborative • Data will be shared to improve outcomes The parties shall agree on methods to maintain updated information about best practices and resources related to the transition of students including the use of Dispatches and maintenance of a copy of the Agreement on the agencies' websites. Consultation and technical assistance to educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services; DOE and DVR will work together to inform the following entities about the existence and intent of this Agreement: • Superintendents of Schools • Directors of Special Education • Parent Training & Information Center • DVR Regional Managers, Supervisors, and Transition Counselors • Directors of Career & Technical Education • Directors of Adult Education • Client Assistance Program • Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS) • State Special Education Advisory Panel Effective implementation requires ongoing communication and sharing of information between the parties. It is especially critical that any changes in resources, regulations, policies and procedures that affect students served jointly by DOE and DVR/DBVI be immediately communicated and that coordinated efforts are made to mitigate any negative impact that may occur as a result of those changes. DVR will provide schools with an orientation video, brochures, and PowerPoint presentation on services for transition-age youth and a representative to serve as a member of the Maine IDEA Part B State Advisory Panel. DVR will also support VR counselors, with transition caseloads to join Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities (MADSEC) and participate in regional and state meetings and training. DVR will provide technical assistance to DOE and school districts on disability-specific information and resources issues and issues concerning eligibility and referral for services as requested. DVR will provide technical assistance and training as requested to DOE and school districts on the Americans with Disabilities Act in conjunction with the State ADA Coordinator. DOE will notify DVR of issues of mutual interest identified during monitoring or as a result of a special education due process finding.

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;

DOE will provide representation to the State Rehabilitation Council, as well as technical assistance and training on educational issues to DVR/DBVI as requested.

In recognition of the importance of promoting information sharing and in order to ensure an effective and timely system of referrals for DVR services, DVR requests that school personnel adopt the following process: 1. When a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) is in the transition planning process prior to entering ninth grade, the student and his/her parents or guardians will receive general information about VR services. 2. When a student is within two years of school graduation or exit from school, the services offered by VR should be re-introduced at the student's IEP or 504 meeting. Both the student and the parents/guardians should have an

opportunity to receive VR materials outlining services and to ask questions concerning the referral.

3. VR Counselors should be invited to attend IEP meetings for students who have been determined eligible for services, as well as in cases where the presence of the Counselor at the meeting would assist in determining the appropriateness of a referral to VR. VR Counselors will provide support to the IEP team to facilitate the IEP process as appropriate. DVR will provide information as requested to school personnel on access to "Long Term Support." DOE will provide guidance to schools on the release of information (including assessment, IEP, Summary of Performance etc.) for students who are working with DVR or who are in the eligibility process. DVR will inform the designated school case manager as to the status of the DVR referral/intake process on individual students with appropriate releases. DVR will determine eligibility and provide services to eligible students within two years prior to expected high school graduation or exit. Interagency Disputes; If disagreements arise regarding any aspect of the implementation of this Cooperative Agreement, they should first be attempted to be resolved between the specific parties involved. If this is unsuccessful, the dispute should be taken to the next successive leadership level until resolution is achieved.

B. TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS;

DOE and DVR will collaborate on possible grant opportunities that have an impact on services to students. DOE will assist DVR to share information about vocational rehabilitation services with students with disabilities who may be eligible for VR, and provide DVR with de-identified data on an annual basis of numbers and demographics of transition-age students with disabilities who have reached ninth grade in public and private schools across Maine. DOE will provide information to DVR on eligibility, availability, and accessibility of CTE (Career and Technical Education) programs. DOE will provide technical assistance to schools on IEP transition plan development. DVR will participate in DOE's efforts to maintain students in school and to prevent and reduce drop-out rates among students with disabilities. The agency will collaborate with schools on the delivery of the "Career Exploration Workshop" curriculum for eligible students with disabilities. At least annually, an in-house training for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors on topics in best practices in working with transition-age youth will be provided.

C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, OF EACH AGENCY, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR DETERMINING STATE LEAD AGENCIES AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES;

This agreement does not involve any financial compensation or exchange of funds between DOE and DVR/DBVI. However, it is the expectation that in the development and implementation of services, DOE and DVR/DBVI will provide in-kind resources and will promote cost efficiency and non-duplication through collaboration. Nothing in this agreement relieves either party of the responsibility to provide or pay for any transition service that the agency would otherwise provide to a student with disabilities who meets the eligibility criteria of that agency. If a participating agency, meaning a state or local agency other than the educational agencies responsible for the student's education, that is financially and legally responsible for providing transition services to the student fails to provide the transition services described in the IEP, the education agency shall reconvene the IEP team to identify alternative strategies to meet the transition objectives for the child set out in the IEP.

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

DVR will inform DOE in writing of procedural changes that may impact the eligibility of students with disabilities for vocational rehabilitation services, so that DOE may disseminate the information to local school districts. • DOE will notify DVR concerning proposed changes in regulations, policies and procedures at the state or federal level that may impact students with whom DVR works.

DVR will collect de-identified information on informal/formal complaints and due process hearings that involve school-aged youth; this data will be provided on an annual basis to DOE, as well as numbers and demographics of transition-aged students served. DVR will provide a list of Transition Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and the schools they serve to DOE and each school district on an annual basis. A protocol to serve students who are in out-of-district placements in accordance with current policy will be developed

E. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

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

Maine does not have any cooperative agreements with private non-profit VR service providers.

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

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.8(b)(4)). Describe the designated State agency's efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services and extended employment services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

DVR does not have separate efforts to provide these services. All services are geared to assist individuals with most significant disabilities.

G. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

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

1. VR SERVICES; AND

During the last State of Maine legislative session, a time-limited Business Relations Specialist position was approved as a permanent position. This new, permanent position has not been filled at the time this report was written and the majority of the Business Relations Specialist duties and responsibilities have been suspended.

The second Business Relations Specialist position is charged with the responsibility of overseeing the Progressive Employment pilot project and the full-time position is being utilized in a half-time capacity. Maine DVR applied for and is participating in a learning collaborative with the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) to study and determine if the Vermont Progressive Employment model can be replicated in Maine. The Progressive Employment Model is a dual-customer strategy that is designed to assist job-seekers with significant barriers to employment and assist employers who may be averse to hiring employees with disabilities. The model coordinates rehabilitation counseling with job placement and business account management.

2. TRANSITION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, FOR STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES.

Key components of Maine's Progressive Employment project will target transition-age youth within southern Maine service areas. Selected Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) will develop Progressive Employment opportunities within the catchment area identified. These activities include: informational interviews, job shadows, business tours, on-the-job training/apprenticeships and work experiences. Business Development during the pilot project includes identifying potential business leads based on the goals of the individual referrals and contacting the employer; requesting an informational interview; requesting a tour of the business or facility; sharing information about DVR and determining if the employer is willing to allow the Employment Specialist to conduct assessments, informational interviews, job shadows or on-the-job training at this location. The secondary purpose of this business development process, as it is described, is to gain an understanding of the various positions which this business employs and to ascertain the work environment and work culture. CRPs will develop 125 new business contacts during the length of the pilot and the contact information will be added to the list of active partnerships currently in use, which will greatly enlarge our existing global employer network.

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;

Through its collaboration with DHHS and specifically the coordination of Maine's benefits counseling network DVR has been able to develop opportunities and overcome barriers to competitive integrated employment for individuals with visual impairments who are eligible for MaineCare, the State's Medicaid program. DVR entered into the Ticket to Work Partnership Plus agreement with the Bureau of Employment Services in July 2014. The purpose of this agreement is to strengthen the partnerships within CareerCenters in the provision of vocational rehabilitation and employment and training services to individuals with disabilities seeking employment in Maine. This agreement expands service options and the overall capacity of Maine's workforce investment activities and offers individuals the opportunity to achieve employment outcomes, decrease reliance on public benefits and increase personal economic assets and resources.

2. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES; AND

To ensure that individuals with the most significant disabilities receive quality vocational rehabilitation services and equal access to employment opportunities throughout the state of Maine, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation takes a multi-faceted approach that includes workforce development, engagement of business and the availability of support services for clients who need them.

EMPLOYMENT SPECIALISTS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM UPDATES

DVR, in collaboration with the Maine Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS), continues to contract with Syntiro, a technical assistance and training provider, to administer a comprehensive workforce development system for Employment Specialists in the Community Rehabilitation Provider sector. This project, Employment for ME Workforce Development System, includes basic certification (ACRE) training, advanced topical skills training, maintenance of a comprehensive training calendar and a mentoring program for newly certified employment specialists. The system was launched in July 2011.

2014–2015 Mentor program forms were posted on the website in July 2014. Four people were interested in being protégés and two mentors. It was decided that the program would not be offered this year.

3. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

DVR has a MOU that is intended to guide the Maine Department of Labor's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), through its Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), through its Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHS), in the course of

planning and implementing an aligned service delivery system that promotes evidence-based practices. It contains information about policies and processes that pertain to maintaining and enhancing the relationship between these two entities.” Through these strong partnerships with OADS and SAMHS, DVR has been able to maximize federal and state funding to Maine by drawing down its full federal allotment for public rehabilitation services and accessing employment support services through Medicaid waivers. Additionally, DVR, OADS and SAMHS have developed and are implementing joint approaches to the workforce development of community rehabilitation providers and business engagement throughout the state.

I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT; DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

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

1. DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

A. QUALIFIED PERSONNEL NEEDS.

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

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

In FFY 2014, Maine DVR experienced a turnover rate just over 15 percent among its Rehabilitation Counselors. In FFY 2013 the turnover rate was at 20 percent and prior to that DVR has averaged greater than 15 percent annual turnover rate of Rehabilitation Counselors. There are currently 7 RC II positions that are vacant. Maine's turnover rate continues to be deeply affected by retirement; the age of its workforce and low wages when compared to private sector employment. Turnover rates over the past five years, average just below 16%. Assuming retention levels remain consistent, it can be projected that DVR staffing needs could require as many as 19 new Rehabilitation Counselors in the next 5 years. The average turnover rate for non-rehabilitation counselor staff has been relatively consistent, approximately 13–15 percent annually, until this year. In examining staffing patterns of all other DVR staff, the turnover rate is approximately 20 percent. During this reporting year of 2015, Maine DVR has replaced:

1 Casework Supervisor

13 Rehabilitation Counselor II

9 Clerical/Support Personnel

4 Rehabilitation Consultants, with one Rehabilitation Consultant position that continues to be unfilled.

ii. the number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and

When applying the average turnover rates, it can be forecasted that Maine DVR will need to replace:

3 Regional Managers,

6 Casework Supervisors,

3 Paraprofessionals,

5 Clerical/Support Personnel and

0 Rehabilitation Consultants

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.

Within the next five years. The projections for staff vacancies are dependent upon current levels of funding as well as stability in state hiring and contracts. Maine DVR will keep RSA apprised of developments on this issue. Row Job Title Total positions Current vacancies Projected vacancies over the next 5 years

1 Director Vocational Rehabilitation 1 0 0

2 Director SIQA 1 0 0

3 Director, Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened 1 0 0

4 Assistant Director Vocational Rehabilitation 1 0 0

5 Regional Manager 3 0 3

6 Casework Supervisor 8 0 6

7 Rehabilitation Consultant 5 1 0

8 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II 65 7 19

9 Paraprofessional 8 1 3

10 Support Personnel 23 2 5

The system for collecting and analyzing data indicates approximately 10,000 individuals with disabilities will be served by Vocational Rehabilitation in FFY 2015. Current service delivery is performed by Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) staff, consisting of 65 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, eight Paraprofessionals, eight Casework Supervisors, and three Regional Managers. DVR staff receives administrative and organizational support and guidance from the Director of DVR, the Director of SIQA (Systems Improvement and Quality Assurance), the Director of the Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened, DVR Assistant Director, and six Rehabilitation Consultants (program specialists) and clerical/secretarial support services from 23 office personnel. DVR has an additional five time-limited Rehabilitation Counselor I's. Data gathered during the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grant when DVR also had temporary RCI's demonstrated that DVR's ability to efficiently meet the needs of clients was significantly improved when these positions were available.

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 Southern Maine (USM) is the only in-state institution of higher education offering a graduate program which satisfies the standards set forth by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). During the most recent year, USM had 32 students enrolled full-time or part-time in its Master of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling Program. Five students graduated during the past academic year. USM classes are offered on campus and via distance education. USM does offer RSA grant funding for Maine DVR Employees for their Rehabilitation Counseling Program participants at the present time. It should be noted that USM did submit an application for long-term grant funding to RSA and was given granted approval for RSA funding. Maine DVR has been utilizing RSA funding since January 2015.

The University of Maine at Farmington (UMF) in partnership with the University of Southern Maine began offering an accelerated program in the Fall of 2015 that will allow counseling students to graduate with a master's degree a year sooner. Graduates of the five-year program will be able to qualify for both State licensing for counseling and national certification for rehabilitation counseling. The Program is accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs and the Council on Rehabilitation Education. UMF typically graduates 25 to 30 students per year with a B.S. in Rehabilitation Services. This new program will meet the standards set forth by RSA for "fully qualified" vocational rehabilitation counselors (i.e. qualifies to sit for the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) exam). Maine DVR has offered summer internships to UMF undergraduates to expose them to careers in vocational rehabilitation. UMF does expect to have three to eight students enrolled in their accelerated program beginning, in January of 2016.

Maine DVR has limited resources to pay educational/training costs associated with its efforts to develop and maintain a fully qualified staff and, as such, conducts on-going investigation of distance education programs that offer RSA grant funding to participants.

- ii. The number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and

During this reporting year, Maine DVR has had fourteen Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRCs) enrolled in the RSA-funded Rehabilitation Counseling program at University of Southern Maine, Maine DVR has had one VRC enrolled in the distance education Rehabilitation Counseling program at Virginia Commonwealth University and four VRCs enrolled in the University of Southern Maine to complete "core courses" During this year, two VRC's have successfully passed the CRC exam.

Institutions; Students enrolled; Employee sponsored by agency and/or RSA; Graduate sponsored by agency and/or RSA; Graduates from the previous year;

1 Virginia Commonwealth University 1 1 0 0

2 University of Southern Maine 17 17 0 0

3 0 0 0 0

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.

USM had 32 students enrolled full-time or part-time in its Master of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling Program. Five students graduated during the past academic year. USM classes are offered on campus and via distance education.

During this reporting year, Maine DVR has had fourteen Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRCs) enrolled in the RSA-funded Rehabilitation Counseling program at University of Southern Maine, Maine DVR has had one VRC enrolled in the distance education Rehabilitation Counseling program at Virginia Commonwealth University and four VRCs enrolled in the University of Southern Maine to complete "core courses" During this year, two VRC's have successfully passed the CRC exam.

Institution; Students enrolled; Emp sponsored; grads from prev.yr;

1 Virginia Commonwealth University 1 1 0 0

2 University of Southern Maine 17 17 0 0

3 0 0 0 0

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.

DVR, with the support of the Commissioner of the Department of Labor, continues to work closely with the State of Maine's Bureau of Human Resources (BHR) to fill vacancies. Recent recruitment efforts have included electronic vacancy postings on national and State of Maine websites, local postings with community providers and information sharing with USM, the only Maine College that offers a rehabilitation program. Recruitment efforts for fully qualified rehabilitation counselors have become increasingly difficult, in comparison to previous years. With high turnover rates and less than desirable number of candidates graduating from the University of Southern Maine (USM), Maine's sole rehabilitation counseling program, the division has struggled with finding and hiring fully qualified candidates, as defined by the RSA. During FFY 2014, twelve rehabilitation counselors were hired; eleven of the twelve Rehabilitation Counselors hired, that is 92 percent, were not fully qualified by RSA standards. Currently, 57 percent of all rehabilitation counselors do not meet fully qualified status. Twenty two of the rehabilitation counselors that work for DVR require a Master's degree to meet the standard. An additional five counselors require "core" courses. As noted in the chart above, thirteen individuals are currently enrolled in an education program in order to meet the standards, as outlined. The DVR Director sits on the Advisory Board of the University of Southern Maine's

Rehabilitation Counseling program, strengthening and coordinating the relationship between the two organizations. DVR invites USM and UMF faculty to participate in training opportunities throughout the year. A Rehabilitation Consultant works closely with the Bureau of Human Resources to assist eligible individuals with disabilities to access Maine State Government's "Special Appointment" program. DVR has a number of staff with disabilities and provides appropriate accessibility accommodations to support employment. The State of Maine is an Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer. An area of concern for Maine DVR is the retention of qualified staff. The State of Maine has recently begun to offer merit or cost of living increases again after being discontinued in 2008. DVR is committed to offering personnel development opportunities that enhance the work environment and support service delivery. DVR continues to review and assess essential job functions within the Division in view of the CSPD requirements and seeks the development of alternative and evidence-based approaches in the provision and maintenance of high quality service delivery.

3. PERSONNEL STANDARDS

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

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

Maine DVR personnel requirements and hiring practices are aligned with the Rehabilitation Act mandates and its regulations. The State of Maine does not have an established state standard for fully qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors so defers to the Rehabilitation Services Administration standard. This standard states that an individual must possess a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, CRC status, or be eligible to sit for the CRC examination when filling Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II vacancies. Priority is then given to applicants and staff who possess master's degrees in counseling or a counseling-related degree, defined as Social Work, Psychology, Special Education, Rehabilitation and Counseling – which meets the standard if a graduate course in Counseling Theories and Techniques of Counseling course was completed as part of the degree requirements. Other required courses including: Assessment, Occupational Information or Placement, Medical, Psychosocial and Cultural Aspects of Disabilities, and in Community Resources or Delivery of Rehabilitation Services.

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.

When recruiting or hiring new staff, Maine DVR gives preference to fully qualified individuals. However, if there is a critical agency staffing need and recruitment efforts do not secure a suitable candidate, DVR can hire individuals conditionally. These individuals are required to enter into an agreement to acquire the appropriate credentials to become fully qualified under a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) plan. The CSPD education plans, for becoming "fully

qualified" according to the standards set forth by the Rehabilitation Act, are responsive to the needs of the individual counselor, and agreed to by management. The plan is incorporated into the employee's annual performance review to ensure continuity and progress toward "fully qualified" status. Counselors who require a full master's degree program to meet the "fully qualified" status are allotted up to five years after completion of their probationary period to meet the CSPD requirements. Those with related counseling master's degrees who meet the qualifications to sit for the CRC exam or who are currently in a master's degree program in counseling are provided accelerated timeframes dependent on remaining coursework. Maine DVR strives to ensure that all CSPD plans are accomplished in the most cost effective manner.

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. SYSTEM OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT

a system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated State unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and

Staff development is delivered through formal and informal modalities, internal and external. DVR employees participate in annual performance reviews, a portion of which specifically addresses personnel development. At these reviews, staff and supervisors jointly identify training required to address performance enhancement.

B. ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE

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

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services hosts a biennial, two-day statewide training event at which multiple trainings – identified and prioritized by staff surveys, case reviews and oversight bodies (i.e. State Rehabilitation Council) are offered to all staff. Training needs and activities are often identified and offered at the regional/office levels through free or low cost workshops. DVR also supports educational programming for existing staff seeking to meet fully qualified status and, for those who have achieved CRC status and require on-going CRC training credits, by acting as a sanctioned provider of CRC training credits. Maine had limited RSA-funded In-Service Training Grant dollars to support personnel development until USM was granted RSA funding for their Master's Rehabilitation Program in 2014. RSA funding became available to Maine DVR in January 2015 for VRC's. Maine DVR has made continuous efforts to seek and identify pertinent learning opportunities, particularly through the use of distance learning. Videoconferencing capacity has been established on a statewide basis and has led to extensive learning collaborations. Maine DVR staff also seeks distance training opportunities through webinars, online training and teleconferences such as those offered by Syntiro, the Institute for Community Inclusion, the National Clearing House of Rehabilitation Training Materials, Independent Living Research Utilization, Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC), Social Security Administration, the National Coalition for Parent Education Advocacy Training Center and Maine's Parent Information and Resource Center. DVR's new counselor training curriculum is a two-week, comprehensive overview of the DVR program, policy and procedures and includes topics such as rehabilitation technology, job placement and assessment, vocational counseling, as well as interactive training modules in the casework flow process. New counselor training is routinely evaluated and revised to meet the changing needs of clients and to incorporate recent evidence-based practices and requirements of the RSA and CRCC. During New Counselor Training, all DVR staff has the opportunity to refresh skills by attending any training session. In addition, training has been designed for paraprofessionals and support staff to increase their knowledge of the rehabilitation process, procedural directives and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Rules. DVR continued to make use of the New England Technical and Continuing Education Center (TACE) for its technical assistance and training until this funding ended December 31, 2014. Training opportunities and conference materials are shared through a number of statewide means, including the Internet and DVR intranet and counselor, managerial and supervisory networking activities and interactions. A library of training resources, including texts, journals and videotapes addressing vocational rehabilitation topic areas is available to be loaned to regional offices as needed. Materials include Institute on Rehabilitation Issues publications, CDs offering American Sign Language tutorials, videotapes addressing learning disabilities, Consumer Choice News, National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials, and other documents from the various National Rehabilitation and Research and Training Programs throughout the United States. Over the past year, a continued focus of staff development has been on the administration and interpretation of assessments used as part of the DVR Career Exploration Workshop (CEW) as well as deaf awareness and other disability-related awareness. During FY 2014 DVR staff participated in 154 hours of DVR sponsored training representing a total of 309 attendees.

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.

DVR has four Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (three of whom are Deaf). DVR has also has a Regional Manager, two Rehabilitation Counselors and one Rehabilitation Assistant who are d/Deaf. This year, DVR was able to convert all Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf lines to permanent status which made it possible to attract staff for a hard-to-fill Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf in the northern part of the state. The Director of the Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened (who is Deaf himself) supervises the four Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf and also provides direction, education and outreach on issues impacting individuals who are d/Deaf or Hard of Hearing. As a state with a high percentage of older residents, there has been an increasing need to serve individuals who have age-related hearing loss and who wish to remain working. The Division Director has offered many workshops on deaf awareness/etiquette to employers, providers and state agencies this year to help increase awareness of promoting inclusion of employees who are d/Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Late Deafened. The Division Director meets once a month with his staff to address topics such as best practices in case management, communication strategies for individuals who use gestural communication for their primary mode of communication, among many other topics. Staff who are Deaf have videophones at their desks for visual communication with consumers. An additional six employees are proficient in ASL, including the DVR Director. DVR offices are co-located in Maine's CareerCenter network. CareerCenters offer telecommunications devices including Interprettype, Ubi Duo, Videolinks, Video Relay and Video Remote Interpreting. Captioning (CART) services are used frequently to ensure access for staff and clients alike and are provided as needed. An online video introduction to CareerCenter services for individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing is available. Spoken language interpreter services are accessed through a statewide contract for both in-person and telephone interpreting. This year a statewide contract for Video Remote Interpreting was signed – allowing for increased access for clients in rural parts of Maine. DVR also employs some bilingual staff. Additionally, DVR through its Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened, is working closely with the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired to increase availability of Deaf-Blind Interpreters and Support Service Providers.

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 outlined in Section 606 (Employment of Individuals with Disabilities) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, Maine DVR continually makes "positive efforts to employ and advance in employment qualified individuals with disabilities in programs assisted under this title". Currently 25 Transition VR Counselors are assigned to work with the more than 200 Maine High Schools, as well as with out-of-school youth and youth attending private institutions. Transition-aged youth represent nearly one third of all DVR cases in Maine and one of the fastest growing populations served by DVR. Maine DVR has a Statewide Transition Counselor Advisory Group that meets quarterly to promote best practices in the provision of VR transition services. During the last year, this group heard from a number of guest speakers on disability and employment issues – including benefits counseling – and focused much of its efforts on WIOA

implementation and the requirement for increased collaboration with schools and the Maine Department of Education. As outlined in DVR's current Cooperative Agreement with the Maine Department of Education (MDOE), DVR has provided technical assistance to MDOE and school districts on disability-specific information and resources issues and issues concerning eligibility and referral for services as requested. One way that DVR has provided this information is through participation in MDOE's State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG). This five-year grant from the US Department of Education targets five significant areas of need concerning personnel development and the education of children with disabilities. Improving transition services is one of the identified five goals. The DVR Assistant Director as well as a Rehabilitation Counselor II both sit on the Transition work group and the Assistant Director is also a member of the larger SPDG Advisory Council. During the past year, DVR worked very closely with the SPDG to participate in a number of trainings for schools and other stakeholders on transition planning for students with disabilities. DVR (and Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired) Transition VR Counselors have attended SPDG-sponsored regional trainings to provide content area knowledge as well as gain additional understanding of best practices in post-secondary transition planning. During the trainings, DVR's Transition Career Exploration Workshop was highlighted as an effective tool to assist schools to improve transition planning outcomes for their students. Over the last year Maine Department of Education received intensive technical assistance from the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC). As a result, Maine sent a team of stakeholders – including the DVR Assistant Director – to the 2015 Annual Capacity Building Institute. As a result of the plan developed at that conference, a number of follow-up steps were developed.

The DVR Assistant Director is a member of the IDEA Part B State Advisory Panel which is responsible for advising MDOE on issues related to students with disabilities ages 3–20. She presented at the 2015 Fall Conference of MADSEC – the state association for special education directors – on best practices for supporting work experience for youth through WIOA.

In anticipation of release of WIOA regulations, DVR and DBVI have been working closely with the Maine Department of Education to begin development of an updated interagency Memorandum of Understanding. The new version is anticipated to include language detailing how the state agencies will work together to strengthen transition planning for a broader group of eligible and potentially eligible students.

J. STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.11(a)).

1. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE REHABILITATION NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING WITHIN THE STATE, PARTICULARLY THE VR SERVICES NEEDS OF THOSE:

A. WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) continues to be a strong partner in the support and delivery of employment services for people with disabilities. – DHHS currently supports approximately 5,200 people with developmental disabilities, brain injuries or physical disabilities through four Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) 1915c Waivers. The waivers allow individuals who have been found eligible for the Maine Office of Aging and Disability Services (OADS) Services based on disability/eligibility to become prepared for employment through Community Supports Services that can assist the person to volunteer, increase work-readiness skills, and address issues of health and safety. New in 2014 was the addition of Career Planning Services using Discovering Personal Genius which is a tool that supports an individual to discover skills, abilities, capacities and three Vocational Themes. Approximately 150 people have accessed the service in the first year and been referred to Vocational Rehabilitation. Furthermore, OADS is providing on-the-job support through the waivers to about 1000 people who are working throughout Maine. These services can provide support to both the individual and the employer to maintain employment. At this time, approximately 3,000 working-age MaineCare waiver recipients are not working but are being asked about their interest and desire to move toward employment.

– In addition to providing ongoing employment support to more than 200 employed individuals with mental illness through contracts with CRP's, the DHHS Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHS) has a number of initiatives currently underway to promote employment among the individuals they serve. SAMHS and OADS are coordinating the use of Balancing Incentive Program funds to increase system capacity to support individuals with disabilities on the path to employment. This initiative includes training for Work and Benefits Navigators, an Employment 101 curriculum, and training in Individual Placement and Support /Supported Employment

B. WHO ARE MINORITIES;

Vocational rehabilitation services to minorities with disabilities in Maine have always been a challenge to DVR because of the state's homogeneous population and low ethnic diversity. A vast majority (96%) of the VR population, a slight variation from Maine's general population (95%), is White and only 4% identify themselves as being members of a racial or ethnic minority. In a state that has little statistical diversity of minority populations, Native Americans represent a historically recognizable group and Maine has nearly 18,500 tribal members who are located both on reservations and defined land, as well as scattered across the state. Tribal members are primarily located in Penobscot, Washington and Aroostook counties. Unemployment figures among Micmac and Maliseet tribes range from 55% to 76%. DVR continues to work collaboratively with the Houlton Band of Maliseets, which was awarded a five year Section 121 grant in FY 2008 which was extended again through 2017.

While Maine's minority population is small, two areas of Maine have seen significant increases in the numbers of non-English speakers due to refugee resettlement programs. According to the 2014 American Community Survey, approximately 65,000 Maine residents speak a language other than English at home. Targeted culturally appropriate outreach may be needed to ensure that information concerning VR resources is available to individuals who belong to potentially underserved minority populations.

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

In addition to the unserved and underserved populations identified above, this assessment also gathered data and provided information on the anticipated vocational needs of incarcerated individuals with disabilities, older workers, veterans, those receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

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

Co-location in Maine's network of Department of Labor (MDOL) One-Stop CareerCenters has provided DVR the opportunity to work in partnership with a number of other programs that are components of the statewide workforce investment system and can support the employment of people with disabilities. In October of 2010, DVR assisted MDOL's Bureau of Employment Services in obtaining a Disability Employment Initiative Grant to continue work successfully started under Maine's Disability Program Navigator Grant. In October 2013, the state was awarded another three-year round of DEI funding but its focus is on a different area of the state. Designed to improve CareerCenter services and programs for people with disabilities in targeted regions of the state, Maine's DEI grant work includes operating a statewide workforce employment network providing Ticket to Work services to SSI and SSDI beneficiaries. The DEI grant is collecting limited data on individuals served by the grant. One objective of the grant is to conduct Integrated Resource Team (IRT) meetings on individuals with unmet needs that are impacting employment. To motivate CareerCenter counselors and case managers to enroll people with disabilities in employment and training programs, particularly WIOA-supported services, the grant offers training and supportive services funds to WIOA-enrolled people with disabilities. These funds supplement existing dollars and are designed to help CareerCenters maximize the likelihood of a successful employment outcome. The funds, which are known as the Flexible Employment Fund (FEF), require an IRT to convene, thus encouraging an integrated, or unified, approach to employment services.

The CareerCenters also provide a number of other employment programs that serve people with disabilities. The Maine Job Bank is an online accessible CareerCenter tool to allow job seekers from around the state to be matched with real-time available open positions. The Job Bank currently has 22,248 active job bank registrants of whom 1,634 are self-disclosed job seekers with disabilities. This represents 7.3% of total Job Bank registrants. Data reported on the ETA 9002 for Program Year 2014 showed that under the Wagner-Peyser Act, Maine served 2,627 individuals who disclosed a disability. This represents only 3.4% of all individuals served – and a significant decrease from the 4,525 individuals served in 2008. In Program Year 2014 (July 1, 2014–June 30, 2015), Maine's Workforce Investment Act (WIA) data indicate that 172 individuals with self-disclosed disabilities were enrolled in WIA services. Among those that exited services, the entered employment rate was 77.1% compared to 73.2% for public assistance recipients and 69.6% for veterans. Average earnings data reveal that individuals with disabilities earned only \$10,749 compared to \$11,762 for public assistance recipients and \$12,366 for veterans.

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

It is appropriate to note here the impact that WIOA has on the requirements to service more in school youth with disabilities as they transition to adulthood and the world of work.

The Challenges and Opportunities under WIOA One of the core challenges of WIOA is the capacity of public VR from a resource perspective, to take on these additional responsibilities, particularly given the challenges that already exist for VR nationally in meeting the needs of job seekers with disabilities, with many states already in order of selection. If WIOA is to deliver on its promise in terms of improved transition outcomes for all students with disabilities, it will be critically important for VR systems to work in a highly cooperative fashion with state and local education agencies and school districts, as well as other public agencies and funders, to leverage resources. In addition,

simply assuming that the details will be worked out at the local level between VR offices and local school districts in terms of delivery and funding of the transition services required under WIOA, will likely result in a lack of consistent implementation, to the detriment of students with disabilities. (Hoff, 2014)

Maine DVR continues in its efforts to fully and properly implement all of the components of this new legislation to work cooperatively with agencies that have the most impact on transition-age students and ensure optimal success for our consumers, including assessing the future needs of this population once the final regulations are received.

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

DVR has seen some improvement in the length of time that it takes individuals to move into a plan for services along with the overall time spent in the VR program as a whole. DVR's concerted efforts to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities have resulted in increases in the rehabilitation rate and successful employment outcomes each of the last several years. As was noted, however, DVR struggles with a higher than average staff turnover and large case load sizes in some areas of the state which have resulted in concerns about responding to consumers in a timely manner. While the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) brings with it many opportunities that support building upon and improving DVR's partnerships with other state agencies and councils and commissions, it also provides DVR with some challenges regarding how to provide more services to in school youth, for example, while not adding any additional financial or staff resources. DVR will be undertaking a project to review all of the recommendations that were provided in the Process Mapping exercise this past fall. As DVR reviews processes and how current staff and financial resources are used, we plan to develop some specific time and financial savings methodologies that will assist in providing more efficient services while maintaining overall quality and consistency of these services across the state. In addition, once the new rules for WIOA are available, DVR will be adjusting our services and procedures accordingly.

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 .

It is appropriate to note here the impact that WIOA has on the requirements to service more in school youth with disabilities as they transition to adulthood and the world of work.

The Challenges and Opportunities under WIOA One of the core challenges of WIOA is the capacity of public VR from a resource perspective, to take on these additional responsibilities, particularly given the challenges that already exist for VR nationally in meeting the needs of job seekers with disabilities, with many states already in order of selection. If WIOA is to deliver on its promise in terms of improved transition outcomes for all students with disabilities, it will be critically important for VR systems to work in a highly cooperative fashion with state and local education agencies and school districts, as well as other public agencies and funders, to leverage resources. In addition, simply assuming that the details will be worked out at the local level between VR offices and local school districts in terms of delivery and funding of the transition services required under WIOA, will likely result in a lack of consistent implementation, to the detriment of students with disabilities. (Hoff, 2014)

Maine DVR continues in its efforts to fully and properly implement all of the components of this new legislation to work cooperatively with agencies that have the most impact on transition-age students and ensure optimal success for our consumers, including assessing the future needs of this population once the final regulations are received.

K. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.11(b)). Describe:

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

In the Comprehensive Needs Assessment completed for the 2015 State Plan, the estimated number of individuals eligible for services based on the American Community Survey (ACS) in 2010 was 73,000 DVR–eligible adults in Maine. This data, from the ACS, was most recently updated in 2010.

2. THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL RECEIVE SERVICES UNDER:

A. THE VR PROGRAM;

The FFY 2015 projections for Maine DVR were 4,000 new applicants with 3,300 individuals to become eligible for services. Maine DVR anticipated that 2,000 clients will develop Individualized Plans for Employment and projected 1,000 successful employment closures. • In FFY 2015, Maine processed 4,115 new applicants, found 3,434 individuals eligible, wrote 2,473 plans, and closed 1,132 clients in employment. Maine DVR served 8,990 clients with \$8,185,386.11 (total case service expenditures from the RSA–2 110 & VI–B funds) in Title I funds. • Each priority category, if under an order of selection – This is the fifth full federal fiscal year Maine DVR was able to serve all eligible consumers. o In FFY 2014, Maine’s successful employment closures, by Order of Selection category: ? 452 clients (45%) were mostly significantly disabled; ? 391 clients (38%) were significantly disabled; and ? 167 clients (17%) were disabled. o In FFY 2015, Maine’s successful employment closures, by Order of Selection category: ? 493 clients (44%) were mostly significantly disabled; ? 401 clients (35%) were significantly disabled; and ? 238 clients (21%) were disabled. • The average expenditure per client closed in FFY 2015 was estimated to be \$2,000. The proposed case service budget was \$9,000,000. Actual expenditures for cases closed in FFY 2015 were \$8,185,386.11 with the average case cost of \$2,009 per client. Maine served individuals in all three priority categories in FFY 2014. The projected number of clients to receive services after being found eligible was 9,000 in which 5,000 were expected to be served under an employment plan.

B. THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM; AND

Maine DVR received \$252,000 in Title VI–B grant funds and \$13,150,933 in Title I funds for the FY 2013 grant. • In FFY 2014, DVR closed 136 Supported Employment cases of which 46 cases closed with an employment outcome. • In FFY 2015, DVR closed 117 Supported Employment cases of which 47 cases closed with an employment outcome. In FFY 2016, it is expected that Maine DVR will serve 110 individuals with Title VI funds and at least another 30 with Title I funds. The number served with Title I funds has been stable over the past three years.

C. EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION;

The expected services provision by priority category was as follows:

Category Percent Individuals; All Served/With IPE

1 (Most Significantly Disabled) 50% 4,500/2,500

2 (Significantly Disabled) 30% 2,700/1,500

3 (Disabled) 20% 1,800/1,000

As of this report date, Maine DVR served all eligible clients. In terms of employment outcomes for FFY 2014, DVR projected 1,000 employment closures as follows:

Category Percent Successful Closures

1 (Most Significantly Disabled) 50% 500

2 (Significantly Disabled) 30% 300

3 (Disabled) 20% 200

Maine continued to serve individuals in all three priority categories during FFY 2014 as stated above. The projected number of clients to receive services after being found eligible was 9,000. With a case service budget of \$8,500,000, the expected services provision by priority category was as follows:

Category Percent Clients Dollars

1 (Most Significantly Disabled) 50% 4,500 \$4,250,000

2 (Significantly Disabled) 30% 2,700 \$2,550,000

3 (Disabled) 20% 1,800 \$1,700,000

3. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR VR SERVICES, BUT ARE NOT RECEIVING SUCH SERVICES DUE TO AN ORDER OF SELECTION; AND

State Plan Estimates for FFY 2016 During FFY 2016, DVR determined that it could no longer serve individuals in OOS Category 3 due to lack of resources. The projected number of clients to receive services after being found eligible is 10,000 of which 6,000 are expected to be served under an employment plan. Since open cases in Category 3 will continue to be served, they are included below. The expected services provision by priority category was as follows:

Category Percent Individuals All Served/With IPE

1 (Most Significantly Disabled) 55% 5,500/3,300

2 (Significantly Disabled) 35% 3,500/2,100

3 (Disabled) 10% 1,000/600

In terms of employment outcomes for FFY 2016, DVR is projecting 1,200 employment closures as follows:

Category Percent Successful Closures

1 (Most Significantly Disabled) 55% 660

2 (Significantly Disabled) 35% 420

3 (Disabled) 10% 120

The projected number of clients to receive services after being found eligible is 10,000.

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.

With a case service budget of \$8,000,000, the expected services provision by priority category is as follows:

Category Percent Clients Dollars

1 (Most Significantly Disabled) 55% 5,500 \$4,400,000

2 (Significantly Disabled) 35% 3,500 \$2,800,000

3 (Disabled) 10% 1,000 \$800,000

L. STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

The designated State unit must:

1. IDENTIFY IF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES WERE JOINTLY DEVELOPED

Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the State VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the State has a Council, and jointly agreed to any revisions.

Maine DVR, in concert with the DVR SRC, developed a plan to assess the VR needs in Maine. This included information from several public forums that were held throughout 2015. The goal of these forums was for the SRC to solicit constructive feedback from current and former clients of Maine DVR. Although DVR and the SRC followed a similar process to how feedback was sought during the previous year, only five members of the community attended and one gave verbal feedback to the VR program.

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

Goal 1 To increase successful closures for DVR clients from 1200 in 2016 and 1300 in 2017, thereby substantially improving employment outcomes for DVR clients in Maine. Employment outcomes and goals from 2017 through 2018 will be impacted by the change in serving more youth in school. Initially, it is believed that DVR may see a decrease in their overall employment outcomes, as DVR will not realize successful outcomes from these in school youth for a few years. In addition, with the focus of DVR's resources put toward school youth, there may be fewer VR resources for adults with significant disabilities.

Goal 2 To serve all individuals with the most significant disabilities in a timely manner, which means determining eligibilities within 60 days and developing plans for employment for all consumers within the new 90 day time frame. DVR will continue to maintain no wait list for those individuals in categories 1 and 2, and will monitor the ability to again serve those in category 3 in the future.

Goal 3 To ensure that individuals with disabilities who may be unserved or underserved or who have minority status have access to DVR services.

Goal 4 Maine DVR will partner with the larger workforce development system to improve opportunities and access for DVR clients as measured annually by documented collaborative activities, technical assistance, and training.

Goal 5 Maine DVR will partner with Adult Education, the SWB, and the larger workforce development system to incorporate and apply the new rules related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

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;

Maine DVR completed its comprehensive needs assessment and presented it to the State Rehabilitation Council for comment.

The SRC reviewed the Comprehensive Needs assessment in December 2015 and were invited to develop goals and strategies to gaps in the system and services to un-served and underserved individuals.

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

Standards and Indicators are tracked on a quarterly basis and the new MaineAWARE case management system software enables Maine DVR to track in real time if needed. This is done and reported out to the Bureau Lead Team staff, as well as Regional managers, so that all are aware of how DVR is are doing in meeting these specific goals.

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.

The SRC also provided questions asked in Maine's 2014 consumer satisfaction survey conducted by Market Decisions, LLC. This is the fifth consumer satisfaction survey conducted by Market Decisions since 2003. The SRC has provided and approved "the state specific" questions.

C. OTHER AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON THE OPERATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE VR PROGRAM, INCLUDING ANY REPORTS RECEIVED FROM THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL AND FINDING AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MONITORING ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED UNDER SECTION 107.

No recommendations from SRC to DVR in their 2015 Annual Report.

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.

If services cannot be provided to all eligible individuals who apply, the Director of DVR will implement an Order of Selection (OOS) as set forth in this section. After determining eligibility counselors must assign a priority category and follow the Order of Selection set forth below for the provision of services. Individuals determined eligible prior to the date of implementation of the Order of Selection will continue to receive cost services. Maine DVR will notify all eligible individuals of the priority categories in the Order of Selection. Eligible individuals in priority categories not currently being served will be notified in writing of their assignment to a particular category and their right to appeal their category assignment.

Whether in an Order of Selection or not, Maine DVR has assigned all applicants to an OOS category to ensure that DVR continues to serve the most significantly disabled. This was upon the advice of RSA staff during the 2011 107 Monitoring review. The priority category shall be assigned, based on their level of significance of disability; "Level of significance of disability" means one of the following: Priority Category 1, "most significantly disabled"; Priority Category 2, "significantly disabled"; or Priority Category 3, "disabled" as set forth below. Individuals with disabilities shall be served first based on significance of disability and second by date of application in the following priority order: A. Priority Category 1, "Most significantly disabled" means an eligible individual who meets the following criteria: (1) who has a serious limitation in terms of an employment outcome in four or more functional capacity areas. Functional capacity areas are; mobility, work tolerance, communication, self-care, interpersonal skills, cognition and learning (self-direction), or work skills. "Serious limitation in terms of an employment outcome" means a reduction of one's capacity to perform, due to severe physical or mental impairment, to the degree that the individual requires services or accommodations in order for the individual to work or be a fully functioning member of the community; and (2) whose vocational rehabilitation can be expected to require multiple vocational rehabilitation services, meaning two or more core vocational rehabilitation services as outlined in Section 9 of this rule, services 9.1 through 9.14; and (3) whose vocational rehabilitation can be expected to require an extended period of time. B. Priority Category 2, "Significantly disabled" means an eligible individual who meets the following criteria: (1) who has a serious limitation in terms of an employment outcome in at least two or three functional capacity areas. Functional capacity areas are; mobility, work tolerance, communication, self-care, interpersonal skills, cognition and learning (self-direction), or work skills. "Serious limitation in terms of an employment outcome" means a reduction of one's capacity to perform, due to severe physical or mental impairment, to the degree that the individual requires services or accommodations in order for the individual to work or be a fully functioning member of the community; and (2) whose vocational rehabilitation can be expected to require multiple vocational rehabilitation services, meaning two or more core vocational rehabilitation services as outlined in Section 9 of this rule, services 9.1 through 9.14; and (3) whose vocational rehabilitation can be expected to require an extended period of time; and (4) who has one or more physical or mental disabilities resulting from amputation, arthritis, autism, blindness, burn injury, cancer, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, deafness, head injury, acquired traumatic brain injury, heart disease, hemiplegia, hemophilia, HIV infection, respiratory or pulmonary dysfunction, mental

retardation, mental illness, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, musculo–skeletal disorders, neurological disorders (including stroke and epilepsy), spinal cord conditions (including paraplegia and quadriplegia), sickle cell anemia, specific learning disability, end–stage renal disease, or another disability or combination of disabilities determined on the basis of an assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs to cause comparable substantial functional limitation. C. Priority Category 3, "Disabled" means an eligible individual who has: (1) a serious limitation in terms of an employment outcome in 1 or more functional capacity areas. Functional capacity areas are; mobility, work tolerance, communication, self–care, interpersonal skills, cognition and learning (self–direction), or work skills. "Serious limitation in terms of an employment outcome" means a reduction of one's capacity to perform, due to severe physical or mental impairment, to the degree that the individual requires services or accommodations in order for the individual to work or be a fully functioning member of the community; and (2) whose vocational rehabilitation may or may not require multiple core vocational rehabilitation services as outlined in Section 9 of this rule, services 9.1 through 9.14; or (3) whose vocational rehabilitation may or may not require an extended period of time Individuals Not Meeting the Order of Selection Criteria – Eligible individuals who do not meet the Order of Selection category currently being served will have access to services through information and referral. Individuals will be appropriately referred to other programs – including those of other core WIOA partners.

B. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER.

In late 2015, DVR was made aware of a potential shortfall in funding. Further analysis of the reasons behind the projected shortfall revealed: • The required 15% Title I set–aside for Pre-Employment Transition Services is reducing the funding available for all other clients other than Students with Disabilities. • Case service costs and expenditures have increased over the past year by approximately 20%, mostly due to an increase in applications by individuals seeking assistance with hearing aid costs • DVR has increased the numbers of individuals served and successfully closed in employment in each of the last five years while funding has not increased. • A high level of staff vacancies over the last year may result in immediate and premature referrals to fee–for–service providers

When DVR became aware of the situation, the State Rehabilitation Council was advised and offered feedback and support for the implementation of an Order of Selection for Category 3 via their regularly scheduled executive committee and full group meetings. Additionally, in December 2015 two phone calls were held with RSA to apprise them of the situation.

In 2014 and 2015, DVR spent approximately \$567,000 and \$690,000 respectively on individuals with disabilities who were in Category 3. By instituting an Order of Selection for Category 3, DVR believes that it will achieve the cost savings that will allow it to keep serving Categories 1 and 2. Individuals who have the fewest barriers to employment may be served through referrals to other services provided by Maine's workforce development system.

C. THE SERVICE AND OUTCOME GOALS.

Maine anticipates implementing an Order of Selection as of January 18, 2016. After that date, DVR plans to serve all eligible clients in Categories 1 and 2 during the remainder of FFY 2016. The projected numbers of clients to be served under an IPE is 6000. The proposed case service budget is \$8,000,000. The expected services provision by priority category is as follows:

OOS Category 1 55% \$4,400,000

OOS Category 2 35% \$2,800,000

OOS Category 3 10% \$800,000 (this reflects those already in Category 3 at the time of the OOS implementation) Based on successful employment closures in 2015, Maine DVR projects employment closures as follows:

OOS 1 55% 660

OOS 2 35% 420

OOS 3 10% 120 Total: 1200

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

Maine DVR is unable to project a date when Category 3 will be able to be re-opened for service.

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

Individuals with disabilities shall be served first based on significance of disability and second by date of application in the following priority order: Priority Category 1, “most significantly disabled”; Priority Category 2, “significantly disabled”; or Priority Category 3, “disabled”.

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.

Maine DVR has not selected to serve eligible individuals in this manner.

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.

Maine DVR has provided extensive training for those staff who are serving in school youth. Maine receives approximately \$252,000 in Supported Employment funds each year. The set-aside for transition age youth at 50% then is quite small. Using our case management system, DVR staff will be able to continue to identify those students and adults who have significant support needs which would qualify them for supported employment funds.

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

- At the time of application, if an individual is believed to require extended services due to the severity of their disability and barriers to employment, a “flag” is placed on the individual within our AWARE case management system. Then, when it comes time to develop a plan for employment for the individual there is another decision point at which time the “flag” either stays on or is taken off depending on the need of the individual at that time. When a referral is made to a provider, there is a discussion that extended services are available to this individual and that he or she may require longer term support services. Those extended services expenditures (such as job development and job coaching) are then coded to the specific grant.

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.

- DVR has a close working relationship with our partners at DHHS Office of Aging and Disability Services and Mental Health Services we have developed a procedural directive which spells out how waiver services will fund career planning (specifically they fund Discovering Personal Genius© as the career planning model) and once Discovery is completed (waiver services will fund up to 50 hours), a referral is made to DVR who will work with the case manager and agency to proceed with job development and perhaps further exploration as needed. Then, when an individual has been successfully placed in a job and is stable and closed out successfully (may utilize extended services for this as needed), waiver funds will then pick up again and cover long term support services (usually job coaching) which will help the individual continue to remain stable on the job.

- DVR is in the process of developing a partnership with Jobs for Maine Graduates (JMG) which is a local affiliate of the National Jobs for Americas Graduates programs. JMG provides pre-employment services to in school youth with a variety of barriers including those with disabilities and as part of our desire to improve our services to in-school youth, we are discussing how to provide additional training for JMG staff so that more students with disabilities can be served by their program. We also

plan to develop a fee structure to make JMG a vender so these services can be paid for through the VR program.

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.

These Goals, Objectives and Strategies to attain 2017–2018 goals developed based on the recommendations from the 2015 Statewide Needs Assessment.

Goal 1

To increase successful closures for DVR clients from 1000 in 2014 and 1100 in 2015 to 1200 in 2016, thereby substantially improving employment outcomes for DVR clients in Maine. These employment outcomes and goals from 2016 through 2018 will be impacted by the change in serving more youth in school. Initially, it is believed that DVR may see a decrease in their overall employment outcomes, as DVR will not realize successful outcomes from these in school youth for a few years. In addition, with the focus of DVR's resources to in school youth, there may be fewer VR resources for adults with disabilities.

Objective: To reduce early exit from services from 42% in 2015 to 38 % during FFY 2016.

Strategies:

- a. Collect and analyze data on reasons for drop out for cases closed in status 30/found eligible no plan developed
- b. Provide staff training on case management techniques that promote engagement.

Objective: To provide access to Pre–Employment Transition Services (as defined under WIOA) to students with disabilities

Strategies:

- a. During FY2016, DVR will engage in a “Progressive Employment” pilot initiative to increase work experience activities for 200 youth and young adult clients in the Lewiston and Portland offices.
- b. During FY 2016, DVR will engage in a pilot with AlphaOne (Maine's Center for Independent Living) to provide services to at least 100 students in two high schools that will increase their self–determination skills and independent living skills.
- c. During FY 2016, DVR will explore partnerships with Career and Technical Education regional schools as a means to deliver PETS services
- d. During FY 2016, DVR will increase summer youth work experience opportunities for PETS eligible clients

e. During FY 2016, explore opportunities to partner with the Maine Department of Health and Human Resources – Office of Children and Family Services to blend and braid funding to deliver PETS services for jointly served youth.

f. During FY 2016, will continue to work closely with WIOA partners to develop a service pathway for youth

Objective: To increase the percentage of successful employment closures for individuals who receive services from community rehabilitation providers.

Strategies:

a. Provide joint training opportunities for CRP's on topics to promote best practices in employment supports for people with disabilities.

Objective: Through lessons learned from the Progressive Employment pilot, expand the number of Maine employers who implement diversity hiring activities through engagement with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services' Business Services Team to 15 in FFY 2016 in conjunction with workforce system partners

Strategies:

a. Continue to actively support the Maine Chapter of the US Business Leadership Network.

b. Partner with the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, local Chambers, and the Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM) to expand business outreach/network.

c. Take a lead role with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) core partners and others in the workforce development system to grow and diversify Maine's workforce through targeted outreach to employers, reinforcing the message that "We need every Mainer".

Goal 2

To serve all individuals with the most significant disabilities in a timely manner, which means determining eligibilities within 60 days and developing plans for employment for all consumers within the new 90 day time frame? DVR will continue to maintain no wait list for those individuals in categories 1 and 2, and will monitor the ability to again serve those in category 3 in the future.

Objective: To reduce the average time in plan development from 217 days in FFY 2014 to the federal standard of 90 days in FFY 2016

Strategies:

- a. Increase use of the Career Exploration Workshop, which has been shown to decrease case length time.
- b. Work closely with the Maine Department of Education to ensure implementation of the joint Cooperative Agreement and best practice guidelines on referral and timely application for transition age students
- c. Deliver staff training and supervision on best practices in IPE plan development and Order of Selection (OOS) determination

Objective: To determine if there could be efficiencies in how DVR processes the work of providing services across the state by building on the recommendations of a process mapping report completed for DVR in summer 2015.

Strategies:

- a. Convene a steering team made up of a representative from the State Rehabilitation Council, at least one clerical staff, three VR counselors, three casework supervisors, the three regional managers, and four Central Office staff.
- b. Beginning in January 2016, establish and launch five work groups to review DVR processes in the following areas:
 - Case Flow Process
 - Clerical Support work flow
 - Technology
 - Training and Communication
 - Review of policies and procedural directives

Objective: To increase the number of individuals with significant intellectual disabilities who access the available waiver employment support for long term employment support needs after closure from BRS.

Strategies:

- b. Continue to work with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services to ensure that all individuals who have the waiver – but have not taken advantage of employment services – are aware of employment supports open to them through coordination between the two Departments
- c. Continue to provide access and training to the BRIDGE –Career Exploration Workshop, appropriate for individuals with intellectual disabilities

Objective: Maine DVR will undertake efforts to continue to embrace and implement an “Employment First” philosophy during the next year as documented by a decrease of 5% in the statewide unemployment rate of people with intellectual disabilities.

Strategies:

- a. DVR will continue to participate in work of Employment First Maine’s coalition, which includes targeted goals to improve employment outcomes for individuals with significant disabilities.
- b. By October 2016, Employment First Maine coalition will present a report or "roadmap" for how Maine will move forward to address this goal.

Goal 3

To ensure that individuals with disabilities who may be unserved or underserved or who have minority status have access to DVR services.

Objective: Maine DVR will work closely with Maine’s Section 121 VR Grant – Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation, to increase co-enrollment to 10 individuals in FFY 2016

Strategies:

- a. Maine DVR will include Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation in training and technical assistance opportunities.
- b. Wabanaki VR will provide technical assistance to Maine DVR on issues related to cultural competency and best practices in Native employment supports.
- c. According to the joint MOU, Maine DVR and Wabanaki VR will meet at least annually to review the agreement.

Objective: Maine DVR will collect data on the numbers of individuals served – belonging to the following categories in FY 2012 to establish a baseline and future goals:

- a. individuals involved with the correctional system
- b. individuals who are veterans
- c. individuals who are “older workers”
- d. individuals who are “New Mainers”

Strategies: a. DVR will develop and utilize special indicators in its case management system to track individuals who belong to one of the above groups.

Objective: DVR will ensure that all materials distributed or published by the agency will be accessible and demonstrate cultural competency.

Strategies:

a. To promote more efficient use of resources and increase access for individuals who use ASL, DVR will explore the benefits of hiring staff interpreters versus contracting for ASL interpreting services.

Objective: Maine DVR will develop new strategies to increase the employment of people with mental health disabilities

Strategies:

a. DVR will partner with the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services to explore opportunities available through the I SPA

b. DVR will work with the Department of Corrections through its quarterly joint meetings to identify effective practices in referring and supporting individuals for whom mental health is a barrier to employment.

Objective: Maine DVR will maintain statewide consistency in its practices with regard to "Clubhouses" offering services to DVR clients as measured by client case review.

Strategies:

a. DVR will maintain a liaison to the local Clubhouse in each office.

b. DVR will invite Clubhouse program staff to participate in DVR training opportunities.

Objective: In keeping with WIOA legislation, ensure individuals working at sub–minimum wage are aware of and have access to DVR services

Strategies:

a. DVR will partner with the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Aging and Disability Services(OADS) and the Bureau of Labor Standards (BLS) to identify individuals who are currently working at sub–minimum wage

b. DVR will develop an outreach strategy to these workers in collaboration with OADS and BLS

c. DVR will develop procedural guidance and training for staff on conversion of workers from sub–minimum wage settings to competitive, integrated employment

Goal 4

Maine DVR will partner with the larger workforce development system to improve opportunities and access for DVR clients as measured annually by documented collaborative activities, technical assistance, and training.

Objective: Maine DVR will continue to partner with Maine's Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) Grant to include 50 non-VR CareerCenter customers with disabilities in Career Exploration Workshops Strategies in FFY 2016

Strategies:

- a. The DEI team will include one VR Rehabilitation Counselor I who will assist in piloting a jointly-delivered Career Exploration Workshop
- b. DVR will participate in DEI Integrated Resource Team meetings
- c. DVR will work with the DEI team and others in the Bureau of Employment Services to ensure accessibility in Maine's CareerCenter network
- d. DVR will partner with DEI staff in the delivery of an asset development summit in FY 2016

Objective: DVR will work with the Maine Department of Labor's Center for Workforce Research and Information to maintain a triennial snapshot of the employment status of people with disabilities in Maine as well as a webpage where disability data can be easily accessed.

Strategies:

- a. DVR will engage CWRI to offer training to DVR staff on use of current labor market information and tools
- b. DVR will work with CWRI to develop a triennial snapshot of the employment status of people with disabilities in Maine as well as a webpage where disability data can be easily accessed.

Objective: DVR will develop strategies with WIOA core partners to provide referrals to workforce services for individuals found eligible for DVR under Category 3 but unable to be served by DVR due to waitlist.

Strategies:

- a. DVR will attend regular LWIB and One Stop partnerships with the goal of developing specific cross referral and common intake processes across core partner agencies and organizations.
- b. Processes developed will be piloted in all areas of the state to be vetted and finalized before being adopted statewide.

Objective: Maine DVR will continue implementation of a Memorandum of Understanding with the public Worker's Compensation system. In order to better serve injured Maine workers who are in need of rehabilitation services DVR will increase the number of individuals served through a referral from the Workers' Compensation Board from 65 in FFY 2015 to 75 in FFY 2016.

Strategies:

- a. DVR will meet at least annually with the Workers' Compensation Board to assess the success of the MOU initiative.

Objective: DVR will explore opportunities for new grants to support the mission of BRS. During 2015, DVR will apply for at least two new grant opportunities.

Strategies:

a. DVR Assistant Director will continue to look at websites and email list serves for possible grant opportunities that may be relevant.

Goal 5

Maine DVR will partner with Adult Education, the SWIB, and the larger workforce development system to incorporate and apply the new rules related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Objective: To learn, and apply all rules of WIOA with the DVR program, including drafting a unified state plan, adopting new performance measures and continued collaboration with the One-Stop system.

Strategies:

a. New rules will be reviewed and adopted by DVR within the time frames given in the new law.

A steering committee has been formed with all affected partners and a project plan developed to address the changes agencies face with the advent of WIOA.

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.

Assistive technology services and assistive technology devices are provided to individuals with disabilities as determined by each individual's vocational goal, and appear as prescribed services on the respective individual's signed IPE. DVR services include assistive technology and assistive technology devices if required for the individual's IPE, necessary for the attainment of the individual's employment goal. DVR works closely with Maine cohorts, Alpha One and ALLTECH, assistive technology organizations which provide assistive technology technical assistance services as well as assistive technology devices.

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.

Goal 3

To ensure that individuals with disabilities who may be unserved or underserved or who have minority status have access to DVR services.

Objective: Maine DVR will work closely with Maine's Section 121 VR Grant – Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation, to increase co-enrollment to 10 individuals in FFY 2016

Strategies:

- a. Maine DVR will include Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation in training and technical assistance opportunities.
- b. Wabanaki VR will provide technical assistance to Maine DVR on issues related to cultural competency and best practices in Native employment supports.
- c. According to the joint MOU, Maine DVR and Wabanaki VR will meet at least annually to review the agreement.

Objective: Maine DVR will collect data on the numbers of individuals served – belonging to the following categories in FY 2012 to establish a baseline and future goals:

- a. individuals involved with the correctional system
- b. individuals who are veterans
- c. individuals who are “older workers”
- d. individuals who are “New Mainers”

Strategies:

- a. DVR will develop and utilize special indicators in its case management system to track individuals who belong to one of the above groups.
- b. DVR will ensure that all materials distributed or published by the agency will be accessible and demonstrate cultural competency.
- c. To promote more efficient use of resources and increase access for individuals who use ASL, DVR will explore the benefits of hiring staff interpreters versus contracting for ASL interpreting services.

Objective: Maine DVR will develop new strategies to increase the employment of people with mental health disabilities

Strategies:

- a. DVR will partner with the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services to explore opportunities available through the I SPA b. DVR will work with the Department of Corrections through its quarterly joint meetings to identify effective practices in referring and supporting individuals for whom mental health is a barrier to employment.

Objective: Maine DVR will maintain statewide consistency in its practices with regard to “Clubhouses” offering services to DVR clients as measured by client case review.

Strategies:

- a. DVR will maintain a liaison to the local Clubhouse in each office.
- b. DVR will invite Clubhouse program staff to participate in DVR training opportunities.

Objective: In keeping with WIOA legislation, ensure individuals working at sub–minimum wage are aware of and have access to DVR services

Strategies:

- a. DVR will partner with the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Aging and Disability Services(OADS) and the Bureau of Labor Standards (BLS) to identify individuals who are currently working at sub–minimum wage
- b. DVR will develop an outreach strategy to these workers in collaboration with OADS and BLS
- c. DVR will develop procedural guidance and training for staff on conversion of workers from sub–minimum wage settings to competitive, integrated employment

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).

Goal 1 To increase successful closures for DVR clients from 1000 in 2014 and 1100 in 2015 to 1200 in 2016, thereby substantially improving employment outcomes for DVR clients in Maine. These employment outcomes and goals from 2016 through 2018 will be impacted by the change in serving more youth in school. Initially, it is believed that DVR may see a decrease in their overall employment outcomes, as DVR will not realize successful outcomes from these in school youth for a few years. In addition, with the focus of DVR's resources to in school youth, there may be fewer VR resources for adults with disabilities.

Objective: To reduce early exit from services from 42% in 2015 to 38 % during FFY 2016.

Strategies:

- a. Collect and analyze data on reasons for drop out for cases closed in status 30/found eligible no plan developed
- b. Provide staff training on case management techniques that promote engagement.

Objective: To provide access to Pre–Employment Transition Services (as defined under WIOA) to students with disabilities.

Strategies:

- a. During FY2016, DVR will engage in a “Progressive Employment” pilot initiative to increase work experience activities for 200 youth and young adult clients in the Lewiston and Portland offices.

b. During FY 2016, DVR will engage in a pilot with AlphaOne (Maine's Center for Independent Living) to provide services to at least 100 students in two high schools that will increase their self-determination skills and independent living skills.

c. During FY 2016, DVR will explore partnerships with Career and Technical Education regional schools as a means to deliver PETS services

d. During FY 2016, DVR will increase summer youth work experience opportunities for PETS eligible clients

e. During FY 2016, explore opportunities to partner with the Maine Department of Health and Human Resources – Office of Children and Family Services to blend and braid funding to deliver PETS services for jointly served youth.

f. During FY 2016, will continue to work closely with WIOA partners to develop a service pathway for youth

Objective: To increase the percentage of successful employment closures for individuals who receive services from community rehabilitation providers.

Strategies:

a. Provide joint training opportunities for CRP's on topics to promote best practices in employment supports for people with disabilities.

Objective: Through lessons learned from the Progressive Employment pilot, expand the number of Maine employers who implement diversity hiring activities through engagement with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services' Business Services Team to 15 in FFY 2016 in conjunction with workforce system partners

Strategies:

a. Continue to actively support the Maine Chapter of the US Business Leadership Network.

b. Partner with the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, local Chambers, and the Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM) to expand business outreach/network.

c. Take a lead role with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) core partners and others in the workforce development system to grow and diversify Maine's workforce through targeted outreach to employers, reinforcing the message that "We need every Mainer".

Goal 2 To serve all individuals with the most significant disabilities in a timely manner, which means determining eligibilities within 60 days and developing plans for employment for all consumers within the new 90 day time frame. DVR will continue to maintain no wait list for those individuals in categories 1 and 2, and will monitor the ability to again serve those in category 3 in the future.

Objective: To reduce the average time in plan development from 217 days in FFY 2014 to the federal standard of 90 days in FFY 2016

Strategies:

- a. Increase use of the Career Exploration Workshop, which has been shown to decrease case length time.
- b. Work closely with the Maine Department of Education to ensure implementation of the joint Cooperative Agreement and best practice guidelines on referral and timely application for transition age students
- c. Deliver staff training and supervision on best practices in IPE plan development and Order of Selection (OOS) determination

Objective: To determine if there could be efficiencies in how DVR processes the work of providing services across the state by building on the recommendations of a process mapping report completed for DVR in summer 2015.

Strategies:

- a. Convene a steering team made up of a representative from the State Rehabilitation Council, at least one clerical staff, three VR counselors, three casework supervisors, the three regional managers, and four Central Office staff.
- b. Beginning in January 2016, establish and launch five work groups to review DVR processes in the following areas: • Case Flow Process • Clerical Support work flow • Technology • Training and Communication • Review of policies and procedural directives

Objective: To increase the number of individuals with significant intellectual disabilities who access the available waiver employment support for long term employment support needs after closure from BRS.

Strategies:

- a. Continue to work with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services to ensure that all individuals who have the waiver – but have not taken advantage of employment services – are aware of employment supports open to them through coordination between the two Departments
- b. Continue to provide access and training to the BRIDGE –Career Exploration Workshop, appropriate for individuals with intellectual disabilities

Objective: Maine DVR will undertake efforts to continue to embrace and implement an “Employment First” philosophy during the next year as documented by a decrease of 5% in the statewide unemployment rate of people with intellectual disabilities.

Strategies:

- a. DVR will continue to participate in work of Employment First Maine’s coalition, which includes targeted goals to improve employment outcomes for individuals with significant disabilities.

b. By October 2016, Employment First Maine coalition will present a report or "roadmap" for how Maine will move forward to address this goal.

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

Goal 1:

Objective: To increase the percentage of successful employment closures for individuals who receive services from community rehabilitation providers.

Strategies: a. Provide joint training opportunities for CRP's on topics to promote best practices in employment supports for people with disabilities.

Objective: Through lessons learned from the Progressive Employment pilot, expand the number of Maine employers who implement diversity hiring activities through engagement with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services' Business Services Team to 15 in FFY 2016 in conjunction with workforce system partners

Strategies: a. Continue to actively support the Maine Chapter of the US Business Leadership Network. b. Partner with the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, local Chambers, and the Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM) to expand business outreach/network. c. Take a lead role with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) core partners and others in the workforce development system to grow and diversify Maine's workforce through targeted outreach to employers, reinforcing the message that "We need every Mainer".

6. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE STATE WITH RESPECT TO THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA.

Performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA – DVR is a partner with Adult Education, the SWIB, and the larger workforce development system to incorporate and apply the new rules related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), including drafting a unified state plan adopting new performance measures and further collaboration with the One-Stop system. DVR is a member of the Maine WIOA steering committee, which is guiding the Act's implementation, and also has participants on multiple related sub-committees. DVR will be using wage data from the Maine Department of Labor's Unemployment Insurance to establish baseline and initial WIOA performance targets for employment outcomes. Although it does not provide information on individuals who are placed in self-employment or other jobs, such as federal and out-of-state positions, this is the only data set available at this time. DVR is seeking further definition and data sources for the other WIOA performance indicators.

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

Goal 4 Maine DVR will partner with the larger workforce development system to improve opportunities and access for DVR clients as measured annually by documented collaborative activities, technical assistance, and training.

Objective: Maine DVR will continue to partner with Maine's Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) Grant to include 50 non-VR CareerCenter customers with disabilities in Career Exploration Workshops Strategies in FFY 2016

Strategies: a. The DEI team will include one VR Rehabilitation Counselor I who will assist in piloting a jointly-delivered Career Exploration Workshop b. DVR will participate in DEI Integrated Resource Team meetings c. DVR will work with the DEI team and others in the Bureau of Employment Services to ensure accessibility in Maine's CareerCenter network d. DVR will partner with DEI staff in the delivery of an asset development summit in FY 2016

Objective: DVR will work with the Maine Department of Labor's Center for Workforce Research and Information to maintain a triennial snapshot of the employment status of people with disabilities in Maine as well as a webpage where disability data can be easily accessed.

Strategies: a. DVR will engage CWRI to offer training to DVR staff on use of current labor market information and tools b. DVR will work with CWRI to develop a triennial snapshot of the employment status of people with disabilities in Maine as well as a webpage where disability data can be easily accessed.

Objective: DVR will develop strategies with WIOA core partners to provide referrals to workforce services for individuals found eligible for DVR under Category 3 but unable to be served by DVR due to waitlist.

Strategies:

a. DVR will attend regular LWIB and One Stop partnerships with the goal of developing specific cross referral and common intake processes across core partner agencies and organizations.

b. Processes developed will be piloted in all areas of the state to be vetted and finalized before being adopted statewide.

Objective: Maine DVR will continue implementation of a Memorandum of Understanding with the public Worker's Compensation system. In order to better serve injured Maine workers who are in need of rehabilitation services DVR will increase the number of individuals served through a referral from the Workers' Compensation Board from 65 in FFY 2015 to 75 in FFY 2016.

Strategies: a. DVR will meet at least annually with the Workers' Compensation Board to assess the success of the MOU initiative.

Objective: DVR will explore opportunities for new grants to support the mission of BRS. During 2015, DVR will apply for at least two new grant opportunities.

Strategies: Goal 5 Maine DVR will partner with Adult Education, the SWIB, and the larger workforce development system to incorporate and apply the new rules related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Objective: To learn, and apply all rules of WIOA with the DVR program, including drafting a unified state plan, adopting new performance measures and continued collaboration with the One-Stop system.

Strategies: a. New rules will be reviewed and adopted by DVR within the time frames given in the new law. A steering committee has been formed with all affected partners and a project plan developed to address the changes agencies face with the advent of WIOA

8. HOW THE AGENCY'S STRATEGIES WILL BE USED TO:

A. ACHIEVE GOALS AND PRIORITIES BY THE STATE, CONSISTENT WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT;

The Maine Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) assists eligible individuals with disabilities to prepare for, achieve and retain employment in integrated community settings. DVR administers the General Vocational Rehabilitation program in Maine for the Rehabilitation Services Administration. A separate program is available to individuals who are blind or have visual impairments through the Maine Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired. This Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment focuses on the General Vocational Rehabilitation program and on the needs of individuals eligible for those services.

The assessment, conducted jointly with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), is designed to answer important questions about the population eligible for DVR services that live in Maine and their vocational rehabilitation needs. It serves to inform DVR's strategic plan and goal development for the next three fiscal years, 2016 – 2018. In its compilation, we rely on a variety of publicly available sources, including survey information from the United States Census Bureau and data from the Rehabilitation Services Administration and the Social Security Administration. We gathered information from the Maine Departments of Labor, Education, and Health and Human Services, as well as numerous stakeholder groups, including people with disabilities, employers, and Vocational Rehabilitation counselors.

Maine is a large geographical state, which spans 30,843 square miles. The state is primarily rural in nature with a dispersed population of 1.3 million people and density of 43 people per square mile. Census data available in 2010 indicates that the population is primarily homogeneous with 95% of the residents being white and a median age of 43.1 years. At the time of this report, workforce conditions in Maine continue to improve, though there has been virtually no real economic growth for a decade. Underlying those seemingly contradictory statements is a rapidly advancing age structure of the population that is constraining growth and tightening the labor market at the same time. Through 2014, real gross domestic product has been little changed since 2004, after relatively steady growth in previous decades. Meanwhile, the number of jobs is up since the 2010 post-recession low, but still nearly 2% short of the 2008 peak level. In the middle of 2015 the state has about the same number of jobs as in 2004. This situation is in stark contrast to the nation, which began reaching new highs in GDP in 2012 and in nonfarm payroll jobs in 2014.

Though lagging from a net growth perspective, Maine is outperforming the nation in terms of employment and unemployment rates. As of September 2015, the 4.4% unemployment rate was back to pre-recession levels and below the 5.1 percent U.S. average and the employment to population ratio remained higher than the nation.

Since DVR's last comprehensive statewide needs assessment in 2012, The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 reauthorized the Rehabilitation Act of 1998. The purposes of WIOA include aligning the workforce development system with education, businesses, labor market information and trends, and increasing collaboration among state and federal agencies.

Maine's legislature passed the Employment First Maine Act into law in June of 2013, establishing integrated community-based employment and customized employment as the "first and preferred service or support option" for people with disabilities. The passage of the law is a natural progression in Maine's focus on competitive integrated employment as a valued outcome for the state's citizens with disabilities. The state, like many that have passed Employment First laws, is now grappling with what it means to be fully compliant with the law.

Demand for community inclusion and access to employment by people with disabilities and their supporters continues to be strong across the country with consumer choice and opportunity for full participation being important for all. The advocacy and advice of the State Rehabilitation Council, Client Assistance Program, and Disability Rights Center, as well as groups such as Maine APSE and the Employment First Coalition, help to ensure that rights are being respected, laws are being followed, and practices are being improved to increase the successful employment of people with disabilities.

Maine's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, which includes the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, is involved at all levels as the implementation of WIOA transforms existing systems into a more cohesive, effective and collaborative entity through participation in restructuring the One-Stop Career Center processes, Workforce Boards, training, employment and youth workforce activities. Achieving expectations posed by these two significant changes in practice, challenges Maine to push forward with more systems changes that prioritize and assure access to competitive integrated employment services and supports.

In June of 2015, Maine DVR contracted with an outside consultant to review its service delivery process. The agency maintains a goal of providing timely, quality and efficient services to consumers. Expectations of outcomes included the examination of our internal service delivery process, in order to identify efficiencies and best practices that can help improve our timeliness and efficiency while continuing to provide quality services. Changes to the Rehabilitation Act including, the requirement of "90 days to plan" and new pre-employment training services for transition youth will impact our service delivery and resource capacity. This review included process mapping and brainstorming in six local Maine DVR offices around the state. The process detailed, reviewed, evaluated, discussed, and critiqued. Performance related to time, effectiveness, and efficiencies were analyzed. Best practices emerged.

The consultants reviewed documentation and data about the Maine VR program, and employment of people with disabilities in Maine. The most salient circumstance encountered in Maine VR offices was large caseloads, and the amount of work required to provide quality services to all of these clients. Maine VR has less than half the average complement of support staff according to national standards. On the surface, Maine VR has an adequate supply of counselors, but the geographical distances counselors have to travel and the lack of available Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) across the state, impact their effectiveness. More importantly, as many other VR programs in states are adding more business relations and in-house employment specialists, Maine VR is lacking positions available to provide direct job placement and work experiences for its clients. The lack of adequate levels of support staff requires VR Counselors to perform a large share of administrative support functions, taking time away from their counseling function with clients.

The State Rehabilitation Council surveyed current and former clients of Maine DVR to solicit feedback regarding DVR services and opportunities for changes or improvement. During FY14, the SRC conducted an online survey. During FY15, the SRC held a series of public forums soliciting feedback in Lewiston, Rockland, Augusta, and Bangor. Individuals who were unable to attend the

forum were able to provide feedback directly to the forum organizers by phone or email. In addition, the SRC Communications Committee met regularly during FY15 to review public forum input in comparison with data and information provided by DVR. DVR clients report high levels of satisfaction with VR services. DVR staff is diligent, committed and skilled. The number of clients reporting problems with their counselor has increased slightly when compared to the previous satisfaction survey. Resolving problems with VR clients is an area for further improvement. Based on SRC forum feedback, self-employment appears to be an increasingly common goal among DVR clients. DVR is serving increasing numbers of transition-age youth, and this trend is likely to continue under the new WIOA requirements.

In terms of case service expenditures, job development and placement continues to be the largest single service group, representing over 29% percent of total DVR case costs each year. A number of service groups saw large decreases, including College or University training, on-the-job supports and diagnosis & treatment while large increases were noted in hearing aid costs, and occupational/vocational & other training.

In identifying the general population eligible for DVR services and estimating unmet needs of those with significant disabilities, this report used data available through the American Community Survey, the Social Security Administration, and the Maine Departments of Education and Health and Human Services:

At the end of FFY 2014, DVR had 6,531 individuals in an active case status. For that same year, the ACS estimated that there were approximately 73,000 working-age adults with a disability who were not employed.

The Maine Department of Education reported an anticipated need of employment services in 2015 for 9,178 special education students, ages 14 – 20, of which those with learning disabilities (37.1%) and physical impairments (24.4) were the largest disability populations. That noted, Maine, like the rest of the United States, is experiencing an increase in the numbers of individuals identified with Autism spectrum disorders.

It is appropriate to note here the impact that WIOA has on the requirements to service more in school youth with disabilities as they transition to adulthood and the world of work.

The Challenges and Opportunities under WIOA One of the core challenges of WIOA is the capacity of public VR from a resource perspective, to take on these additional responsibilities, particularly given the challenges that already exist for VR nationally in meeting the needs of job seekers with disabilities, with many states already in order of selection. If WIOA is to deliver on its promise in terms of improved transition outcomes for all students with disabilities, it will be critically important for VR systems to work in a highly cooperative fashion with state and local education agencies and school districts, as well as other public agencies and funders, to leverage resources. In addition, simply assuming that the details will be worked out at the local level between VR offices and local school districts in terms of delivery and funding of the transition services required under WIOA, will likely result in a lack of consistent implementation, to the detriment of students with disabilities. (Hoff, 2014)

Maine DVR continues in its efforts to fully and properly implement all of the components of this new legislation to work cooperatively with agencies that have the most impact on transition-age students and ensure optimal success for our consumers.

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) continues to be a strong partner in the support and delivery of employment services for people with disabilities. – DHHS currently supports approximately 5,200 people with developmental disabilities, brain injuries or physical disabilities through four Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) 1915c Waivers. The waivers allow individuals who have been found eligible for the Maine Office of Aging and Disability Services (OADS) Services based on disability/eligibility to become prepared for employment through Community Supports Services that can assist the person to volunteer, increase work-readiness skills, and address issues of health and safety. New in 2014 was the addition of Career Planning Services using Discovering Personal Genius which is a tool that supports an individual to discover skills, abilities, capacities and three Vocational Themes. Approximately 150 people have accessed the service in the first year and been referred to Vocational Rehabilitation. Furthermore, OADS is providing on-the-job support through the waivers to about 1000 people who are working throughout Maine. These services can provide support to both the individual and the employer to maintain employment. At this time, approximately 3,000 working-age MaineCare waiver recipients are not working but are being asked about their interest and desire to move toward employment.

– In addition to providing ongoing employment support to more than 200 employed individuals with mental illness through contracts with CRP's, the DHHS Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHS) has a number of initiatives currently underway to promote employment among the individuals they serve. SAMHS and OADS are coordinating the use of Balancing Incentive Program funds to increase system capacity to support individuals with disabilities on the path to employment. This initiative includes training for Work and Benefits Navigators, an Employment 101 curriculum, and training in Individual Placement and Support /Supported Employment.

Vocational rehabilitation services to minorities with disabilities in Maine have always been a challenge to DVR because of the state's homogeneous population and low ethnic diversity. A vast majority (96%) of the VR population, a slight variation from Maine's general population (95%), is White and only 4% identify themselves as being members of a racial or ethnic minority. In a state that has little statistical diversity of minority populations, Native Americans represent a historically recognizable group and Maine has nearly 18,500 tribal members who are located both on reservations and defined land, as well as scattered across the state. Tribal members are primarily located in Penobscot, Washington and Aroostook counties. Unemployment figures among Micmac and Maliseet tribes range from 55% to 76%. DVR continues to work collaboratively with the Houlton Band of Maliseets, which was awarded a five year Section 121 grant in FY 2008 which was extended again through 2017.

While Maine's minority population is small, two areas of Maine have seen significant increases in the numbers of non-English speakers due to refugee resettlement programs. According to the 2014 American Community Survey, approximately 65,000 Maine residents speak a language other than English at home. Targeted culturally appropriate outreach may be needed to ensure that information concerning VR resources is available to individuals who belong to potentially underserved minority populations.

In addition to the unserved and underserved populations identified above, this assessment also gathered data and provided information on the anticipated vocational needs of incarcerated individuals with disabilities, older workers, veterans, those receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Co-location in Maine's network of Department of Labor (MDOL) One-Stop CareerCenters has provided DVR the opportunity to work in partnership with a number of other programs that are components of the statewide workforce investment system and can support the employment of people with disabilities. In October of 2010, DVR assisted MDOL's Bureau of Employment Services in obtaining a Disability Employment Initiative Grant to continue work successfully started under Maine's Disability Program Navigator Grant. In October 2013, the state was awarded another three-year round of DEI funding but its focus is on a different area of the state. Designed to improve CareerCenter services and programs for people with disabilities in targeted regions of the state, Maine's DEI grant work includes operating a statewide workforce employment network providing Ticket to Work services to SSI and SSDI beneficiaries. The DEI grant is collecting limited data on individuals served by the grant. One objective of the grant is to conduct Integrated Resource Team (IRT) meetings on individuals with unmet needs that are impacting employment. To motivate CareerCenter counselors and case managers to enroll people with disabilities in employment and training programs, particularly WIOA-supported services, the grant offers training and supportive services funds to WIOA-enrolled people with disabilities. These funds supplement existing dollars and are designed to help CareerCenters maximize the likelihood of a successful employment outcome. The funds, which are known as the Flexible Employment Fund (FEF), require an IRT to convene, thus encouraging an integrated, or unified, approach to employment services.

The CareerCenters also provide a number of other employment programs that serve people with disabilities. The Maine Job Bank is an online accessible CareerCenter tool to allow job seekers from around the state to be matched with real-time available open positions. The Job Bank currently has 22,248 active job bank registrants of whom 1,634 are self-disclosed job seekers with disabilities. This represents 7.3% of total Job Bank registrants. Data reported on the ETA 9002 for Program Year 2014 showed that under the Wagner-Peyser Act, Maine served 2,627 individuals who disclosed a disability. This represents only 3.4% of all individuals served – and a significant decrease from the 4,525 individuals served in 2008. In Program Year 2014 (July 1, 2014–June 30, 2015), Maine's Workforce Investment Act (WIA) data indicate that 172 individuals with self-disclosed disabilities were enrolled in WIA services. Among those that exited services, the entered employment rate was 77.1% compared to 73.2% for public assistance recipients and 69.6% for veterans. Average earnings data reveal that individuals with disabilities earned only \$10,749 compared to \$11,762 for public assistance recipients and \$12,366 for veterans.

In conclusion, DVR has seen some improvement in the length of time that it takes individuals to move into a plan for services along with the overall time spent in the VR program as a whole. DVR's concerted efforts to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities have resulted in increases in the rehabilitation rate and successful employment outcomes each of the last several years. As was noted, however, DVR struggles with a higher than average staff turnover and large case load sizes in some areas of the state which have resulted in concerns about responding to consumers in a timely manner. While the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) brings with it many opportunities that support building upon and improving DVR's partnerships with other state agencies and councils and commissions, it also provides DVR with some challenges regarding how to provide more services to in school youth, for example, while not adding any additional financial or staff resources. DVR will be undertaking a project to review all of the recommendations that were provided in the Process Mapping exercise this past fall. As DVR reviews processes and how current staff and financial resources are used, we plan to develop some specific time and financial savings methodologies that will assist in providing more efficient services while maintaining overall quality and consistency of these services across the state. In addition, once the new rules for WIOA are available, DVR will be adjusting our services and procedures accordingly.

B. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES; AND

State Independent Living Council (SILC) To assist the SILC to increase organizational capacity and member effectiveness, Maine DVR continued to support the SILC to maintain an Executive Director to envision and articulate the organization's goals and establish the systems and mechanisms to achieve these goals. The SILC Executive Director will be responsible for conducting the work of the SPIL under the supervision and direction of the Maine SILC to accomplish tasks such as a) recruitment and management of members and volunteers b) establish and maintain partnerships with community members and organizations c) market and promote the Maine SILC d) increase and diversify the resources related to the six core areas of the SILC. State Rehabilitation Council Support Innovation & Expansion funds are used to support the activities and administration of the Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) for the Division and the SRC meets monthly as a full council. The SRC has standing committees that meet regularly. These committees include, DVR/SRC Policy Group, CSPD Subcommittee, Membership, Annual Meeting, Website committee, and the Executive Committee. For more information regarding the SRC, please visit www.mainesrc.org. At its annual meeting in September 2013 the SRC benefited from the New England Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Center (TACE) facilitators. TACE successfully facilitated the SRC annual meeting as TACE staff understood not only the SRC mission, but also its current challenges, future goals and the critical importance of its work on behalf of PWD.

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.

DVR does not have separate efforts to provide these services. All services are geared to assist individuals with most significant disabilities.

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.

Goal 1 To increase successful closures for DVR clients from 705 in FFY 2011 to 800 in FFY 2012 and 900 in FFY 2013, 1000 in 2014, and 1100 in 2015; thereby substantially improving employment outcomes for DVR clients in Maine

Objective: Reduction of the numbers of DVR clients who “drop out” of services from 1627 in FFY 2011 to 1500 in FFY 2012 to 1300 in FY 2013 (continued for 2014 & 2015)

Strategies: a. Collect and analyze data on reasons for drop out for cases closed in status 30/found eligible no plan developed.

REPORT ON PROGRESS: DVR contracted with the Center for Workforce Research and Information to conduct a preliminary analysis on early exiters from services. That report was released in January 2015 and presented to the SRC at their February meeting. The report indicated that clients under the age of 25 were particularly likely to exit services before successful employment. In this past year, DVR has undertaken a number of initiatives and provided additional training to staff in the attempt to decrease the number of individuals who do not complete their programs within VR. These initiatives, include implementing a Progressive Employment pilot geared to transition age youth in the hopes that youth will stay engaged with the VR process once they graduate from High School. In addition DVR has provided additional training to staff to impress upon them the need to move clients into plan earlier, which we believe will have a positive impact by lessening the early exit of individuals from VR.

b. Provide staff training on case management techniques that promote engagement.

REPORT ON PROGRESS: The DVR Director presented a webinar on March 23, 2015 on WIOA and Time to Plan. This was then followed up by targeted in-person training to all field office staff during the summer of 2015. The training included best practices on time to plan for a variety of client populations as well as technical strategies to improve case management. To continue to strengthen employment plan development, casework supervisors regularly review open cases as well as meet with VRCs to provide guidance on appropriate plan development. New Counselor Training includes a module on plan development and all VRCs who would like to brush up on their plan development skills are welcome to attend along with new counselors when it is offered during the year.

Objective: To increase the percentage of successful employment closures for individuals who receive services from community rehabilitation providers.

Strategies: a. Provide joint training opportunities for CRP's on topics to promote best practices in employment supports for people with disabilities.

REPORT ON PROGRESS: DVR through its partnership in the Workforce Development System sponsors regular training for CRPs on topics such as Discovering Personal Genius and Fading and Natural Supports. Additionally, DVR offered in-person and webinar training to CRPs on the Progressive Employment model, collaboration with DHHS and other relevant topics during the year. DVR strives to provide cross-training between CRPs and VR counselors whenever possible.

c. Monitor data on the implementation of the Milestone Outcome Payment System for quality assurance.

REPORT ON PROGRESS: Monitoring of expenditures and employment outcomes is occurring; a detailed analysis is in early stages with the assistance of Management Analyst II hired during FFY 15. Using the Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) expenditures from SFY 2012 as a baseline and comparing it to SFY 2015 expenditures, there was an increase of total expenditures for CRP services of \$655, 453; which equates to a 22.5% increase in spending. Using the same baseline data information, comparing SFY 2012 to SFY 2015, 263 less clients were referred to and received services from CRPs and there were 9 less CRP successful closures. Cost per successful closure was \$11,345 in SFY 2012 and \$14,412 in SFY 2015 or in an increase per client of \$3,067. Costs for all clients served by CRPs in SFY 2012 were \$1,169 and in SFY 2015 \$1,602, an increase of \$433 per client. Improvements were noted in service time length from Eligibility to Employment and from Eligibility to Closure during the same SFY comparison and closure trends showed an increase in the rehabilitation rate, comparing successful closures to unsuccessful closures, of 5.7% points. Another area of note is the number of authorizations created by Support Staff during the same time period decreased by 1,275; this demonstrates a decrease in workload for administrative staff within the agency and has implications for improvements throughout the State of Maine payment system and process. As noted above, there are increases to spending in services provided to clients through the Milestone payment process; likewise, there are benefits and improvements noted. A more thorough evaluation of the costs and benefit analysis and a determination to make adjustments to the existing process will be forthcoming.

Objective: To expand the number of Maine employers who implement diversity hiring activities through engagement with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services' Business Services Hiring Initiative Team from two in FFY 2011 to four in FFY 2012 to six in FY 2013 to twelve in FY 2014 to sixteen in FY 2015.

Strategies: a. Continue to actively support the Maine Chapter of the US Business Leadership Network.

REPORT ON PROGRESS: DVR continues with participation in the development of the Maine Business Leadership Network infrastructure and participates on the MEBLN advisory team. No one was sent to the conference in FY15 because there was no one in that position at the time the conference was held. DVR did participate the two previous years however. DVR has experienced the retirement of one Business Relations Specialist and the resignation of another. Despite these setbacks, DVR maintains a dual customer approach as evidenced by the activities below. Recruitment of new businesses has, however, been slowed by this staff turnover.

b. Partner with the Maine State Chamber of Commerce, local Chambers, and the Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM) to expand business outreach/network.

REPORT ON PROGRESS: DVR renewed its agreement with the Chamber of Commerce which serves as the host for the MEBLN, the Business Relations Specialist and MEBLN members submitted a proposal on increasing hiring of people with disabilities which was selected for presentation at Maine's annual Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) conference in May 2015.

c. With input from field staff (VRCs and CRPs), develop Regional Business Relations Plans for each region. These plans will clearly identify roles, responsibilities, and strategies to engage business partners in the field.

d. Participate with other MDOL programs to pilot a sector strategy to respond to workforce needs in health care. A major emphasis is on the development of a Maine Health Care Academy to train job seekers for CNAs and/or nursing positions.

REPORT ON PROGRESS: This partnership was put on hold due to staffing turnover. Goal 2 To serve all individuals with the most significant disabilities in a timely manner including maintenance of no waitlist for services during the period FFY 2012 – 2015

Objective: To reduce the average time in plan development (status 10) from 300 days in FFY 2011 to 240 days in FFY 2012 to 210 days in FY 2013 to 180 days in FY 2014 & FY 2015.

Strategies: a. Increase use of the Career Exploration Workshop, which has been shown to decrease case length time.

REPORT ON PROGRESS: DVR continues to use the Career Exploration Workshop as a powerful tool in assisting clients to clarify their career goals. The CEW is offered on a regular basis (at least monthly) in five CareerCenter locations and as needed at other sites. Currently DVR is conducting its second analysis of the impact of CEW on client outcomes. According to recent data from our last quarter, the Statewide average number of days for all VR clients to get into an Individualized Plan from their date of eligibility is 134 days. At the end of 2014, the average time to plan was 217 days. While DVR has continued to address and improve on this time frame, our goal is to meet the 90 days to plan requirement that is stated in the Rehab Act. This is the goal that we will strive for in this next Federal Fiscal year.

b. Work closely with the Maine Department of Education to ensure implementation of the joint Cooperative Agreement and best practice guidelines on referral and timely application for transition age students.

REPORT ON PROGRESS: DVR sits on DOE's State Personnel Development Grant and has participated in multiple joint training opportunities. DVR Asst. Director serves as Co-Chair of IDEA Part B Advisory Committee. DOE is a partner in Employment First and Special Services Director Jan Breton co-chairs subcommittee on transition. DVR presented at the MADSEC Special Education Directors annual conference in October 2014 as well as recorded a webinar on DVR services for posting on the Maine Department of Education website. Maine DVR works very closely with the Maine Department of Education to ensure timely referrals. Through MDOE sponsored trainings and regional groups, Maine DVR has had the opportunity to reinforce the message that the best time for referrals to DVR is two years before high school graduation or exit. Due to staff turnover in the field this is an area that needs regular attention.

c. Deliver staff training and supervision on best practices in IPE plan development

REPORT ON PROGRESS: To continue to strengthen employment plan development, casework supervisors regularly review open cases as well as meet with VRCs to provide guidance on appropriate plan development. New Counselor Training includes a module on plan development and all VRCs who would like to brush up on their plan development skills are welcome to attend along with new counselors when it is offered during the year. Transition VR counselors were participants in the Maine Department of Education's regional trainings on transition on March 3 –5, 2015. Additionally, transition clients were a targeted focus of the "Time to Plan" training provided to staff during Summer 2015. Transition VRCs receive regular updates on best practices via quarterly meetings. This year a particular focus of those meetings has been on WIOA's Pre Employment Transition Services

Objective: To increase the number of individuals with significant intellectual disabilities who access the available waiver employment support for long term employment support needs after closure from BRS by 50 people during FFY 2013.

Strategies: a. Continue to work in collaboration with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services to address the significant waitlist for employment waiver services.

REPORT ON PROGRESS: DVR developed a joint procedural directive with DHHS on long-term support and shared via webinar in November 2014 for DHHS, VR and CRP staff.

b. Continue to work with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services to ensure that all individuals who have the waiver – but have not taken advantage of employment services – are aware of employment supports open to them through coordination between the two Departments.

REPORT ON PROGRESS: During this last year DVR has partnered with DHHS on the implementation of the discovery model for individuals with significant disabilities "Discovering Personal Genius". DVR and DHHS issued joint guidance on DPG and presented a webinar on that guidance in September 2015. Regular DPG training was offered for interested staff and providers.

c. Complete and pilot the recently developed Career Exploration Workshop appropriate for individuals with intellectual disabilities The BRIDGE CEW has been used extensively since its release with 29 agencies trained to date by DVR staff (Clubhouse, Strive U, case management agencies, homeless shelters, schools and more)

Goal 3 To ensure that individuals with disabilities who may be unserved or underserved or who have minority status have access to DVR services, Maine DVR will increase the numbers of individuals with disabilities from racial and minority groups from 3.2 percent in FY 2011 to meet the federal standard as determined by RSA' s Indicator 2.1 RSA is looking at the proportion of minorities who receive services compared to the ratio of non-minorities served. The Federal standard is 0.80 or greater

Objective: Maine DVR will work closely with Maine's Section 121 VR Grant – Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation, to increase co-enrollment from no one co-enrolled in FY 2011 to four in FY 2012, six in FY 2013, eight in FY 2014, and 10 in FY 2015

Strategies: a. Maine DVR will include Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation in training and technical assistance opportunities.

REPORT ON PROGRESS: a. Wabanaki VR Counselor participated in DVR New Counselor training in Nov/Dec 2014

b. Wabanaki VR will provide technical assistance to Maine DVR on issues related to cultural competency and best practices in Native employment supports.

REPORT ON PROGRESS: Individual TA and consultation is provided by Wabanaki VR on an as needed basis. In the coming fiscal year DVR will work with Wabanaki VR to develop a webinar for DVR staff

c. According to the joint MOU, Maine DVR and Wabanaki VR will meet at least annually to review the agreement.

REPORT ON PROGRESS: The MOU was last updated June 2013; regionally DVR and the WVR communicate regularly. The Directors of Maine DVR and Wabanaki VR met in March 2015 to review the Memorandum of Understanding. The Director of the Section 121 Grant serves on the State Rehabilitation Council. DVR's Business Relations Consultant has provided outreach to the Wabanaki VR program to ensure that individuals served by that program have access to employment opportunities developed with larger companies in northern Maine. During the reporting year, Maine DVR and Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation co-enrolled four (4) clients. Both programs value the partnership between the programs and continually review case sharing, training, and other issues to ensure optimal collaboration. Maine DVR also has made gains on meeting the federal standard (RSA Indicator 2.1). RSA looks at the proportion of minorities who receive services compared to the ratio of non-minorities served. The Federal standard is 0.80 or greater. As of December, 2013 the Maine service rate for minorities was 0.967.

Objective: Maine DVR will collect data on the numbers of individuals served – belonging to the following categories in FY 2012 to establish a baseline and future goals:

a. individuals involved with the correctional system

b. individuals who are Veterans c. individuals who are "older workers" d. individuals who are "New Mainers"

Strategies: a. DVR will develop and utilize special indicators in its case management system to track individuals who belong to one of the above groups.

REPORT ON PROGRESS: DVR is currently working on collecting these baseline measures.

b. DVR will ensure that all materials distributed or published by the agency will be accessible and demonstrate cultural competency.

REPORT ON PROGRESS: Members of DVR staff – including the State ADA Coordinator and the Director of the Division for the Deaf Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened served as part of a RFP team on Video Remote Interpreting services for the State of Maine. VRI availability will increase access for individuals living in remote areas of the state that are Deaf and have limited access to ASL interpreters. VRI will also increase client access for short or spontaneous meetings.

c. Maine DVR will complete a new video "Orientation to VR Services" in conjunction with the Maine Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) and the New England TACE.

REPORT ON PROGRESS: DVR and the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired, in collaboration with the Institute for Community Inclusion, completed seven new captioned/audio described video vignettes that tell the stories of individuals with diverse disabilities who have benefited from VR services. The videos are currently posted on the state website for viewing

Objective: Maine DVR will undertake efforts to embrace and implement an "Employment First" philosophy during the next year as documented by a decrease of 5% in the statewide unemployment rate of people with intellectual disabilities.

Strategies:

REPORT ON PROGRESS: Employment First Maine held a successful Summit in October 2014 to mark the accomplishments since the passage of Employment First legislation in 2013.

Objective: Maine DVR will increase the numbers of individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing who are served by DVR in the Northern and Western regions of the state.

Strategies: a. DVR will hire two additional Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf

REPORT ON PROGRESS: One position (Bangor) is currently posted, the other is filled. Both positions are in the budget to become permanent.

Objective: Maine DVR will maintain statewide consistency in its practices with regard to "Clubhouses" offering services to DVR clients as measured by client case review.

Strategies: a. DVR will maintain a liaison to the local Clubhouse in each office.

REPORT ON PROGRESS: DVR has either specifically assigned VRC's or a regional manager who works closely with each of the clubhouses.

b. DVR will invite Clubhouse program staff to participate in DVR training opportunities.

REPORT ON PROGRESS: Training opportunities have been offered, including learning to use The Bridge CEW, which has been piloted at one clubhouse with some success.

Goal 4 Maine DVR will partner with the larger workforce development system to improve opportunities and access for DVR clients as measured annually by documented collaborative activities, technical assistance, and training.

Objective: Maine DVR will partner with Maine's Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) Grant to increase the numbers of non-VR CareerCenter customers with disabilities who participate in Career Exploration Workshops from 3 in FY 2011 to 10 in FY 2012 to 25 in FY 2013

Strategies: a. The DEI team will include one VR Rehabilitation Counselor I who will assist in piloting a jointly-delivered Career Exploration Workshop

REPORT ON PROGRESS: New RCI, Lindsay Ball began on November 10 and is serving the Augusta, Skowhegan, Wilton and Lewiston offices.

b. DVR will participate in DEI Integrated Resource Team meetings

REPORT ON PROGRESS: DEI is just now launching the IRT process.

c. DVR will work with the DEI team and others in the Bureau of Employment Services to ensure accessibility in Maine's CareerCenter network

REPORT ON PROGRESS: The ADA Coordinator has surveyed for physical accessibility compliance

Objective: Maine DVR will work with the Bureau of Labor Standards to support integrated competitive community-based employment of people with disabilities by a review and examination of organizations paying sub-minimum wage in Maine with the goal of reducing these certificates from 17 in FY 2011 to 15 in FY 2012 to 13 in FY 2013

Strategies: a. DVR will hire three Rehabilitation Counselor II's to serve specialty Workers' Compensation caseloads

REPORT ON PROGRESS: DVR currently is advertising for openings for two WC RC IIs. b. DVR will meet at least annually with the Workers' Compensation Board to assess the success of the MOU initiative.

Objective: DVR will explore opportunities for new grants to support the mission of BRS. During 2015, DVR will apply for at least two new grant opportunities.

REPORT ON PROGRESS: DVR has submitted an application to the Institute for Community Inclusion for participation in a Learning Collaborative on Implementation of Vermont's Progressive Employment model.

Identify how a broad range of assistive technology services and assistive technology devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process; and describe how assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities on a statewide basis.

Assistive technology services and assistive technology devices are provided to individuals with disabilities as determined by each individual's vocational goal, and appear as prescribed services on the respective individual's signed IPE. DVR services include assistive technology and assistive technology devices if required for the individual's IPE, necessary for the attainment of the individual's employment goal. DVR works closely with Maine cohorts, Alpha One and ALLTECH, assistive technology organizations which provide assistive technology technical assistance services as well as assistive technology devices.

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

While progress was made and goals were achieved, DVR experienced staff turnovers, in part as a result of retirements. Also, DVR experienced fiscal challenges which impacted the program. DVR

has responded to these and other issues by evaluating the delivery of services, priorities of our program and most importantly, how to overcome these and other challenges to serve our clients effectively.

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.

Services and strategies are evaluated as part of the entire program.

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

- DVR has several goals and strategies in place (listed earlier in this document) with the overarching goal of improving outcomes for individuals with significant disabilities, including adults and students with intellectual and developmental disabilities which is the population that Maine would most likely be serving within the supported employment program. During FY 2014, Maine DVR served 181 individuals with the primary disability of intellectual and developmental disability and 52 were successfully closed in competitive employment. In FY 2015, DVR served 241 individuals with Intellectual and developmental disabilities with 48 closed successfully in competitive integrated employment and to date (FFY 2016), DVR has served 399 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities with 40 successful closures in integrated competitive employment. There are improvements in how we are serving this population, and the addition of employment and career services that are being provided to this population with waiver funds is helping with this effort. DVR plans to continue to reach out and improve services to this population by expanding efforts in the use of progressive employment (discussed earlier in the plan), and training and supports for the Jobs for Maine Graduates programs so that they are better able to serve students with disabilities.

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

DVR is a partner with Adult Education, the SWIB, and the larger workforce development system to incorporate and apply the new rules related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), including drafting a unified state plan adopting new performance measures and further collaboration with the One-Stop system. DVR is a member of the Maine WIOA steering committee, which is guiding the Act's implementation, and also has participants on multiple related sub-committees. DVR will be using wage data from the Maine Department of Labor's Unemployment Insurance to establish baseline and initial WIOA performance targets for employment outcomes. Although it does not provide information on individuals who are placed in self-employment or other jobs, such as federal and out-of-state positions, this is the only data set available at this time. DVR is seeking further definition and data sources for the other WIOA performance indicators.

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

State Independent Living Council (SILC) To assist the SILC to increase organizational capacity and member effectiveness, Maine DVR continued to support the SILC to maintain an Executive Director to envision and articulate the organization's goals and establish the systems and mechanisms to achieve these goals. The SILC Executive Director will be responsible for conducting the work of the SPIL under the supervision and direction of the Maine SILC to accomplish tasks such as a) recruitment and management of members and volunteers b) establish and maintain partnerships with community members and organizations c) market and promote the Maine SILC d) increase and diversify the resources related to the six core areas of the SILC. State Rehabilitation Council Support Innovation & Expansion funds are used to support the activities and administration of the Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) for the Division and the SRC meets monthly as a full council. The SRC has standing committees that meet regularly. These committees include, DVR/SRC Policy Group, CSPD Subcommittee, Membership, Annual Meeting, Website committee, and the Executive Committee. For more information regarding the SRC, please visit www.mainesrc.org. At its annual meeting in September 2013 the SRC benefited from the New England Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Center (TACE) facilitators. TACE successfully facilitated the SRC annual meeting as TACE staff understood not only the SRC mission, but also its current challenges, future goals and the critical importance of its work on behalf of PWD.

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.

The Division continues to take steps to ensure the quality of Supported Employment. Our management information system reports provide information on weekly wages, hours worked, and public assistance at the time of application and closure. The reports also provide information on the type of disabilities being served, the cost per case, and the average cost by counselor, region, and state. Planning discussions continue with both Developmental Services and Mental Health Services to work with DVR in tracking employment outcomes. We are able to document individuals who are eligible for VR, but who lack long-term support preventing plan development. Maine strives to improve the quality of supported employment services through the provision of various training opportunities. The Division continues to work with the Maine DHHS to oversee the implementation of a comprehensive workforce development system for Employment Specialists and case managers. The inclusion of cases managers in these events is to educate about the importance of work in our consumers' lives, the sharing staff training is supported by the MOUs between BRS and DHHS. In 2011 classes were held for case managers on employment tools and resources at four different CareerCenters throughout the state. The Division regularly shares relative training and webinar announcements with the Provider community and provides ongoing staff development. We have identified minimum training requirements for the new CRPs to become approved providers. CRPs must provide evidence that all Employment Specialists and Job Coaches have completed one of the BRS approved training curricula. The Division and DHHS have agreed that any curriculum must be ACRE certified in order to be added to the list of approved Employment Specialist or Job Coach Certification training programs. DVRs expectation is that this training requirement and a comprehensive workforce development system, along with other established standards for service provided through the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) and our in-state accreditation process will continue to improve services to all DVR consumers. The CARF and In-State approval process for CRPs consists of a number of facets such as reviewing policies and procedures that reflect knowledge and application of quality supported employment services in adherence to APSE standards for Supported Employment. Areas evaluated are: • mission statement, • admission criteria, • policy and practice on Assessments, • case coordination, client input, • health and safety issues, • human resource issues such as staff qualifications and background checks, • client rights and • appeal procedures. Other parts of the approval process include interviews with key stakeholders such as clients, employers, funding agents, etc. 1. Scope of Supported Employment The primary services provided to clients in supported employment continue to be • Assessment, • Job Skills Coaching, and • Job Placement. These direct services are provided by an Employment Specialist or a Job Coach, who supports the client through activities such as: intervention with supervisors and peers, and aids integration into the company's social environment. Other allowable services that are provided when a need is identified include supplemental assessments, social skills training, observation or supervision of the individual, transportation, and facilitation of natural supports. The Division provides whatever is required to achieve and maintain integrated competitive employment. Based on ongoing commitments from the DHHS Office Adult Mental Health Services to provide extended support to all individuals using the supported employment model when they have stabilized and are ready for extended support, the DVR continues to expand the percentage of individuals with long-term mental illness who require ongoing supports to sustain employment. Changes through the DHHS approved June 1, 2006 increased

resources available for the extended support funds for individuals with developmental disabilities. This results in up to 600 hours of Supported Employment services available per year expanding opportunity for extended job supports for an estimated 1400 individuals. We anticipate that 300 to 400 hundred of these individuals will be applying for VR during the next year. In this past year extended support services have been more limited for individual with developmental disabilities. Developmental Services did implement a new Medicaid waiver program shifting resources from day habilitation services to community supports which includes employment. This has resulted in additional individuals with developmental disabilities being eligible for supported employment with Developmental Services providing extended supports. We developed an agreement which coordinates the delivery of supported employment services including extended supports. Unfortunately, due to funding cuts the new waiver is not open to new applicants at this time. DVR and Developmental Services are committed to working with those individuals already on the waiver. The Division continues to receive funds from the state to provide extended support to individuals with traumatic brain injuries. We estimated in 2012 that between 25 to 30 individuals with traumatic brain injury will be able to participate in supported employment using state funded extended support. DVR ended 2012 having served 46. Another state funded program providing long term supports is the Basic Extended Support Program that purchases extended support for all disability groups. The annual services CAP for individuals receiving long term supports from this fund is \$3000. This funding supported 144 individuals during 2012. Presently, the disability groups this program funds includes any individuals who have been closed successfully in the DVR or DBVI program, who require no more than \$3000 a year in long term support (for job coaching). Transitional employment is also available to individuals with chronic mental illness. Transitional employment recognizes that persons with mental illness, in some cases, can learn a skill at a community based training site and transfer those skills to an actual work site. It also recognizes that the primary need is not always job skills training but emotional support, reinforcement, and evaluation of the client's mental health. 2. Extent of Supported Employment Services We anticipate three to four hundred of these individuals will be applying for VR during the next year. In this past year extended support services have been more limited for individual with developmental disabilities. Developmental Services did implement a new Medicaid waiver program shifting resources from day habilitation services to employment. The new waiver program has resulted in additional individuals with developmental disabilities being eligible for supported employment with Developmental Services providing extended supports. DVR developed an agreement which coordinates the delivery of supported employment services including extended supports. Unfortunately, due to funding cuts the new waiver is not open to new applicants at this time. DVR and Developmental Services are committed to working with those individuals already on the waiver. DVR continues to look closely at the true need for ongoing supports and reserving this model for those with the most severe disability. There were a number of individuals that benefited from the "place" and "train" model without necessarily needing the extended support. There is also greater emphasis on natural supports.

2. THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES.

The Division's rules state the maximum time period for DVR time-limited services is eighteen (18) months, unless the IPE indicates that more than eighteen (18) months of services are necessary in order for the individual to achieve job stability prior to transition to extended services. In day-to-day practice, a team approach is used to determine when an individual is ready to transition to extended support.

CERTIFICATIONS

Name of designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

Name of designated State agency **Department of Labor**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Jeanne S. Paquette**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Commissioner**

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1. The **designated State agency or designated State unit (as appropriate) listed above** is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by WIOA*, and its supplement under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.** Yes
2. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the **designated State agency listed above** agrees to operate and administer the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan , the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations , policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of VR services and the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan; Yes
3. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated State agency agrees to operate and administer the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan* , the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations , policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under title VI are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;** Yes
4. The designated State agency and/or the designated State unit has the authority under State law to perform the functions of the State regarding the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement; Yes
5. The State legally may carry out each provision of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement. Yes
6. All provisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement are consistent with State law. Yes
7. The **Authorized Representative listed above** has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement; Yes

8. The **Authorized Representative listed above** has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services; Yes

9. The agency that submits the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement. Yes

FOOTNOTES

Certification 1 Footnotes

* Public Law 113-128.

** Unless otherwise stated, "Rehabilitation Act" means the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA, signed into law on July 22, 2014.

Certification 2 Footnotes

* All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

** No funds under title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

*** Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76,77,79,81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3485; and the State VR Services Program regulations.

Certification 3 Footnotes

* No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

** Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in *** under Certification 2 footnotes

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON THE CERTIFICATIONS FROM THE STATE

CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING — VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions.

(3) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, subgrants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly. This certification is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

STATEMENT FOR LOAN GUARANTEES AND LOAN INSURANCE

The undersigned states, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

Applicant's Organization **Department of Labor - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Jeanne S. Paquette**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Commissioner**

SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (only if applicable)
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>). If applicable, please print, sign, and email to MAT_OCTAE@ed.gov

CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING — SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions.

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If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

Applicant's Organization **Department of Labor - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Jeanne S. Paquette**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Commissioner**

SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (only if applicable)
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>).

ASSURANCES

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances: **The State Plan must provide assurances that:**

1. PUBLIC COMMENT ON POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.

2. SUBMISSION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT:

The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a unified plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.

3. ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN:

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:

A. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS REQUIRED BY SECTION 101(A)(2) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

B. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF EITHER A STATE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION OR STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, AS REQUIRED BY SECTION 101(A)(21) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable **(B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council**

C. CONSULTATIONS REGARDING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(16)(B) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

D. THE FINANCIAL PARTICIPATION BY THE STATE, OR IF THE STATE SO ELECTS, BY THE STATE AND LOCAL AGENCIES, TO PROVIDE THE AMOUNT OF THE NON-FEDERAL SHARE OF THE COST OF CARRYING OUT THE VR PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(3).

E. THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(2)(A) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

The designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds **No**

F. THE SHARED FUNDING AND ADMINISTRATION OF JOINT PROGRAMS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(2)(A)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

The designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs: **No**

G. STATEWIDENESS AND WAIVERS OF STATEWIDENESS REQUIREMENTS, AS SET FORTH IN SECTION 101(A)(4) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

Is the designated State agency requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan? See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan. **No**

H. THE DESCRIPTIONS FOR COOPERATION, COLLABORATION, AND COORDINATION, AS REQUIRED BY SECTIONS 101(A)(11) AND (24)(B); AND 606(B) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

I. ALL REQUIRED METHODS OF ADMINISTRATION, AS REQUIRED BY SECTION 101(A)(6) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT .

J. THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT, AS SET FORTH IN SECTION 101(A)(7) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

K. THE COMPILATION AND SUBMISSION TO THE COMMISSIONER OF STATEWIDE ASSESSMENTS, ESTIMATES, STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES, STRATEGIES, AND PROGRESS REPORTS, AS APPROPRIATE, AND AS REQUIRED BY SECTIONS 101(A)(15), 105(C)(2), AND 606(B)(8) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

L. THE RESERVATION AND USE OF A PORTION OF THE FUNDS ALLOTTED TO THE STATE UNDER SECTION 110 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO EXPAND AND IMPROVE THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES, PARTICULARLY INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES.

M. THE SUBMISSION OF REPORTS AS REQUIRED BY SECTION 101(A)(10) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

4. ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES:

The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:

A. COMPLY WITH ALL REQUIREMENTS REGARDING INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTIONS 101(A)(5)(D) AND (20) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

B. IMPOSE NO DURATION OF RESIDENCE REQUIREMENT AS PART OF DETERMINING AN INDIVIDUAL'S ELIGIBILITY FOR VR SERVICES OR THAT EXCLUDES FROM SERVICES UNDER THE PLAN ANY INDIVIDUAL WHO IS PRESENT IN THE STATE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(12) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT .

C. PROVIDE THE FULL RANGE OF SERVICES LISTED IN SECTION 103(A) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT AS APPROPRIATE, TO ALL ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE WHO APPLY FOR SERVICES IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(5) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT?

Agency will provide the full range of services described above **No**

D. DETERMINE WHETHER COMPARABLE SERVICES AND BENEFITS ARE AVAILABLE TO THE INDIVIDUAL IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(8) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

E. COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 102(B) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

F. COMPLY WITH REQUIREMENTS REGARDING THE PROVISIONS OF INFORMED CHOICE FOR ALL APPLICANTS AND ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 102(D) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

G. PROVIDE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES TO AMERICAN INDIANS WHO ARE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING IN THE STATE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(13) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

H. COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CONDUCT OF SEMIANNUAL OR ANNUAL REVIEWS, AS APPROPRIATE, FOR INDIVIDUALS EMPLOYED EITHER IN AN EXTENDED EMPLOYMENT SETTING IN A COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAM OR ANY OTHER EMPLOYMENT UNDER SECTION 14(C) OF THE FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT OF 1938, AS REQUIRED BY SECTION 101(A)(14) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

I. MEET THE REQUIREMENTS IN SECTIONS 101(A)(17) AND 103(B)(2) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT IF THE STATE ELECTS TO CONSTRUCT, UNDER SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, FACILITIES FOR COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

J. WITH RESPECT TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, THE STATE,

I. HAS DEVELOPED AND WILL IMPLEMENT,

A. STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS IDENTIFIED IN THE ASSESSMENTS; AND

B. STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED BY THE STATE, TO IMPROVE AND EXPAND VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES ON A STATEWIDE BASIS; AND

II. HAS DEVELOPED AND WILL IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES TO PROVIDE PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES (SECTIONS 101(A)(15) AND 101(A)(25)).

5. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION FOR THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT TITLE VI SUPPLEMENT:

A. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT ASSURES THAT IT WILL INCLUDE IN THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN ALL INFORMATION REQUIRED BY SECTION 606 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

B. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY ASSURES THAT IT WILL SUBMIT REPORTS IN SUCH FORM AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH SUCH PROCEDURES AS THE COMMISSIONER MAY REQUIRE AND COLLECTS THE INFORMATION REQUIRED BY SECTION 101(A)(10) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT SEPARATELY FOR INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES UNDER TITLE I AND INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

C. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL COORDINATE ACTIVITIES WITH ANY OTHER STATE AGENCY THAT IS FUNCTIONING AS AN EMPLOYMENT NETWORK UNDER THE TICKET TO WORK AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROGRAM UNDER SECTION 1148 OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT.

6. FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM:

A. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY ASSURES THAT IT WILL EXPEND NO MORE THAN 2.5 PERCENT OF THE STATE'S ALLOTMENT UNDER TITLE VI FOR ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS OF CARRYING OUT THIS PROGRAM; AND, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR AGENCIES WILL PROVIDE, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY THROUGH PUBLIC OR PRIVATE ENTITIES, NON-FEDERAL CONTRIBUTIONS IN AN AMOUNT THAT IS NOT LESS THAN 10 PERCENT OF THE COSTS OF CARRYING OUT SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROVIDED TO YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES WITH THE FUNDS RESERVED FOR SUCH PURPOSE UNDER SECTION 603(D) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 606(B)(7)(G) AND (H) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

B. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY ASSURES THAT IT WILL USE FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT ONLY TO PROVIDE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING EXTENDED SERVICES TO YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, WHO ARE ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE SUCH SERVICES; AND, THAT SUCH FUNDS ARE USED ONLY TO SUPPLEMENT AND NOT SUPPLANT THE FUNDS PROVIDED UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, WHEN PROVIDING SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES SPECIFIED IN THE INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 606(B)(7)(A) AND (D), OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

7. PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES:

A. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY ASSURES THAT IT WILL PROVIDE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AS DEFINED IN SECTION 7(39) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

B. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY ASSURES THAT:

I. THE COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF INDIVIDUALS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES CONDUCTED UNDER SECTION 102(B)(1) OF THE

REHABILITATION ACT AND FUNDED UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT INCLUDES CONSIDERATION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT AS AN APPROPRIATE EMPLOYMENT OUTCOME, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF SECTION 606(B)(7)(B) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT

- II. AN INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT THAT MEETS THE REQUIREMENTS OF SECTION 102(B) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT , WHICH IS DEVELOPED AND UPDATED WITH TITLE I FUNDS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTIONS 102(B)(3)(F) AND 606(B)(6)(C) AND (E) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON THE ASSURANCES FROM THE STATE

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION
(BLIND)

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

* Sec. 102(b)(D)(iii) of WIOA

A. INPUT OF STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

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

1. INPUT PROVIDED BY THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, INCLUDING INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN, RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL'S REPORT, THE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION, AND OTHER COUNCIL REPORTS THAT MAY HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED AS PART OF THE COUNCIL'S FUNCTIONS;

SRC– DBVI State Plan Comments This is been quite a year for the SRC and DBVI. The year started out quietly but as it progressed some major issues within the agency came to light, testing the relationship between the SRC and DBVI. We are ending the year with, what we hope to be, an agency that is moving forward in a healthy manner, with a sustainable plan, and working cooperatively together as the SRC and DBVI. As RSA knows DBVI ran into a financial shortfall starting in June 2015. The SRC started working on this issue in September 2015. There has been much input from the community as to where the SRC should be devoting it resources in 2016. The major areas are: homemaker closures, transition students (PETS) and "realignment".

Homemaker: DBVI has historically used the homemaker closure to meet the needs of its older independent living consumers. The Independent Living arm of DBVI is currently in a financial deficit. In the past "homemakers" have fallen into the Title I section of the DBVI budget. It is clear this will not be happening as we move forward. Though the homemaker client represents a large portion of who DBVI Maine serves, most of this document focuses on employment. Employment is an important and worthwhile goal. It appears to the SRC the older blind and visually impaired populations make up a large and growing portion of the state's residents. The state plan appears to treat this portion of the blind community as an afterthought. It is the SRC's opinion that DBVI needs to allocate time and resources to this population of blind Mainers.

Transition: DBVI and the SRC also have to develop a plan with its PETS students. There is much work to be done in this area: retention of students, the 15% fiscal set aside in a state that is aging without dismantling the services being provided to other consumers of DBVI services.

Realignment: The final focus of the SRC this year is the "realignment" activities of DBVI. Realignment is the term coined to describe the activities of DBVI to or seek efficiency and re-organize DBVI to bring operational expenditures back in line with federal and state funding. DBVI and the SRC are taking a retrospective look at how we ended up in the financial situation we are currently in. Working together, and trying to get a clear picture of what happened and how to prevent this from happening in the future. We are doing this by reviewing budgets, talking to staff and consumers along with reviewing various parts of the agency specifically contracts, technology, staffing, and outreach to the community.

Finally, early in the fall the combining of DVR and DBVI was not "off the table" The SRC would request from BRS/DOL whether activities within BRS are still looking at combining the two agencies as an option or has this issue been taken off "the table" permanently? Though we have been on a rocky road we appreciate the effort DBVI is currently putting forth to help solve some very big issues in conjunction with the SRC for the community it serves.

Sincerely, SRC DBVI

Specific Comments Separated by the headings of the appropriate section:

(A) INPUT OF STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

As an ACB member and PTGDU member I had no knowledge this ever happened. I heard about it from a source outside of these specific groups. I then distributed the information about the hearings to these organizations.

Blind consumers have requested that DBVI be moved out of BRS into its own Commission. DBVI has not responded to the consumers' desires/request.

The plan does not address the projected shortfall of funding of IL for the blind community.

Consumers are not familiar or very comfortable with the public hearing process. Consequently the consumer voice in the state plan process has historically been less than what it could or should be. the state plan should make clear that DBVI will create plans to proactively and consistently meet consumers where they gather throughout the year to collect needs data, satisfaction data and other comments regarding consumers' needs and how well the DBVI is meeting them.

(C) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH AGENCIES NOT CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES UNDER THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

This paragraph speaks regarding a strong relationship between DVR and OADS/SAMHS. Does this information pertain to DBVI? If so, what is DBVI doing with these entities in terms of "implementing joint approaches to the workforce development of community rehabilitation providers and business engagement throughout the state"?

(D) COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

We believe 504 students should also be added to this MOU.

The plan states that the DBVI Director sits on DOE advisory committee and is a member of a DOE team preparing for statewide implementation of UEB. The DBVI Director position has been vacant for several months. Who is fulfilling this role to ensure that DBVI is involved in moving these efforts forward?

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

The plan states that DVR and DBVI are working with DHHS to learn about new service opportunities such as Discovering Personal Genius and Medicaid waiver funding for persons with head injury. Does DPG pertain to DBVI or just to DVR?

(G) COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

The SRC would like to see some data surrounding how the Business Relations Specialist has benefited DBVI in the past. Also, please explain why the Business Relations Specialist positions

have not been filled. It does not seem feasible that DBVI Counselors/directors can cover these duties, considering the reductions in staff that have occurred.

(I) COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT; DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

Plan states that DBVI's leadership will continue to monitor and deliver training needs although CSPD is no longer a requirement. Should this state that DBVI has continued to monitor and deliver the services instead of will continue?

In regards to projected vacancies over the next five years, is the Rehab Services Manager position the Assistant DBVI Director position? If not, where is the Assistant Director position? Why is the position projected to be vacant over the next five years? Why is the Business Enterprise Program staff position expected to be vacant over the next five years? There is no discussion in this section regarding the staffing cuts that have occurred or the impact of these cuts on DBVI. Please address the cuts as well as the impacts.

Could DBVI please elaborate on the statement, "Going forward there are concerns regarding the impact on retention of qualified staff due to limited training resources and other physical challenges."

(J) STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

One of the themes in the CSNA was the need for peer support/peer monitoring. We would recommend DBVI subscribe to the Iris networks newsletter (community connections) for a list of peer support groups around the state that staff could refer consumers to.

The section talks of service delivery models. The two listed are, home-based and center-based models. In the past, there has been a third model a regional model. In the regional model several consumers from a community get together and receive services. This is cost-effective. It also allows consumers to be with others who are going through similar situations.

Where is the data or sources to support this statement? The statement being, "consumers continue to stress the need to have in-state option."

Plan needs to address/include community-based model of services. There is great concern from blind consumers that choices have been strictly limited as independent providers have stopped receiving referrals to provide services. How is DBVI going to ensure consumer choice as well as timely access to services?

The SILC and others in the disability community are working toward developing a transportation voucher system in Maine which would substantially improve transportation problems for people with disabilities, especially in the rural areas. DBVI should include the intention of participating and supporting the development and implementation of an effective transportation voucher program in Maine.

What were the ages of the people attending out-of-state immersion centers?

The SRC believe "Awareness of DBVI Services" should be the first grouping in the section.

In regards to DBVI eligible population doubling, how will DBVI prepare to serve these numbers? What additional resources will be needed and how will the resources be accessed? Additionally, the plan states that “consumers identified the need to explore service delivery models” related to non-English speaking immigrants and refugees. How will DBVI explore service delivery models and plan to better serve this identified population?

(L) STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

Goal 1 focuses on stabilizing DBVI's financial situation; however, neither the goal nor the plan identifies DBVI's financial situation. DBVI experienced significant changes during the past reporting year. Staff positions were eliminated; providers stopped receiving referrals; contracts were reduced. The structure of DBVI was changed in a significant way. Please speak to the changes and the potential impacts. Please include a goal that focuses on DBVI's plan to restore structure, positions, and services statewide. It is concerning that re-allotment funds will be used for “one-time initiatives.” Shouldn't DBVI focus on initiatives that are sustainable and have great impact on individuals served?

(M) ORDER OF SELECTION

Plan states that Maine DBVI does not currently have a wait list. Considering the budget shortfall and cutting of key DBVI positions, as well as reports from providers and clients that services were not being provided by DBVI, has DBVI formally considered entering into an order of selection? If not, has DBVI conversed with the SRC regarding their decision not to enter into an order of selection?

Please explain how DBVI concluded that an order of selection is not needed. What discussion did DBVI have with the SRC regarding order of selection?

Maine DBVI does not currently have a wait list for individual seeking services but the SRC would suggest doing some research into referrals made by doctors' offices. There is a thought that these referrals may not be processed in a timely manner.

(O) STATE'S STRATEGIES

Referring to Goal 1: As an SRC we feel that reallocation funds, when used correctly and prudently can be incorporated into an annual budget. It should be noted that historically DBVI has time and time again utilized reallocation funds in this manner. We do not feel it would be prudent at this time to remove this much needed stabilizing resource.

Referring to Goal 2: Offering an employment service that only runs every other year is not timely. Clients cannot wait up to 48 months for service. If this is a necessary service for clients it needs to either run more frequently or on an individual as needed basis.

Referring to Goal 2: This goal includes an objective for implementing new WIOA regulations that affect homemakers. Do we have WIOA regulations? What will we do in terms of homemakers if we do not have regulations or until we have regulations? Please consider a goal that specifically addresses homemakers in a holistic manner. For example, DBVI needs a goal that will identify and provide supports and services to the homemaker population. How will IL funds be available to this group?

Referring to Goal 4: Unserved or underserved – please consider adding objective that addresses services for New Mainers (need identified by consumer).

Referring to Goal 5: It is not obvious why you would want to form alliances with these two programs. DBVI is short staffed at this time. Establishing partnerships that are not paramount in nature seems to be a waste of resources. The SRC would recommend that you take these out.

Supported Employment – The plan states that at least two consumers were closed successfully into integrated employment. What is the exact number? The plan identifies a lack of a variety of natural supports as a barrier for this population. What is/can DBVI do to develop/increase natural supports?

Innovation and Expansion – How are these funds used specifically?

(P) EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS.

Referring to Goal 1: Could you please explain, to the best of your ability, why there was a drop in competitive closures in fiscal year 2015?

Referring to Goal 2: In 2011 RSA noted a 40% loss of students just before or after graduation. What is the percentage of students lost in 2014?

(Q) QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES.

Quality of Supported Employment Services: Why does the lack of long-term support prevent the development of a plan? What other options, like natural supports or connections with community providers, has been done to ensure that these individuals who are eligible receive services?

The plan states that there is ongoing self-evaluation that will positively impact the quality of service area, including supported employment. Please outline the self-evaluation plan and explain how it has and will positively impact services.

The plan states that “trial work settings should be available to assess the consumer’s ability in an integrated, competitive setting.” Are these available? If not, why?

What are the new ideas that DBVI is exploring in terms of extended support?

How many of the 23 clients were closed successfully? Why is DBVI reporting “at least two individuals”? What is the exact number?

The final sentence states that each individual “should” get the support they need. Why aren’t they getting the support they need? How can/will DBVI work to ensure the support is secured?

General Comments on the Plan:

There is no indication in the plan that DBVI suffered major losses and setbacks during the previous fiscal year, including but not limited to: reduced staffing positions, limitation of services, decreased referrals for independent providers, reduction of contracts, staff uncertainty and fear, consumer

uncertainty and fear. The current state of DBVI is the direct result of the substantial restructuring instituted by BRS.

The relationship between DBVI and the SRC suffered major setbacks during the previous fiscal year.

There is no indication in this plan that DBVI and the SRC need/plan to repair the relationship.

The plan does not strongly differentiate blindness services from general VR services. Much of the language within the plan speaks generically of DBVI and DVR.

Blind consumers expressed clear concerns with the way that DBVI has been restructured and requested input in terms of "restoring" DBVI to its current level of staffing. This plan does not indicate that blind consumers have expressed these concerns.

DVR and DBVI have not worked well together for several years. The state plan should include clear commitment to improve the relations between the two departments and encourage a focus of collaboration.

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

SRC– DBVI State Plan Comments This is been quite a year for the SRC and DBVI. The year started out quietly but as it progressed some major issues within the agency came to light, testing the relationship between the SRC and DBVI. We are ending the year with, what we hope to be, an agency that is moving forward in a healthy manner, with a sustainable plan, and working cooperatively together as the SRC and DBVI. As RSA knows DBVI ran into a financial shortfall starting in June 2015. The SRC started working on this issue in September 2015. There has been much input from the community as to where the SRC should be devoting it resources in 2016. The major areas are: homemaker closures, transition students (PETS) and "realignment".

Homemaker: DBVI has historically used the homemaker closure to meet the needs of its older independent living consumers. The Independent Living arm of DBVI is currently in a financial deficit. In the past "homemakers" have fallen into the Title I section of the DBVI budget. It is clear this will not be happening as we move forward. Though the homemaker client represents a large portion of who DBVI Maine serves, most of this document focuses on employment. Employment is an important and worthwhile goal. It appears to the SRC the older blind and visually impaired populations make up a large and growing portion of the state's residents. The state plan appears to treat this portion of the blind community as an afterthought. It is the SRC's opinion that DBVI needs to allocate time and resources to this population of blind Mainers.

Transition: DBVI and the SRC also have to develop a plan with its PETS students. There is much work to be done in this area: retention of students, the 15% fiscal set aside in a state that is aging without dismantling the services being provided to other consumers of DBVI services.

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consumers along with reviewing various parts of the agency specifically contracts, technology, staffing, and outreach to the community.

Finally, early in the fall the combining of DVR and DBVI was not "off the table" The SRC would request from BRS/DOL whether activities within BRS are still looking at combining the two agencies as an option or has this issue been taken off "the table" permanently? Though we have been on a rocky road we appreciate the effort DBVI is currently putting forth to help solve some very big issues in conjunction with the SRC for the community it serves.

Sincerely, SRC DBVI

Agency Response: DBVI agrees with the observations of the SRC in regard to the events of 2015 and believes that we have re-established a collaborative relationship that will provide a unified analysis of these issues. In the absence of any analysis regarding potential cost savings, consolidation of the existing DSUs is not under consideration at this time. Specific Comments Separated by the headings of the appropriate section:

(A) INPUT OF STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

As an ACB member and PTGDU member I had no knowledge this ever happened. I heard about it from a source outside of these specific groups. I then distributed the information about the hearings to these organizations.

Agency Response: DBVI expects that SRC representatives of consumer organizations will regularly communicate SRC conversations and activities to their membership.

Blind consumers have requested that DBVI be moved out of BRS into its own Commission. DBVI has not responded to the consumers' desires/request.

Agency Response: DBVI is established in law and can only be moved or relocated departmentally by the Maine State Legislature. This is not within DBVI's discretion.

The plan does not address the projected shortfall of funding of IL for the blind community.

Agency Response: This is the Title I plan for Vocational Rehabilitation and does not address Independent Living services.

Consumers are not familiar or very comfortable with the public hearing process. Consequently the consumer voice in the state plan process has historically been less than what it could or should be. the state plan should make clear that DBVI will create plans to proactively and consistently meet consumers where they gather throughout the year to collect needs data, satisfaction data and other comments regarding consumers' needs and how well the DBVI is meeting them.

Agency Response: DBVI Director and staff have historically met regularly met with consumer organizations and the SRC, in addition to surveying customers directly about their satisfaction with DBVI services.

(C) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH AGENCIES NOT CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES UNDER THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

This paragraph speaks regarding a strong relationship between DVR and OADS/SAMHS. Does this information pertain to DBVI? If so, what is DBVI doing with these entities in terms of “implementing joint approaches to the workforce development of community rehabilitation providers and business engagement throughout the state”?

Agency Response: DBVI has revised the plan to state “DBVI/DVR and OADS/SAMHS...” DBVI staff and service providers are able to participate in training and workforce development opportunities funded jointly by OADS/SAMHS and DVR/DBVI, but also do cross–training to ensure that we are working jointly and knowledgeably with DHHS in service delivery.

(D) COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

We believe 504 students should also be added to this MOU.

Agency Response: DBVI has revised the plan to include this element.

The plan states that the DBVI Director sits on DOE advisory committee and is a member of a DOE team preparing for statewide implementation of UEB. The DBVI Director position has been vacant for several months. Who is fulfilling this role to ensure that DBVI is involved in moving these efforts forward?

Agency Response: Karen Fraser was attending these meetings when she was in the role as Acting DBVI Director and for continuity continued to represent DBVI as the implementation plan was completed. Nancy Moulton, Program Director for CCME, continues to provide liaison to the UEB implementation along with Karen.

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

The plan states that DVR and DBVI are working with DHHS to learn about new service opportunities such as Discovering Personal Genius and Medicaid waiver funding for persons with head injury. Does DPG pertain to DBVI or just to DVR?

Agency Response: DBVI uses a “Future’s Planning” to learn more about the client, his/her interests and abilities and therefore has not used the Discovering Personal Genius.

(G) COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

The SRC would like to see some data surrounding how the Business Relations Specialist has benefited DBVI in the past. Also, please explain why the Business Relations Specialist positions have not been filled. It does not seem feasible that DBVI Counselors/directors can cover these duties, considering the reductions in staff that have occurred.

Agency Response: These positions have been filled and then vacated over the last couple of years. Some of the employments that were connected to these positions for DBVI were at TAMbrands and Proctor & Gamble. Since then, funding has made it more difficult to justify filling these positions and many DBVI counselors have begun to work more directly with employers. We are confident that counselors can manage the direct work with employers that might be asked of them.

(I) COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT; DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

Plan states that DBVI's leadership will continue to monitor and deliver training needs although CSPD is no longer a requirement. Should this state that DBVI has continued to monitor and deliver the services instead of will continue?

Agency Response: Yes and this change has been made to the plan.

In regards to projected vacancies over the next five years, is the Rehab Services Manager position the Assistant DBVI Director position? If not, where is the Assistant Director position? Why is the position projected to be vacant over the next five years? Why is the Business Enterprise Program staff position expected to be vacant over the next five years? There is no discussion in this section regarding the staffing cuts that have occurred or the impact of these cuts on DBVI. Please address the cuts as well as the impacts.

Agency Response: This chart includes the Rehab Services Manager that used the working title of Assistant Director which is currently vacant. These vacancies will exist into the period of this plan but are not expected to remain vacant for five years.

Could DBVI please elaborate on the statement, "Going forward there are concerns regarding the impact on retention of qualified staff due to limited training resources and other physical challenges."

Agency Response: Because DBVI no longer receives a training grant from RSA, there will only be limited opportunities for training. This certainly could impact the retention (or recruitment) of qualified staff as they need a certain number of credits each year to retain CRC accreditation.

(J) STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

One of the themes in the CSNA was the need for peer support/peer monitoring. We would recommend DBVI subscribe to the Iris networks newsletter (community connections) for a list of peer support groups around the state that staff could refer consumers too.

Agency Response: Iris Network support groups exist because DBVI funds this activity and staff are well aware of and often participate in regional support groups.

The section talks of service delivery models. The two listed are, home-based and center-based models. In the past, there has been a third model a regional model. In the regional model several consumers from a community get together and receive services. This is cost-effective. It also allows consumers to be with others who are going through similar situations.

Agency Response: DBVI agrees that the regional group model will be considered for utilizations in the future.

Where is the data or sources to support this statement? The statement being, "consumers continue to stress the need to have in-state option."

Agency Response: DBVI has modified this statement in the plan.

Plan needs to address/include community-based model of services. There is great concern from blind consumers that choices have been strictly limited as independent providers have stopped receiving referrals to provide services. How is DBVI going to ensure consumer choice as well as timely access to services?

Agency Response: Provisions in our Request for Proposals for community based services beginning July 1, 2016 will result in more efficient distribution of VRT staff throughout the state, which will improve and equalize access to services. Also, DBVI will continue to offer consumer choices wherever possible as prescribed in the federal regulations.

The SILC and others in the disability community are working toward developing a transportation voucher system in Maine which would substantially improve transportation problems for people with disabilities, especially in the rural areas. DBVI should include the intention of participating and supporting the development and implementation of an effective transportation voucher program in Maine.

Agency Response: DBVI is and will continue to be supportive of any effort to improve transportation options in Maine.

What were the ages of the people attending out-of-state immersion centers?

Agency Response: This information is not known to us at this time, but we will research.

The SRC believe "Awareness of DBVI Services" should be the first grouping in the section.

Agency Response: DBVI agrees with this revision.

In regards to DBVI eligible population doubling, how will DBVI prepare to serve these numbers? What additional resources will be needed and how will the resources be accessed? Additionally, the plan states that “consumers identified the need to explore service delivery models” related to non-English speaking immigrants and refugees. How will DBVI explore service delivery models and plan to better serve this identified population?

Agency Response: While DBVI does anticipate strong growth in the number of visually impaired (esp. older) individuals, we do not expect a doubling of referrals in the near term.

(L) STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

Goal 1 focuses on stabilizing DBVI's financial situation; however, neither the goal nor the plan identifies DBVI's financial situation. DBVI experienced significant changes during the past reporting year. Staff positions were eliminated; providers stopped receiving referrals; contracts were reduced. The structure of DBVI was changed in a significant way. Please speak to the changes and the potential impacts. Please include a goal that focuses on DBVI's plan to restore structure, positions, and services statewide. It is concerning that re-allotment funds will be used for “one-time initiatives.” Shouldn't DBVI focus on initiatives that are sustainable and have great impact on individuals served?

Agency Response: DBVI is not yet able to describe a plan for restoration of reductions made during the past year, but we expect to be able to do so by April 2016. Reallotment funds have been used in FFY16 and are anticipated to be included next year, but not in a way that would put DBVI in jeopardy if the funds were not available in future years.

(M) ORDER OF SELECTION

Plan states that Maine DBVI does not currently have a wait list. Considering the budget shortfall and cutting of key DBVI positions, as well as reports from providers and clients that services were not being provided by DBVI, has DBVI formally considered entering into an order of selection? If not, has DBVI conversed with the SRC regarding their decision not to enter into an order of selection?

Please explain how DBVI concluded that an order of selection is not needed. What discussion did DBVI have with the SRC regarding order of selection?

Maine DBVI does not currently have a wait list for individual seeking services but the SRC would suggest doing some research into referrals made by doctors' offices. There is a thought that these referrals may not be processed in a timely manner.

Agency Response: DBVI does not currently have a waitlist or active OOS because at this point, we are able to serve those individuals that have applied and been found eligible for services.

(O) STATE'S STRATEGIES

Referring to Goal 1: As an SRC we feel that reallotment funds, when used correctly and prudently can be incorporated into an annual budget. It should be noted that historically DBVI has time and time again utilized reallotment funds in this manner. We do not feel it would be prudent at this time to remove this much needed stabilizing resource.

Agency Response: DBVI is currently working under a budget that incorporates 2015 reallocation as one part of our financial recovery, and we expect to continue that inclusion into FFY17.

Referring to Goal 2: Offering an employment service that only runs every other year is not timely. Clients cannot wait up to 48 months for service. If this is a necessary service for clients it needs to either run more frequently or on an individual as needed basis.

Agency Response: The Employability Skills Program is scheduled whenever we identify a number of clients that would benefit.

Referring to Goal 2: This goal includes an objective for implementing new WIOA regulations that affect homemakers. Do we have WIOA regulations? What will we do in terms of homemakers if we do not have regulations or until we have regulations? Please consider a goal that specifically addresses homemakers in a holistic manner. For example, DBVI needs a goal that will identify and provide supports and services to the homemaker population. How will IL funds be available to this group?

Agency Response: The new regulations are expected to be out in June and will provide more information to the direction that DBVI will take. At this time, we continue to advocate for additional IL funds to strengthen our ability to respond to the needs of this population.

Referring to Goal 4: Unserved or underserved – please consider adding objective that addresses services for New Mainers (need identified by consumer).

Agency Response: DBVI has revised the plan to include this recommendation.

Referring to Goal 5: It is not obvious why you would want to form alliances with these two programs. DBVI is short staffed at this time. Establishing partnerships that are not paramount in nature seems to be a waste of resources. The SRC would recommend that you take these out.

Agency Response: It remains important for DBVI to continue our existing liaison efforts with organizations that share our objectives.

Supported Employment – The plan states that at least two consumers were closed successfully into integrated employment. What is the exact number? The plan identifies a lack of a variety of natural supports as a barrier for this population. What is/can DBVI do to develop/increase natural supports?

Agency Response: Two individuals were identified as closed in supported employment. DBVI continues to work with employers to identify natural supports in employment settings.

Innovation and Expansion – How are these funds used specifically?

Agency Response: Current innovation and expansion includes efforts to individualize/customize services of the rehabilitation center (immersion model) at the Iris Network.

(P) EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS.

Referring to Goal 1: Could you please explain, to the best of your ability, why there was a drop in competitive closures in fiscal year 2015?

Agency Response: The number of clients in plans with competitive employment objectives is relatively small, so closures in any single year will vary significantly.

Referring to Goal 2: In 2011 RSA noted a 40% loss of students just before or after graduation. What is the percentage of students lost in 2014?

Agency Response: At this time, we do not have this number.

(Q) QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES.

Quality of Supported Employment Services: Why does the lack of long-term support prevent the development of a plan? What other options, like natural supports or connections with community providers, has been done to ensure that these individuals who are eligible receive services?

Agency Response: The referenced ability “to track individuals who are eligible for VR but for whom the lack of long-term support prevents the development of a plan” allows us to resolve this barrier and does not suggest these individuals are found in-eligible.

The plan states that there is ongoing self-evaluation that will positively impact the quality of service area, including supported employment. Please outline the self-evaluation plan and explain how it has and will positively impact services.

Agency Response: DBVI administrative/supervisory staff review supported employment cases and closures on a regularly basis.

The plan states that “trial work settings should be available to assess the consumer’s ability in an integrated, competitive setting.” Are these available? If not, why?

Agency Response: Trial work settings are available: plan has been revised.

What are the new ideas that DBVI is exploring in terms of extended support?

Agency Response: No new ideas have been identified to date.

How many of the 23 clients were closed successfully? Why is DBVI reporting “at least two individuals”? What is the exact number?

Agency Response: Two individuals were identified as closed in supported employment.

The final sentence states that each individual “should” get the support they need. Why aren’t they getting the support they need? How can/will DBVI work to ensure the support is secured?

Agency Response: DBVI believes that clients should and do get the appropriate services and support.

General Comments on the Plan:

There is no indication in the plan that DBVI suffered major losses and setbacks during the previous fiscal year, including but not limited to: reduced staffing positions, limitation of services, decreased referrals for independent providers, reduction of contracts, staff uncertainty and fear, consumer uncertainty and fear. The current state of DBVI is the direct result of the substantial restructuring instituted by BRS.

The relationship between DBVI and the SRC suffered major setbacks during the previous fiscal year.

There is no indication in this plan that DBVI and the SRC need/plan to repair the relationship.

The plan does not strongly differentiate blindness services from general VR services. Much of the language within the plan speaks generically of DBVI and DVR.

Blind consumers expressed clear concerns with the way that DBVI has been restructured and requested input in terms of “restoring” DBVI to its current level of staffing. This plan does not indicate that blind consumers have expressed these concerns.

DVR and DBVI have not worked well together for several years. The state plan should include clear commitment to improve the relations between the two departments and encourage a focus of collaboration.

Agency Response: DBVI believes that it’s relationships with the SRC and DVR have been substantially improved during the last six months to the extent that both relationships have resumed a positive and collaborative character. Some language in the plan does connect DBVI and DVR as a reflection of these collaborative efforts. We have every reason to believe that these positive relationships will continue into the future.

3. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT’S EXPLANATIONS FOR REJECTING ANY OF THE COUNCIL’S INPUT OR RECOMMENDATIONS.

All input and recommendations were included in section 1 and 2.

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;

Maine Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired has not requested a waiver of statewideness.

2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL APPROVE EACH PROPOSED SERVICE BEFORE IT IS PUT INTO EFFECT; AND

n/a

3. ALL STATE PLAN REQUIREMENTS WILL APPLY

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

n/a

C. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH AGENCIES NOT CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES UNDER THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM.

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

1. FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS;

The Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired has continued the use of cooperative planning to expand and enhance the work of rehabilitation for consumers who are blind or have low vision. DBVI works in conjunction with other agencies that are not in the statewide workforce development system. The Division f/t Blind and Visually Impaired, in conjunction with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and the Department of Corrections (DOC) have developed a 'Procedural Directive' to assist those individuals who are incarcerated and anticipate applying for VR services. Employment has been identified as one of the most important factors in reducing recidivism among individuals who are exiting the criminal justice system. In Maine, there are many individuals who may be eligible for VR services who are currently incarcerated and who could potentially benefit from Vocational Rehabilitation services to obtain and maintain employment upon their release. The Department of Corrections through its prisons and probation systems are committed to working collaboratively with DBVI and DVR to promote appropriate referrals, as well as the exchange of information and needed documentation to support VR eligibility determination. If individuals who are blind or have low vision are identified as having blindness rehabilitation needs, other than for VR services, they will be referred directly to a local DBVI office.

DBVI staff has been involved in teaming efforts with the staff at the Veterans Administration (VA) Blindness Rehabilitation Program at the Togus, VA hospital to collaborate on services for veterans who are blind or visually impaired. In addition, a Memorandum of Understanding with the VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program has been developed and signed by all parties.

DBVI continues its collaborative efforts with the University of Southern Maine Linguistics Department, Helen Keller National Center for the Deaf-Blind, Maine Deaf-Blind Project, and The Iris Network to improve services for clients who are deaf-blind or dual sensory impaired from hearing and vision loss. These cooperative efforts have resulted in the program, "Independence Without Fear." The mission of this program is to recruit, train and maintain a database of specially trained volunteers who can facilitate communication for people with significant vision and hearing impairments. This program has expanded outreach to the pertinent population and continued opportunities for experiential learning for professional Tactile Interpreters and Support Service Providers. The Maine Deaf-Blind Project, which is a member of the New England Consortium of Deaf Blind Projects, provides technical assistance for students until the age of 21 and focuses on transition age youth.

The Division works collaboratively with the University of Southern Maine/Maine Small Business Development Centers (SBDC), and Coastal Enterprise, Inc. (CEI) a private, nonprofit Community Development Corporation in assisting and supporting VR consumers who are interested in self-employment opportunities. A work group that consists of statewide representatives from SBDC, DBVI and Client Assistance Program (CAP) meet on a quarterly basis to discuss, explore and identify areas of strengths or concerns regarding small business ownership for our consumers. This group reviews the process for continuous improvement and to ensure the success of the VR client with his/her employment goal. This work has resulted in more solid employment goals involved in

self-employment as part of a well-defined business plan. DBVI/DVR and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) have two Memorandums of Understanding (MOU); one MOU is with the Office of Aging and Disability Services, which serves individuals with developmental disabilities; the other MOU is with the Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHS) which serves individuals with mental health issues. The MOU's address the combined efforts that DBVI/DVR and DHHS have initiated and clarify roles to improve the successful outcomes for these jointly served populations.

- DHHS Office of Aging and Disability Services and DVR/DBVI MOU (updated November 2013) "This Memorandum is intended to guide the Maine Department of Labor's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), through its Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Office of Aging and Disability Services (OADS) in the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), through a system change planning process for the purpose of implementing an aligned service delivery system that promotes evidence-based practices. It contains information about policies and processes that pertain to maintaining and enhancing the relationship between these two entities."
- DHHS Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services and DVR MOU (updated August 2013) "This Memorandum is intended to guide the Maine Department of Labor's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), through its Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), through its Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHS), in the course of planning and implementing an aligned service delivery system that promotes evidence-based practices. It contains information about policies and processes that pertain to maintaining and enhancing the relationship between these two entities."

Additionally, DBVI/DVR, OADS and SAMHS have developed and are implementing joint approaches to the workforce development of community rehabilitation providers and business engagement throughout the state.

- Interagency Support of Benefits Counseling DBVI/DVR continue to work closely with many other state partners to ensure that Maine's benefits counseling services remain available to beneficiaries of SSI/SSDI, and specifically, DBVI applicants and eligible clients. This allowed the services to remain intact while a resolution was determined on a federal level as to the continuation of this critical service in 2013. DBVI/DVR currently administer a single contract with Maine's approved WIPA provider, Maine Medical Center's Department of Vocational Services, which includes funding from four sources of state and federal funds, including from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services, and Office of Aging and Disability Services. The contract's scope of work includes direct service provision of benefits counseling, training of VR counselors and case managers, and service capacity building through quarterly system development network meetings, which include representatives from the Disability Rights Center's Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS) and the Bureau of Employment Services' Disability Employment Initiative.

2. STATE PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

Assistive technology services and devices are provided to individuals who are blind or visually impaired as determined by each individual's employment goal, and appear as prescribed services on the individual's signed IPE. These services are provided when necessary for the attainment of the individual's employment goal and DBVI works closely with a number of assistive technology organizations such as Alpha One, ACCESS IT, Mainely Access, Inc. and Maine CITE, which is the Assistive Technology grantee for Maine, to ensure that the appropriate technical assistance services and assistive technology devices are provided.

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

BRS supports staff involvement in the USDA's AgrAbility project. In Maine, the AgrAbility project is administered by Alpha One, Goodwill Industries of New England and the University of Maine. The liaison to the project ensures that BRS staff is knowledgeable about AgrAbility and related resources. Grant funding for AgrAbility ended during 2014 and DBVI uses AgrAbility services on a fee for service basis when these services are applicable to a client's IPE.

4. NONEDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH; AND

Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) works with other state agencies and many Councils and Committees whose focus is on individuals with disabilities, including out-of-school youth who are blind or visually impaired. BRS has a long standing relationship and works very closely with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). BRS has two memorandums of understanding (MOU); one MOU is with the Office of Aging and Disability Services, which serves individuals with developmental disabilities; the other MOU is with the Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHS) which serves individuals with mental health issues. The MOU's address the combined efforts that BRS and DHHS have initiated and clarify roles to improve the successful outcomes for these jointly served populations. • DHHS Office of Aging and Disability Services and DVR/DBVI MOU (updated November 2013) "This Memorandum is intended to guide the Maine Department of Labor's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), through its Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Office of Aging and Disability Services (OADS) in the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), through a system change planning process for the purpose of implementing an aligned service delivery system that promotes evidence-based practices. It contains information about policies and processes that pertain to maintaining and enhancing the relationship between these two entities." • DHHS Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services and DVR MOU (updated August 2013) "This Memorandum is intended to guide the Maine Department of Labor's Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), through its Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), through its Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHS), in the course of planning and implementing an aligned service delivery system that promotes evidence-based practices. It contains information about policies and processes that pertain to maintaining and enhancing the relationship between these two entities." Through these strong partnerships with OADS and SAMHS, BRS has been able to maximize federal and state funding to Maine by drawing down its full federal allotment for public rehabilitation services and accessing employment support services through Medicaid waivers. Additionally, DVR, OADS and SAMHS have developed and are implementing joint approaches to the workforce development of community rehabilitation providers

and business engagement throughout the state. • Interagency Support of Benefits Counseling – 2013 BRS continues to work closely with many other state partners to ensure that Maine's benefits counseling services remain available to beneficiaries of SSI/SSDI, and specifically, DBVI applicants and eligible clients. This allowed the services to remain intact while a resolution was determined on a federal level as to the continuation of this critical service in 2013. BRS currently administers a single contract with Maine's approved WIPA provider, Maine Medical Center's Department of Vocational Services, which includes funding from four sources of state and federal funds, including from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services, and Office of Aging and Disability Services. The contract's scope of work includes direct service provision of benefits counseling, training of VR counselors and case managers, and service capacity building through quarterly system development network meetings, which include representatives from the Disability Rights Center's Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS) and the Bureau of Employment Services' Disability Employment Initiative.

• Veterans Administration and BRS MOU, November 2011 A Memorandum of Understanding between the Maine Department of Labor – Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Division for the Blind & Visually Impaired, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services was finalized and signed in November 2011. "The purpose of this MOU is to set forth the commitments of BRS and VA-VR&E to cooperate to meet the needs of veterans with disabilities... Through the efforts outlined in this agreement, BRS and VA-VR & E will strive to minimize duplication of services, improve information sharing and referral, and coordinate activities in accordance with all applicable statutes and regulations." The MOU is currently being updated to reflect new language from WIOA and other changes. • Department of Corrections and BRS MOU – Procedural Guidance The Maine Department of Labor-Bureau of Rehabilitation Services and the Maine Department of Corrections (DOC) have worked together to establish procedural guidance on collaboration between the two agencies. Work thus far has resulted in two procedural directives outlining how the two agencies will work together to best meet the needs of individuals who are currently incarcerated or on probation and may be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services. The advocacy and advice of the State Rehabilitation Councils, Statewide Independent Living Council and Disability Rights Center, assist in ensuring that individual rights are being respected, laws are being followed, and practices are being improved to increase the successful employment of people with disabilities.

5. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS.

See section 1 (above)

D. COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

Describe:

1. DSU'S PLANS

The designated State unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of VR services, including pre-employment transition services, as well as procedures for the timely development and approval of individualized plans for employment for the students.

The Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, along with the Department of Education (DOE) first developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 1999 and has been updated throughout the years to capture changes in resources and maximize our on-going collaboration between agencies. The most recent version, completed in December 2010 and amended in September 2011, addresses topics such as youth in transition and reflects changes in federal and state legislation since the original MOU was written. The current MOU reflects coordination of staff training and development, strategies for determining financial responsibility, and dispute resolution procedures. DBVI and DVR are currently working with DOE to update the MOU to reflect WIOA.

The purpose of this collaboration with DOE is to promote and establish a process that results in an effective working relationship between state agencies on behalf of, and with youth with disabilities, in order to gain the greatest benefit from their respective programs and services. Specific areas of collaboration include: consultation, technical assistance, transition planning, roles and responsibilities, financial responsibilities of each agency and procedures for outreach and identification in order to better coordinate and facilitate the process of student transition.

The MOU defines and strengthens the relationships with DOE and calls for identification of students with disabilities, both in Special Education and regular programs, in order to plan their transition before graduation from high school. The agreement focuses upon the needs of the individual student and allows for flexibility and professional judgment to be exercised by personnel. It also spells out the roles of each agency in referral, outreach, and the provision of service. The blindness-specific curriculum services that are identified in the Individual Education Plan (IEP) and 504 plans facilitate the achievement of the employment goal, which is further developed in the Vocational Rehabilitation Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). DBVI, the student and parent(s) develop the IPE, utilizing the interests, strengths, and needs of the student.

Local transition events continue to be effective in connecting employment programs, vocational programs, skills of blindness instruction, and special education programs to employers as an aid to sorting out career options, developing successful work histories, and creating jobs for students. In addition, collaboration with Maine CITE provides opportunities for furthering the use of assistive technologies that bridge education and employment.

DBVI continues to work cooperatively with the Maine Department of Education, the University of Maine system, The Iris Network, Catholic Charities Maine, and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to expand the number of blindness professionals and other special education professionals in Maine. The DBVI Director sits on the advisory committee for the Maine DOE System for Personnel Development Grant. This grant is in its final year of funding for the three individuals who have received funding for a master's degree in the blindness profession that has a direct impact

on transition-age youth who are blind or visually impaired. Adequate numbers of Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI) are essential to serve children who are blind or visually impaired throughout the State of Maine with academic, expanded core curricular and transition services. In 2010, DOE identified insufficient teaching resources and found that Maine had failed to provide a free and appropriate public education for blind children. As a result, DBVI added two additional TVI positions (one of which was funded with DOE resources) for the 2013–14 school year. DOE also offered funding for two additional TVI positions for the 2014–15 school year due to TVI caseloads that are too large to be effective as determined by a 2014 study by the University of Maine. In order to sustain the two additional positions, DBVI needed obtain ongoing funding in the 2016–17 biennial state budget. This initiative was presented to the Legislature and \$200,000 was identified for SFY 2017 to be used as an increase in salaries for current teachers. This decision was based on the difficulty in recruiting for vacancies with the current salary structure.

The DBVI Director is also a member of a team led by the Dept. of Education, which is preparing for the statewide implementation of Unified English Braille (UEB) in the education of blind children. UEB becomes the official braille code in the United States effective Jan. 4, 2016, replacing English Braille American Edition, and directly affects all instructional and assessment materials used in Maine's secondary schools. The team has drafted a State Implementation Plan through 2020.

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;

See section 1 (above)

B. TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS;

See section 1 (above)

C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, OF EACH AGENCY, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR DETERMINING STATE LEAD AGENCIES AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES;

See section 1 (above)

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

- DBVI will inform DOE in writing of procedural changes that may impact the eligibility of students with disabilities for vocational rehabilitation services, so that DOE may disseminate the information to local school districts.
- DOE will notify DBVI concerning proposed changes in regulations, policies and procedures at the state or federal level that may impact students with whom DBVI works.

DBVI will collect de-identified information on informal/formal complaints and due process hearings that involve school-aged youth; this data will be provided on an annual basis to DOE, as well as numbers and demographics of transition-aged students served.

DBVI Blindness Rehabilitation Specialists work closely with school systems, school teachers/personnel and Teachers of the Visually Impaired to plan, coordinate and deliver transition services to students. They also work with families and communities to identify students who have disabilities and who are in need of specialized low vision services in collaboration with the education system.

E. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

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

When procuring goods and services, the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired follows state procedures, which are overseen by the Maine Bureau of General Services, Division of Purchases. We work closely with contracted community providers to ensure that the contracts and cooperative agreement address requirements for informed consumer choice, any licensing requirements and ensure that staff are qualified to deliver rehabilitation services and blindness-specific skills training for individuals who are blind or have low vision.

The primary community provider for adult blindness rehabilitation services for DBVI continues to maintain its National Accreditation Council (NAC) accreditation for delivery of rehabilitation services for people who are blind or have low vision.

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

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.8(b)(4)). Describe the designated State agency's efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services and extended employment services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

The Division has remained committed to assuring that individuals with the most severe disabilities receive supported employment services when this is appropriate. An IPE is developed that describes the services provided, the need for extended services, if appropriate, and an assurance that the individual has been able to make an informed choice in the provision of these services and the goal itself. DBVI has Memorandum of Understanding and staff participate in meetings with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Office of Adult Mental Health Services (OAMHS) and the Office of Aging and Disability Services (OADS) to work more effectively in assisting consumers in obtaining employment with appropriate and necessary supports. The objective of the meetings is to get people together regularly to provide the opportunity for face-to-face communication, so that we can better network services, increase understanding of program and resource limitations, and refine procedures. In conjunction with Community Rehabilitation Providers, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and DBVI continue to advocate with DHHS for increased state financial support for extended support and supported employment services. Another outcome of these meetings has been increased collaboration at the local level in troubleshooting individual consumer circumstances, as well as learning about new service opportunities as they occur, such as Discovering Personal Genius and new Medicaid waiver funding for persons with acquired head injury.

G. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

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

1. VR SERVICES; AND

During the last State of Maine legislative session, a time-limited Business Relations Specialist position was approved as a permanent position to augment an already existing position for broader statewide coverage. Unfortunately, this new, permanent specialist has not been hired by the time this report was written and the already existing position has not been successfully filled fulltime since a retirement in January 2015. Subsequently, a majority of the Business Relations Specialist duties and responsibilities have been suspended or are being covered by other staff, including DBVI counselors and regional directors. Under WIOA, DBVI will be working with the core partners in the coordination with employers that assist them to grow and diversify their workforces and increase the inclusion of employees with visual impairments.

2. TRANSITION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, FOR STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES.

See section 1 (above)

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;

As noted above in Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Development System, DBVI has strong partnerships with the Department of Health and Human Services, and specifically the Offices of Aging and Disability Services (OADS) and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHS), which are outlined in the following agreements: • DHHS Office of Aging and Disability Services and DVR/DBVI MOU (updated November 2013) “This Memorandum is intended to guide the Maine Department of Labor’s Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), through its Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Office of Aging and Disability Services (OADS) in the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), through a system change planning process for the purpose of implementing an aligned service delivery system that promotes evidence-based practices. It contains information about policies and processes that pertain to maintaining and enhancing the relationship between these two entities.” • DHHS Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services and DVR MOU (updated August 2013) “This Memorandum is intended to guide the Maine Department of Labor’s Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), through its Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), through its Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHS), in the course of planning and implementing an aligned service delivery system that promotes evidence-based practices. It contains information about policies and processes that pertain to maintaining and enhancing the relationship between these two entities.” Additionally through its collaboration with DHHS and specifically the coordination of Maine’s benefits counseling network with BRS, DBVI has been able to develop opportunities and overcome barriers to competitive integrated employment for individuals with visual impairments who are eligible for MaineCare, the State’s Medicaid program.

As Office of Family Independence (OFI) has expressed increasing interest in promoting the employment of beneficiaries with disabilities, MDOL has been increasingly involved in strategic planning and collaborative efforts with the agency to support our mutual customers. DBVI staff in the field offices know and interact with their colleagues from ASPIRE, TANF, SNAP and other OFI-administered programs on a regular basis.

Through cross-agency collaboration, DBVI stays informed regarding Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) MaineCare services that will benefit clients with visual impairment, such as increased coverage of assistive technology through waiver services. Other changes that are proposed include a 1915 (i) State Plan Amendment, also known as an iSPA. In this iSPA, Maine intends to streamline delivery systems and prioritize community and work-based habilitation support for adults. An iSPA provides states with greater autonomy and flexibility for providing services to Medicaid members while maintaining compliance with the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). The proposed changes will affect the following sections of MaineCare policy:

Section 2, Adult Family Care Services; Section 17, Community Support Services; Section 26, Day Health Services; Section 97, Private Non-Medical Institutions

DHHS is also proposing to add the following services to the MaineCare Benefits Manual: Benefits Counseling; Career Planning; Psycho-Social Club House; Residential Habilitation; and Supported Employment-Individualized

In conjunction with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and available technical assistance through CSAVR, DBVI is in the early stages of developing an MOU with the Office of MaineCare services.

2. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES; AND

Developmental Services did implement a new Medicaid waiver program shifting resources from day habilitation services to community supports which includes employment. This has resulted in additional individuals with developmental disabilities being eligible for supported employment with Developmental Services providing extended supports. We developed an agreement which coordinates the delivery of supported employment services including extended supports. Unfortunately, due to funding cuts the new waiver is not open to new applicants at this time. DBVI and Developmental Services are committed to working with those individuals already on the waiver. DHHS currently supports approximately 5,200 people with developmental disabilities, brain injuries or physical disabilities through four Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) 1915c Waivers. The waivers allow individuals who have been found eligible for the Maine Office of Aging and Disability Services (OADS) Services based on disability/eligibility to become prepared for employment through Community Supports Services that can assist the person to volunteer, increase work-readiness skills, and address issues of health and safety. New in 2014 was the addition of Career Planning Services using Discovering Personal Genius which is a tool that supports an individual to discover skills, abilities, capacities and three Vocational Themes. Furthermore, OADS is providing on-the-job support through the waivers to about 1000 people who are working throughout Maine. These services can provide support to both the individual and the employer to maintain employment. At this time, approximately 3,000 working-age MaineCare waiver recipients are not working but are being asked about their interest and desire to move toward employment. Additionally through its collaboration with DHHS and specifically the coordination of Maine's benefits counseling network, DBVI has been able to develop opportunities and overcome barriers to competitive integrated employment for individuals with visual impairments who are eligible for MaineCare, the State's Medicaid program.

BRS entered into the Ticket to Work Partnership Plus agreement with the Bureau of Employment Services in July 2014. The purpose of this agreement is to strengthen the partnerships within CareerCenters in the provision of vocational rehabilitation and employment and training services to individuals with disabilities seeking employment in Maine. This agreement expands service options and the overall capacity of Maine's workforce investment activities and offers individuals the opportunity to achieve employment outcomes, decrease reliance on public benefits and increase personal economic assets and resources.

3. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

See section 1 (above)

I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT; DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

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

1. DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

A. QUALIFIED PERSONNEL NEEDS.

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

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

DBVI had a committee that annually monitored and assessed the needs of all staff for training that fell under the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD). This committee was made up of staff from each region of the state, each professional discipline within DBVI, and a representative from the SRC. Although CSPD is no longer a requirement, DBVI's leadership has continued to monitor, assess and deliver the training that is necessary for skilled and fully qualified staff.

Currently, the Maine Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired employs approximately thirty-eight individuals that all play a role in the delivery of blindness and vocational rehabilitation services. In order to ensure a high level of skilled staff to deliver quality services to consumers, the CSPD plan addresses long-range college training needs for qualified rehabilitation blindness professionals and paraprofessionals. In addition, the CSPD provides short-term training needs that allow for continuous learning and the maintenance of professional certification, including Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) credentials, and Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP) for Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Specialists, Vision Rehabilitation Therapists (VRT) and Low Vision Therapists (LVT).

An annual survey is sent out to staff to determine future training needs and to track all the trainings completed in the previous year. Training sponsored by the division is determined by employee needs to maintain or retain qualified status.

The Regional Managers meet with their staff on an annual basis to review performance and to plan the professional development for the upcoming year. That plan would outline what coursework or credits were required for the employee to continue to be qualified staff. The central office tracks all the courses that employees attend and the credits earned. The supervisors monitor the progress towards the professional development. Employees submit requests for trainings and those are approved as they relate to the professional development. Often staff will request to go to a conference such as the New England Association of Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) that would allow them to attain many of their required credits.

Twelve DBVI staff serve 500-600 individuals with visually impairments each year. Managers continue to track the number of individuals eligible and served in each region within their territory to be able to utilize the qualified personnel who are employed by the State agency in the provision of VR services in relation to the number of individuals in the most efficient way.

ii. the number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and

In FFY15, 550 individuals were served by the Maine DBVI VR system. Maine DBVI does not currently have a wait list for individuals seeking services. Maine DBVI has 8 (7.5 FTEs) VR Counselor II positions, and one Blindness Rehabilitation Specialist that all carry an average caseload of 40–60 per FTE, with an additional 20 – 30 clients at any given time that may move in or out of the system. We expect these numbers to remain fairly consistent going forward. Based on the number of personnel and the previous numbers served, the number of individuals we expect to serve over the next five years should have a range of 500–600 per year. We predict that will include 100% of individuals with significant disabilities due to the population that DBVI serves.

Current service delivery also includes two additional Blindness Rehabilitation Specialists that focus on transition students, five VR Counselor I positions that assist in facilitating clients through the process, and 11 Orientation and Mobility Specialists throughout the state that work with VR clients. All 11 of these O&M staff are currently ACVREP certified.

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.

With the turnover within Maine DBVI over the last few years, the rate of change in the next few years is expected to be lower. It can be anticipated that DBVI staffing needs could include approximately six new staff within the next five years. The table below highlights the current vacancies within DBVI. These vacancies are within the same regional office and are currently being covered by existing staff. The chart also depicts anticipated staffing needs for the next five years due to expected vacancies from retirements.

Row Job Title Total positions Vacancies Projected in 5 yrs.

1 Director 1 1 0

2 Rehab Serv Manager 2 1 1

3 Regional Dir Rehab Serv 2 0 0

4 Blindness Rehab Spec 3 0 0

5 Voc Rehab Counselor II 8 1 0

6 Paraprofessional VRC 1 5 1 1

7 Support Personnel 2 1 0

8 Rehab Consultant 1 0 0

9 BEP Staff 2 1 0

10 Orientation & Mobility 11 0 0

Total 38 6 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;

Maine has only one in-state institution of higher education, the University of Southern Maine (USM), that offers an educational program, which satisfies the standards set forth by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) for states lacking a state standard for fully qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors (i.e. qualifies to sit for the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification exam). In addition to this in-state option, there are two other institutions of higher learning, UMass Boston and Assumption College (both in Massachusetts), that also offer such an educational program. USM received the RSA grant funding to rehabilitation program participants in 2014. DBVI currently has one Rehabilitation Counselor (RC) II enrolled in that program. The University of Virginia–Commonwealth currently has a RSA sponsored program and one RC II is expected to complete the graduate program there in 2016. In addition, DBVI has one additional RC enrolled in courses that will lead her towards the fully qualified standard. Also, Maine has had one RC graduate from UVC this past year and that individual passed her CRC exam. The University of Maine at Farmington (UMF) in partnership with the University of Southern Maine began offering an accelerated program in the Fall of 2015 that will allow counseling students to graduate with a master's degree a year sooner. Graduates of the five-year program will be able to qualify for both State licensing for counseling and national certification for rehabilitation counseling. The Program is accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs and the Council on Rehabilitation Education. UMF typically graduates 25 to 30 students per year with a B.S. in Rehabilitation Services. This new program will meet the standards set forth by RSA for "fully qualified" vocational rehabilitation counselors (i.e. qualifies to sit for the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) exam). As described in the following table, Maine DBVI has three RC II staff working towards the fully qualified VRC standard.

Row	Institutions	Students enrolled	Employees sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates sponsored by agency and/or RSA	Graduates from the previous year
1	Assumption College	0	0	0	2
1	Virginia–Commonwealth University	1	1	0	3
1	University of Southern Maine	1	1	0	4
0	UMass Boston	0	0	0	5
1	Other	1	1		

ii. the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and

As described in the following table, Maine DBVI has three RC II staff working towards the fully qualified VRC standard. Row Institutions Students enrolled Employees sponsored by agency and/or RSA Graduates sponsored by agency and/or RSA Graduates from the previous year 1 Assumption

College 0 0 0 2 Virginia–Commonwealth University 1 1 0 0 3 University of Southern Maine 1 1 0 0
4 UMass Boston 0 0 0 0 5 Other 1 1

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.

See section ii (above)

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.

DBVI continues to have concerns about the ability to recruit and retain qualified staff in Maine due to the low salary scales and the current instability in the state's economy. Many of the positions within DBVI were successfully reclassified in recent years, which has been helpful in the retention of staff. Recent recruiting efforts, which have included electronic vacancy postings on national and State of Maine websites, local postings with community providers, and information sharing with universities and colleges across the country that offer a rehabilitation/blindness program, have yielded an increase in more highly credentialed candidates. Recruitment methods used continue to be extensive and include internet postings on a variety of specific and general job bank sites, ongoing contact with graduate programs throughout the country, promotion of DBVI staffing opportunities at national conferences, networking with community rehabilitation providers, other state agencies, our contracted partners, offering professional internship opportunities to pre and post-graduate level students and job listings in Maine Career Centers.

DBVI recognizes that staff is the most valuable resource in our work supporting consumers who are blind or visually impaired in the pursuit of their vocational goals. To that end the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development was designed to support training for Division staff. In the past federal fiscal year, a variety of training opportunities for all staff were planned and approved by the CSPD committee.

The Division's goal is to encourage staff to pursue a variety of educational choices within a supportive working environment and with the necessary time and financial support. Certifications in all disciplines are encouraged, and the training plan supports maintaining CRC, O&M and other specific professional certifications. DBVI offered many trainings this year in an effort to provide staff with the skills to improve employment outcomes for our clients. These initiatives took significant time and effort from DBVI staff and will have a positive impact on the knowledge, policy and practice of the VR program. Going forward there are concerns regarding the impact on retention of qualified staff due to limited training resources and other fiscal Maine state government continues its efforts to better promote state jobs to person with disabilities. The Bureau of Human Resources provides a system, referred to as 'Special Appointment', to facilitate the recruitment of people from minority backgrounds and individuals with disabilities in filling State government vacancies. Through this initiative, the individual must meet the qualifications for the position and then can be hired under this

program in an “acting capacity” for up to one year. The worker receives the same pay and health benefits as other workers, but does not accumulate seniority time. If at any time during this year the supervisor deems the worker has performed their duties satisfactorily, he/she will be placed in the position as a new employee and the usual probationary period will begin. A unique feature of this initiative is that the Human Resources Department throughout all of state government is centrally connected to this process, which allows for people with disabilities from anywhere within the state to be contacted at the very first point the state becomes aware that there will be an open position. In this manner we can recruit from across a comprehensive network to fill vacancies within DBVI, as long as they meet the qualifications of our position. The Division has one employee that began state employment by utilizing the special appointment process. It has proven to be a very successful job match for this individual challenges.

3. PERSONNEL STANDARDS

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

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

DBVI personnel requirements and hiring practices were aligned with the Rehabilitation Act mandates and its regulations. As stated previously, DBVI does not have an established state standard for fully qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors. Therefore, it defers to the Rehabilitation Services Administration standard whereby an individual must possess a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or CRC status, or be eligible to sit for the CRC examination, when filling Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II vacancies. Qualified staff must possess a six (6) year combination of training, experience, and or education providing knowledges and abilities relating to vocational rehabilitation placement. Applicants and staff who possess master's degrees in counseling or a counseling-related degree, defined as Social Work, Psychology, Special Education, and Counseling also meet the standard if a graduate course in Theories and Techniques of Counseling course was completed as part of the degree requirements and additional graduate courses have been completed with a primary focus on Assessment, Occupational Information or Placement, Medical or Psychosocial Aspects of Disabilities, and in Community Resources or Delivery of Rehabilitation Services. In Maine, DBVI requires that new hires lacking fully qualified status enter into educational plans designed to achieve fully qualified status as a condition of employment and anticipates that some new employees may require up to five years to attain qualified status. If there are extenuating circumstances, a new plan will be developed and the time may be extended. If the employee is still unable to achieve qualified status and it affects the performance of his/her job, disciplinary steps will be put in place through the annual performance appraisal process.

DBVI also supports educational programming for existing staff seeking to meet fully qualified status and, for those who have achieved CRC status and require on-going CRC training credits. DBVI qualified personnel standards for O&M/VRT/LVT staff are to be certified or certifiable by the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals. The ACVREP website explains, “The Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals offers professional certification for vision rehabilitation and education professionals in

order to improve service delivery to persons with vision impairments. ACVREP is committed to quality certification programs that meet rigorous recognized standards. Programs are designed to offer applicants the means to demonstrate that professional knowledge and skills that promote the provision of quality service and ethical practice. ACVREP offers certification in three disciplines: Low Vision Therapy, Orientation & Mobility, and Vision Rehabilitation Therapy. Individuals who possess ACVREP certification demonstrate a level of quality and care that is unmatched in the field.” Whenever possible, DBVI acquires the ACVREP endorsement to earn CEU credits for trainings provided in state.

When recruiting or hiring new staff, DBVI gives preference to fully qualified individuals. If, however, it is necessary to meet a critical agency staffing need and recruitment efforts do not result in the identification and securing of suitable candidates who meet the DBVI hiring standard, individuals can be hired conditionally subject to agreement and implementation of a CSPD plan to acquire the appropriate credentials toward becoming fully qualified. CSPD plans include timeframes for completion that are responsive to the needs of each employee, and agreed to by management. These plans are then incorporated into the employee’s annual performance review to ensure continuity and progress toward fully qualified status. Counselors who require a full master’s degree program to meet fully qualified status are allotted up to five years after completion of their probationary period to meet the requirements while those with related counseling master’s degrees seeking to meet CRC exam standards or are currently in a master’s in counseling program are provided accelerated timeframes dependent on remaining coursework.

DBVI annually reviews the qualifications of all staff and tracks the educational plans of new hires and personnel requiring education and training to ensure that CSPD standards are achieved to the maximum extent possible. CSPD plans for rehabilitation counselors and other staff working in the DBVI VR program, who have not met the state standard are developed with supervisors upon completion of probation and reviewed as part of an annual performance review. CSPD plans reflect a balance between personnel development and operational need. The plans seek optimal training modalities and formats, as well as the most cost effective methods to utilize those institutions with RSA grants. Upon entering CSPD plans, program and coursework approval must be obtained from the DBVI Training Coordinator, who maintains a record of all staff training, activities and certifications.

The State of Maine uses a performance management process that requires an annual performance review for all staff. Personal Development is a section within this document that outlines the agreed upon training that the employee will attend during the year to enhance his/her skills in order to perform the job better or to ensure adequate progress to maintain credentialing.

In an effort to maximize training resources, staff often solicit local training resources to provide free or low cost workshops, attend trainings with a ‘train the trainer’ perspective to provide turn-around training to other staff, and share internal expertise through in-house training opportunities. In past years, DBVI has been successful at leveraging training funds through collaboration with Region I TACE center, Perkins School for the Blind training funds, and the Lovill Trust.

In the previous year, DBVI made continuous efforts to seek and identify enhanced learning opportunities, particularly through use of distance learning modalities, in providing educational forums for its staff. Videoconferencing capacity has been established on a statewide basis and has led to an extensive learning collaborative with DVR, the Career Center One Stops, and the Social Security Administration, external partners such as Maine CITE, the Small Business Development Corporation, and the local workforce development boards. DBVI staff also takes advantage of

distance training opportunities through webinars and teleconferences such as those offered by Workforce One, Independent Living Research Utilization, Social Security Administration, Rehabilitation Services Administration, TACE center and Parent Education Advocacy Training Center.

One training that has been very successful, and has been provided by videoconferencing, is the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services new counselor training curriculum. This training entails a two-week, comprehensive overview of the VR process. It includes topic areas such as rehabilitation technology, job placement and assessment, and vocational counseling. It is available to all staff and required of new DBVI VR staff, as well as interactive training modules in casework flow and post-secondary education. In addition, DBVI utilizes a variety of internet links, on-line videos, and web resources as part of its overall training for new DBVI employees. Additionally, training opportunities and conference materials are shared through a number of statewide avenues, including the Internet and Intranet, the CSPD advisory committee, as well as counselor, managerial and supervisory networking activities and interactions.

A library of training resources, including texts, journals and videotapes addressing vocational and blindness rehabilitation topic areas, are loaned to regional offices as needed. These materials include Institute on Rehabilitation Issues publications, computer CD's and videotapes, Consumer Choice News, professional journals, National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials, and other documents from the various National Rehabilitation and Research and Training Programs throughout the United States.

DBVI continued to make use of the New England Technical and Continuing Education Center (TACE) for its technical assistance and training until this funding ended December 31, 2014.

DBVI just finished its final year of the In-Service Training Basic Award. Priorities will address recruitment and retention of qualified rehabilitation professionals; provide for succession planning, leadership development and capacity building, and training on the amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 made by the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act.

In addressing issues associated with diversity and cultural needs, the Division has staff who are visually impaired who utilize and are well versed in adaptive technology used by our consumers. DBVI has an agreement with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation on referral of individuals who are deaf-blind who use American Sign Language (ASL) as their native language. DBVI has also worked with the Division of the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened and a variety of other collaborative partners to create a training program for professional interpreters for people who are deaf-blind. This training has resulted in approximately twenty individuals being certified in this area. In addition, DBVI has worked with the University of Southern Maine Linguistics Department and other collaborative partners, to create a Support Service Provider (SSP) program to enhance communication for consumers who are deaf-blind or dual sensory impaired who may or may not use ASL.

DBVI staff utilizes interpreter services, such as Maine State Interpreters or Catholic Charities Maine, for individuals with whom they cannot communicate directly with due to language barriers.

Collaboration exists on an administrative level with the Commissioners of Education and Labor working jointly in a number of capacities. There is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between

the two departments to address the needs of students with disabilities, specifically with visual impairments for DBVI.

As outlined in Section 606 (Employment of Individuals with Disabilities) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, DBVI continually makes "positive efforts to employ and advance in employment qualified individuals with disabilities in programs assisted under this title." DBVI staff have attended Maine's DVR Statewide Transition Counselor Advisory Group that meets quarterly to promote best practices in the provision of VR transition services. During the last year, this group heard from a number of guest speakers on disability and employment issues – including benefits counseling – and focused much of its efforts on WIOA implementation and the requirement for increased collaboration with schools and the Maine Department of Education.

During the past year, Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired Transition VR Counselors have attended SPDG–sponsored regional trainings to provide content area knowledge, as well as gain additional understanding of best practices in post–secondary transition planning. Over the last year Maine Department of Education received intensive technical assistance from the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC). As a result, Maine sent a team of stakeholders to the 2015 Annual Capacity Building Institute where a state action plan was developed with a number of follow–up steps.

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.

See section A (above)

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. SYSTEM OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT

a system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated State unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and

In an effort to maximize training resources, staff often solicit local training resources to provide free or low cost workshops, attend trainings with a 'train the trainer' perspective to provide turn-around training to other staff, and share internal expertise through in-house training opportunities. In past years, DBVI has been successful at leveraging training funds through collaboration with Region I TACE center, Perkins School for the Blind training funds, and the Lovill Trust.

In the previous year, DBVI made continuous efforts to seek and identify enhanced learning opportunities, particularly through use of distance learning modalities, in providing educational forums for its staff. Videoconferencing capacity has been established on a statewide basis and has led to an extensive learning collaborative with DVR, the Career Center One Stops, and the Social Security Administration, external partners such as Maine CITE, the Small Business Development Corporation, and the local workforce development boards. DBVI staff also takes advantage of distance training opportunities through webinars and teleconferences such as those offered by Workforce One, Independent Living Research Utilization, Social Security Administration, Rehabilitation Services Administration, TACE center and Parent Education Advocacy Training Center.

One training that has been very successful, and has been provided by videoconferencing, is the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services new counselor training curriculum. This training entails a two-week, comprehensive overview of the VR process. It includes topic areas such as rehabilitation technology, job placement and assessment, and vocational counseling. It is available to all staff and required of new DBVI VR staff, as well as interactive training modules in casework flow and post-secondary education. In addition, DBVI utilizes a variety of internet links, on-line videos, and web resources as part of its overall training for new DBVI employees. Additionally, training opportunities and conference materials are shared through a number of statewide avenues, including the Internet and Intranet, the CSPD advisory committee, as well as counselor, managerial and supervisory networking activities and interactions.

A library of training resources, including texts, journals and videotapes addressing vocational and blindness rehabilitation topic areas, are loaned to regional offices as needed. These materials include Institute on Rehabilitation Issues publications, computer CD's and videotapes, Consumer Choice News, professional journals, National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials, and other documents from the various National Rehabilitation and Research and Training Programs throughout the United States.

DBVI continued to make use of the New England Technical and Continuing Education Center (TACE) for its technical assistance and training until this funding ended December 31, 2014.

DBVI just finished its final year of the In-Service Training Basic Award. Priorities will address recruitment and retention of qualified rehabilitation professionals; provide for succession planning, leadership development and capacity building, and training on the amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 made by the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act.

In addressing issues associated with diversity and cultural needs, the Division has staff who are visually impaired who utilize and are well versed in adaptive technology used by our consumers. DBVI has an agreement with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation on referral of individuals who are deaf-blind who use American Sign Language (ASL) as their native language. DBVI has also worked with the Division of the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened and a variety of other collaborative partners to create a training program for professional interpreters for people who are deaf-blind. This training has resulted in approximately twenty individuals being certified in this area. In addition, DBVI has worked with the University of Southern Maine Linguistics Department and other collaborative partners, to create a Support Service Provider (SSP) program to enhance communication for consumers who are deaf-blind or dual sensory impaired who may or may not use ASL.

DBVI staff utilizes interpreter services, such as Maine State Interpreters or Catholic Charities Maine, for individuals with whom they cannot communicate directly with due to language barriers.

Collaboration exists on an administrative level with the Commissioners of Education and Labor working jointly in a number of capacities. There is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two departments to address the needs of students with disabilities, specifically with visual impairments for DBVI.

As outlined in Section 606 (Employment of Individuals with Disabilities) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, DBVI continually makes "positive efforts to employ and advance in employment qualified individuals with disabilities in programs assisted under this title." DBVI staff have attended Maine's DVR Statewide Transition Counselor Advisory Group that meets quarterly to promote best practices in the provision of VR transition services. During the last year, this group heard from a number of guest speakers on disability and employment issues – including benefits counseling – and focused much of its efforts on WIOA implementation and the requirement for increased collaboration with schools and the Maine Department of Education.

During the past year, Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired Transition VR Counselors have attended SPDG-sponsored regional trainings to provide content area knowledge, as well as gain additional understanding of best practices in post-secondary transition planning. Over the last year Maine Department of Education received intensive technical assistance from the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC). As a result, Maine sent a team of stakeholders to the 2015 Annual Capacity Building Institute where a state action plan was developed with a number of follow-up steps.

The University of Southern Maine (USM) is the only in-state institution of higher education offering a graduate program which satisfies the standards set forth by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). During the most recent year, USM had 32 students enrolled full-time or part-time in its Master of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling Program. Five students graduated during the past academic year. USM classes are offered on campus and via distance education. USM does offer RSA grant funding for Maine DBVI Employees for their Rehabilitation Counseling Program participants at the present time. It should be noted that USM did submit an application for long-term

grant funding to RSA and was given granted approval for RSA funding. Maine DBVI has been utilizing RSA funding since January 2015.

The University of Maine at Farmington (UMF) in partnership with the University of Southern Maine began offering an accelerated program in the Fall of 2015 that will allow counseling students to graduate with a master's degree a year sooner. Graduates of the five-year program will be able to qualify for both State licensing for counseling and national certification for rehabilitation counseling. The Program is accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs and the Council on Rehabilitation Education. UMF typically graduates 25 to 30 students per year with a B.S. in Rehabilitation Services. This new program will meet the standards set forth by RSA for "fully qualified" vocational rehabilitation counselors (i.e. qualifies to sit for the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) exam). UMF does expect to have three to eight students enrolled in their accelerated program beginning, in January of 2016.

Maine DBVI has limited resources to pay educational/training costs associated with its efforts to develop and maintain a fully qualified staff and, as such, conducts on-going investigation of distance education programs that offer RSA grant funding to participants. During this reporting year, Maine DBVI has had one Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) enrolled in the RSA-funded Rehabilitation Counseling program at University of Southern Maine, and one VRC enrolled in the Husson University to complete "core courses" During this year, one VRC's has successfully passed the CRC exam.

Newly hired staff are paired with a mentor, a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor who typically is a CRC. Staff will spend time weekly shadowing and being shadowed by this CRC mentor to gain more in-depth training than what is provided through the BRS new counselor training series, which is primarily agency systems in nature. This allows new staff to benefit from the knowledge of our veteran staff.

DBVI's new counselor training curriculum is a two-week, comprehensive overview of the DBVI program, policy and procedures and includes topics such as rehabilitation technology, job placement and assessment, vocational counseling, as well as interactive training modules in the casework flow process. New counselor training is routinely evaluated and revised to meet the changing needs of clients and to incorporate recent evidence-based practices and requirements of the RSA and CRCC.

During New Counselor Training, all DBVI staff has the opportunity to refresh skills by attending any training session. In addition, training has been designed for paraprofessionals and support staff to increase their knowledge of the rehabilitation process, procedural directives and Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired Rules.

DBVI continued to make use of the New England Technical and Continuing Education Center (TACE) for its technical assistance and training until this funding ended December 31, 2014.

Other Trainings - 2015

AFB Career Connect: One step at a time

Objectives: aspects, navigating, new lesson plans, US nationwide resources available to us here in Maine.

DBVI training specific to Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II's and CRC's

LOW VISION: Education for Blindness Rehab Employees

Objectives: overall Low Vision introductory information. Low vision medical aspects and functional aspects.

Attended by Orientation and Mobility Instructors, Vision Rehabilitation Teachers, Rehabilitation Counselor I's, Rehabilitation Counselor II's, CRC's, and Transition Consultants

DBVI Day Annual Training-

Objectives: WIOA training/development meeting (State employee staff only)

Rehabilitation Counselor I, Rehabilitation Counselor II, CRC, administrative support staff, Supervisors, Orientation & Mobility Instructors, and Transition Consultants.

All Agency/Blindness Systems Annual Training Day-all State of Maine professionals, our contracted partners, working in the field of blindness training.

Objectives: WIOA information to contracted providers, Focus on Cortical Visual Impairments on youth in school/transition students.

Attended Orientation and Mobility Instructors, Vision Rehabilitation Teachers, Teachers of the Visually Impaired, Administrators, Support Staff, Supervisors Rehabilitation Counselor I's, Rehabilitation Counselor II's, CRC's, and Transition Consultants

Objectives: WIOA information to contracted providers, Focus on Cortical Visual Impairments on youth in school/transition students.

Open Trainings for all of the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, (DOL)

Job Coach Certification Process for Maine DVR

DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II's, CRC's, and Supervisors

Objectives: training on job coaching, VR policies, and administrative oversight, and community based situation assessments

World of Work Inventory Interpretation Level 1- History, Development, and introductory interpretation of the World of Work Inventory career assessment.

DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II's, CRC's, and Supervisors

World of Work Inventory Interpretation Level 2- Review of Level 1, unusual profiles, counseling, and implementation of the World of Work Inventory career assessment.

DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II's, CRC's, and Supervisors

B. ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE

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

Staff development is delivered through formal and informal modalities, internal and external. DBVI employees participate in annual performance reviews, a portion of which specifically addresses personnel development. At these reviews, staff and supervisors jointly identify training required to address performance enhancement.

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services hosts a biennial, two-day statewide training event at which multiple trainings - identified and prioritized by staff surveys, case reviews and oversight bodies (i.e. State Rehabilitation Council) are offered to all staff. Training needs and activities are often identified and offered at the regional/office levels through free or low cost workshops. DBVI also supports educational programming for existing staff seeking to meet fully qualified status and, for those who have achieved CRC status and require on-going CRC training credits, by acting as a sanctioned provider of CRC training credits. Maine had limited RSA-funded In-Service Training Grant dollars to support personnel development until USM was granted RSA funding for their Master's Rehabilitation Program in 2014. RSA funding became available to Maine DBVI in January 2015 for VRC's. Maine DBVI has made continuous efforts to seek and identify pertinent learning opportunities, particularly through the use of distance learning. Videoconferencing capacity has been established on a statewide basis and has led to extensive learning collaborations. Training opportunities and conference materials are shared through a number of statewide means, including the Internet and DBVI intranet and counselor, managerial and supervisory networking activities and interactions. A library of training resources, including texts, journals and videotapes addressing vocational rehabilitation and blindness/low vision topic areas is available to be loaned to regional offices as needed. Materials include Institute on Rehabilitation Issues publications, videotapes addressing learning disabilities, Consumer Choice News, National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials, and other documents from the various National Rehabilitation and Research and Training Programs throughout the United States. DBVI also makes full use of many valuable web based resources such as American Federation for the Blind, National Federation of the Blind, American Council of the Blind, Texas School For the Blind, ACVREP, CRCC.

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.

In addressing issues associated with diversity and cultural needs, the Division has staff who are visually impaired who utilize and are well versed in adaptive technology used by our consumers. DBVI has an agreement with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation on referral of individuals who are deaf-blind who use American Sign Language (ASL) as their native language. DBVI has also worked with the Division of the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened and a variety of other collaborative partners to create a training program for professional interpreters for people who are deaf-blind. This training has resulted in approximately twenty individuals being certified in this area. In addition, DBVI has worked with the University of Southern Maine Linguistics Department and other collaborative partners, to create a Support Service Provider (SSP) program to enhance communication for consumers who are deaf-blind or dual sensory impaired who may or may not use ASL.

DBVI staff utilizes interpreter services, such as Maine State Interpreters or Catholic Charities Maine, for individuals with whom they cannot communicate directly with due to language barriers.

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.

Collaboration exists on an administrative level with the Commissioners of Education and Labor working jointly in a number of capacities. There is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two departments to address the needs of students with disabilities, specifically with visual impairments for DBVI.

As outlined in Section 606 (Employment of Individuals with Disabilities) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, DBVI continually makes "positive efforts to employ and advance in employment qualified individuals with disabilities in programs assisted under this title." DBVI staff have attended Maine's DVR Statewide Transition Counselor Advisory Group that meets quarterly to promote best practices in the provision of VR transition services. During the last year, this group heard from a number of guest speakers on disability and employment issues – including benefits counseling – and focused much of its efforts on WIOA implementation and the requirement for increased collaboration with schools and the Maine Department of Education.

J. STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.11(a)).

1. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE REHABILITATION NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING WITHIN THE STATE, PARTICULARLY THE VR SERVICES NEEDS OF THOSE:

A. WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

The Division and its SRC continue to discuss and explore strategies in an effort to reach out to as many potential consumers as possible. The SRC members represent a broad spectrum of consumer interest groups. These individuals share information on the constituent groups that they represent. Topics that are discussed are issues related to employment and other vocational rehabilitation services, skills of blindness needed for personal independence and self-sufficiency, mobility and safe travel, personal adjustment to blindness, support groups, braille, adaptive devices and assistive technology, access to the Internet, audio and digital books, recreation and leisure activities and activities within the Business Enterprise Program. These meetings are available through the Polycom system to Augusta, Rockland, Portland, Bangor, Lewiston, and Presque Isle. DBVI continues to receive input from survey questionnaires that are sent to all closed cases to determine the satisfaction of the consumer for the services that he/she received. In addition, the DBVI Director attended various gatherings of the organized blindness community in Maine (American Council of the Blind of Maine, National Federation of the Blind of Maine, and Pine Tree Dog Guide Users), and various regional meetings with consumers and other stakeholders.

Furthermore, DBVI continues to use information from the 2009 stakeholder group that was convened at the direction of the Maine legislature to “assess the current and future needs of people in Maine who are blind or visually impaired.” This stakeholder group consisted of representatives from the Department of Labor, the Department of Education, Catholic Charities Maine (education for blind children), the Iris Network (blindness rehabilitation), the Disability Rights Center, and ALPHA One Center for Independent Living, the DBVI State Rehabilitation Council and members of Maine’s three consumer-driven blindness organizations.

DBVI’s most recent Comprehensive Statement Needs Assessment was finalized in August 2015 and the complete report is available:

Areas identified as needing DBVI’s continued attention are:

A. Awareness of DBVI Services

Consumers also identified a need for a greater awareness of the services and programs available from DBVI. Some barriers include: difficulty in finding services as a new resident of Maine, difficulty in identifying resources for adjustment to blindness counseling, not enough information identifying the Business Enterprise Program as a vocational option, and not enough information / awareness of vocational services for children, families and schools when the student is blind or has low vision.

To accomplish the above, consumers suggested conducting more public outreach activities. There were numerous recommendations made to hold public forums/informational meetings in different

areas of the state on a regular basis. Consumers also noted that having various staff from DBVI present at these types of activities was effective, and very important to the consumers.

DBVI also uses its case management system to track the number of clients of the VR program over time. This longitudinal view demonstrated a decline in the number of referrals and active clients in the DBVI VR program over the past five years.

DBVI also added a Public Education component to its contract for Community Based Blindness Rehabilitation Services for Adults and Students 14 and older who are blind or visually impaired. One staff, who is a communications professional, provides these services. A communications infrastructure has been put in place, information materials were developed to market services, a complete media kit was developed, contacts at media outlets were established, and a speaker's bureau was organized. In addition, a strong educational component was reinserted into the Iris Network's White Cane Walk for Independence event with a partnership with the Maine Children's Museum and Theatre. Finally, social media, Facebook, and public service announcements via both television and radio were exploited to extend community outreach efforts.

B. Increased Competitive Employment Outcomes

Although DBVI has more consistently met Standard and Indicator 1.3 (percent of competitive employment outcomes compared to all successful outcomes) in recent years, there is still a need to increase the number of employment outcomes. This is especially true in the transition-age population, where only 13% of clients served in this group obtained a competitive employment outcome during our most recent RSA Site Monitoring Review.

Consumers consistently indicate the need for more opportunities for hands-on job training through things like internships and trial work experiences that are long enough to afford the individual opportunity to fully integrate their blindness skills into the job duties, and more summer youth employment opportunities. In addition, DBVI continues to believe in the need to have an in-state option to be able to receive their blindness skills training in a center-based model, so they can re-enter the employment arena more quickly following a loss of vision.

C. Clearly Defined Transition Services

During their Site Monitoring Review, RSA found that DBVI provides numerous services related to transition, but that these services are not clearly articulated through documentation in the case record. In addition, RSA identified the need for DBVI to offer more formalized programs for this population. Past transition clients and parents supported this need, which they believe would afford them a better understanding of what type of services or programs are available for this population through DBVI.

Findings from the IEP evaluation indicate that students of transition age are receiving very little in the way of career education, and the need for significantly more time spent on blindness-specific training geared toward preparing a student who is blind or visually impaired for life following graduation (often referred to as the Expanded Core Curriculum). Although progress has been made between the first two years of the evaluation in the area of better and more consistent communication between blindness and education professionals working with this population, the results from the most recent year shows more improvement in this area is still warranted.

DBVI has re-established its Blindness Rehabilitation Specialist positions, and continues to expand its role as a liaison between the parents and students, the education system, and the blindness system. In addition, DBVI worked with its VR Counselors to more clearly identify in case notes the work they are doing when working with transition-age students, and has begun to use a special indicator in its case management system denoting transition cases.

D. Center-Based Immersion Model Service Delivery

The final report from the 2009 stakeholder group noted above indicated that there are two basic types of service delivery models for blind rehabilitation: home-based and center-based immersion programs. Maine offers home-based services and just opened a center-based or immersion type of program for blindness rehabilitation in September 2015. Maine will now be able to provide the many significant advantages inherent in center-based programs that can be critical to effective, efficient rehabilitation to blindness and re-entry into the workforce without having to send clients outside of the state.

The report discusses a variety of benefits related to local access to center-based, immersion model blindness rehabilitation as a key component of Maine's overall delivery system. The most important of these advantages is the ability to provide immediate, comprehensive training and application with a wide variety of fundamental and essential blindness skills and devices. Being able to provide this comprehensive training in this fashion can increase the pace of acquisition of these basic blindness skills which then will decrease the time needed between eligibility for DBVI services to being prepared to integrate these newly learned skills into an employment setting.

Although both home-based and immersion models have their particular advantages, neither alone can provide all the elements needed for efficient, effective adjustment to vision loss and the timely acquisition of blindness skills. A truly effective blind rehabilitation program needs to have both. However, because those experiencing vision loss typically become isolated and cut-off from others and resources quickly, nearly all can benefit substantially, psychologically and practically, from at least some time spent with others in an immersion program regardless of individual goals and situations.

Since the time the above noted report was released (early in 2010), the DBVI Director has attended annual state conventions and meetings of Maine's three organized blindness groups (noted above), and various regional meetings with consumers and other stakeholders. Of the number of issues each of these groups continued to identify that negatively impact DBVI services, two have been a constant theme. They are: 1) it takes too long to deliver the blindness skills instruction consumers need to fully return to life and employment by only using the home-based delivery model, and 2) more consumers would access a center-based immersion model if they didn't have to leave the state to do so.

We believe we can provide comparable services for less cost within Maine by creating our own infrastructure for delivering services in this manner. This investment is critical, however, because, not only is local service delivery more cost-effective than sending clients to rehabilitation centers out of state for blindness rehabilitation, but clients newly dealing with vision loss are more receptive to receiving these services in a familiar environment closer to home. Therefore, clients are more likely to accept services as part of a more targeted training program; thus, leading to more individuals becoming employed.

Outcome data related to client participation in out of state immersion model rehabilitation programs support this contention. Since 1998, 24 clients of DBVI attended blindness rehabilitation centers outside of Maine, with two of the individuals attending two different programs at two separate centers (for a total of 26 out-of-state programs). Of the 26, six have obtained and maintained employment since their attendance in the out-of-state program. This represents a success rate of 23%. The level of success clients experienced as a result of their attendance at an out-of-state training center appears to be linked to the amount of time they spent at the center, with stays averaging 10–14 weeks being more successful compared to the ones who were not successful only staying an average of four to six weeks.

This data suggests that much of the reason for this lack of success has been the short time clients agreed to participate in such programs, which is consistent with national data on this issue. It is well established that longer periods of time spent participating in an intensive rehabilitation program more effective. Furthermore, many clients who only attend an out-of-state training center for a short time continued to receive home-based services to gain blindness skills effective enough to enable them to return to employment months and years following their participation in these center-based programs.

E. Lack of Availability to Public Transportation

Due to a small population spread throughout a large geographic area in Maine, transportation presents a significant unmet need in most areas of the state. Specific issues include information on existing transportation that is available, and concerns regarding the timeliness and safety of some publicly funded transportation programs. In many areas of the state, public transportation is non-existent for medical appointments, transportation to work, and travel options for routine daily activities.

Consumers also identified the need to access additional training in the techniques for building one's own personal transportation system when public transportation does not exist or is inadequate or unreliable. Many identified the need to have additional training time with an Orientation and Mobility Instructor, as well as access to peers, to work on these strategies.

DBVI O&M staff continues to work with the Maine Department of Transportation (DOT) to assess the need for safer pedestrian traffic at intersections and traffic circles. A collaborative training between DBVI and Maine DOT was held a few years ago that brought together traffic engineers from across the state, as well as some consumers, to learn about pedestrian travel needs of blind consumers. This led some O&M staff to work with traffic engineers in at least three communities to assess intersections for pedestrian safety.

F. Assistive Technology

Consumers acknowledged that they need continual learning/training in assistive technology (AT) as a result of rapid changes in available AT, as well as changes in needs for technology in the lives of consumers. Consumers emphatically stated the need for DBVI to expand the delivery of AT services as it is something that cannot be yet obtained in the mainstream commercial businesses. Some of the specific areas of unmet needs included: low vision devices/services, video magnifiers (CCTV), computers, assistive technology devices and software programs specific to blindness, mainstream AT software and devices useable for people who are blind or visually impaired (Apple products, for example), and information technology training on emerging technologies such as social media. In addition, consumers indicated the need for being able to access training specific to using blindness

and low vision AT with upgraded software (such as when upgrading from Windows XP to Windows 2007 or 2008, or MS Office 2003 to 2010 or 2013).

Consumers also identified the need for DBVI to facilitate the formation/operation of consumer led groups to work with each other on mainstream access technology pertinent to Apple products. They cited numerous instances where consumers have gone into retailers to receive instruction in the operation of their mainstream device, only to discover the staff at these retailers did not know the accessible portions of these products.

G. Current and Future Trends

The number of people with severe visual impairments in Maine is projected to double (to approximately 80,000) over the next 15 years. In addition to the need for more people needing to access DBVI services, there have been dramatic increases in the intensity of rehabilitation needs among Mainers with visual impairments. This is evidenced by the numbers of children of transition-age with visual impairments who have complex secondary disabilities such as autism or brain injury, as well as the increased numbers of persons living with dual sensory impairments of vision and hearing. Consumers identified the need to deliver services in a way that specifically addresses such issues as they relate to blindness and visual impairment.

There continues to be an increase of non-English speaking immigrants and refugees in Maine, especially in the southern part of the state. Those who are dealing with vision loss need costly interpreter services to benefit from available blindness rehabilitation services so that they can better access vocational rehabilitation for gaining employment in their new country. Consumers identified the need to explore service delivery models that specifically addresses such issues as they relate to blindness and visual impairment.

B. WHO ARE MINORITIES;

See section A (above)

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

See section A (above)

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

See section A (above)

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

See section A (above)

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

See section 1. A. (above)

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 .

See section 1. A. (above)

K. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.11(b)). Describe:

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

DBVI looked at the total state population of individuals identified as visually impaired according to the American Community Survey (31,300) when estimating these numbers. DBVI then took into consideration the number of referrals, expenditures, and average case costs from prior years to estimate the number of individuals who will receive services with funds provided under Title I and Part B of Title VI.

DBVI estimates that for FFY 2016 approximately 500–600 individuals who are blind or visually impaired will be served in Title I and Title VI by the Division at an approximate cost of \$3,399,741. Supported employment services are provided to approximately 23 consumers between the Title VI and Title I programs. DBVI has determined that many consumers are able to work in the competitive labor market without supports.

2. THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL RECEIVE SERVICES UNDER:

A. THE VR PROGRAM;

See section 1 (above)

B. THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM; AND

DBVI looked at the total state population of individuals identified as visually impaired according to the American Community Survey (31,300) when estimating these numbers. DBVI then took into consideration the number of referrals, expenditures, and average case costs from prior years to estimate the number of individuals who will receive services with funds provided under Title I and Part B of Title VI.

DBVI estimates that for FFY 2016 approximately 500-600 individuals who are blind or visually impaired will be served in Title I and Title VI by the Division at an approximate cost of \$3,399,741. In FFY15, supported employment services were provided to approximately 23 of these consumers utilizing the funding from both the Title VI and Title I programs. Currently, there are approximately 6 consumers are “Youth with a Disability” and DBVI will spend 50 % of the \$48,000 from Title VI funding on these individuals. DBVI has determined that many consumers are able to work in the competitive labor market without supports.

C. EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION;

N/A

3. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR VR SERVICES, BUT ARE NOT RECEIVING SUCH SERVICES DUE TO AN ORDER OF SELECTION; AND

N/A

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.

See section 1 (above)

L. STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

The designated State unit must:

1. IDENTIFY IF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES WERE JOINTLY DEVELOPED

Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the State VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the State has a Council, and jointly agreed to any revisions.

Based upon DBVI's comprehensive statewide assessment, WIOA requirements and reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act, the following goals for the 2017 State Plan were developed and agreed upon by the DBVI and its State Rehabilitation Council:

Goal (1): To stabilize DBVI's financial situation, ensuring that expenditures are budgeted consistently within existing and available federal and state funds.

Goal (2) To increase successful competitive employment outcomes for DBVI clients.

Goal (3) To deliver Pre–Employment Transition Services (PETS) to youth who are blind and visually impaired, assisting them to successfully live and work independently in the community.

Goal (4) To ensure that a larger number of individuals with disabilities, who may be underserved or unserved or have minority status, have access to DBVI services.

Goal (5) To increase awareness of services and resources for individuals who are blind or have low vision.

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

See section 1 (above)

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

See section 1 (above)

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

Maine Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Federal Fiscal Years (FFY) 2012–2014 Every three years, the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) conducts a comprehensive statewide needs assessment to evaluate the challenges facing individuals who are blind or have low vision living in Maine. The primary purpose of this needs assessment is to help DBVI and its State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) draft a state plan and guide goal development for the next three fiscal years. This report discusses the needs assessment results from a variety of perspectives: stakeholders (individuals with visual impairments and their family members, friends, or advocates; eye care specialists; and prospective employers); consumers of DBVI services (both those closed successfully [Status 26] and those closed unsuccessfully [Status 28]), and professionals from across Maine's blindness system. In this report, information has been collected through on–line surveys, telephone interviews, and at open forums directly from individuals. In addition, publicly available sources such as survey information from the United States Census Bureau and data from the Rehabilitation Services Administration and the

Social Security Administration are included. This report is organized into three major sections: Part One describes the demographics of Maine and its population, how individuals access Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services, and provides quantitative details of services received by DBVI consumers. Most of the data that is presented in Part One is drawn from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) outcome reporting that is submitted annually by DBVI as RSA-911 data. Other source data included are from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau, Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute, and Maine Department of Labor. These sources and others are cited in the body of the report. Part Two describes qualitative data collected during a series of DBVI consumer and staff focus groups held in the fall of 2014. The four consumer forums (open to anyone who had a visual impairment and those who cared for or provided services to people with vision loss) and three staff focus groups (open to DBVI staff and subcontractors working for DBVI) were held in Augusta, Bangor, and Portland. One session was held in the evening to accommodate individuals unable to attend the day sessions due to work schedules and all of the focus groups were accessible via teleconference to encourage participation. These focus group discussions were facilitated by Dr. Karen Wolffe and transcribed verbatim for analytic purposes. To ensure confidentiality and objectivity, the focus group transcripts were analyzed by another seasoned researcher, Dr. Kathy Nelson. Drs. Nelson and Wolffe jointly authored Part Two of this report, however, all Part Two analyses were conducted by Dr. Nelson. The final section, Part Three details the results of a series of telephone interviews performed by Dr. Wolffe and parallel surveys submitted on-line by stakeholders. The results that are presented reflect completed survey input from 173 respondents (110 of whom were people with visual impairments or their family members, 47 were DBVI staff or subcontractors, and 16 were eye care professionals). Both quantitative and qualitative data are included in the overview of the respondents' input. Their input covers a broad range of topics: Challenges facing individuals with visual impairments in Maine, assessment of the provision of services by DBVI, recommendations for improving DBVI services, and the employment and life experiences of the respondents.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services in Maine In Maine, the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) is the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Designated State Unit for administering services that are governed by the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, for eligible individuals whose primary disability is visual impairment. The Maine Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) administers a separate General Vocational Rehabilitation program for individuals who have other disabilities. DBVI operates as a state vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency within the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, which is located within the Department of Labor (DOL). The mission of BRS is to provide full access to employment, independence, and community integration for people with disabilities. DBVI works together with individuals who have visual disabilities to help them achieve or maintain gainful employment, live independently, and integrate into their local communities. To that end, DBVI serves individuals with visual impairments throughout their lives. Federal statute mandates that each applicant entering the publicly funded rehabilitation program follows an individualized process from application through eligibility, comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs, development of an individualized plan for employment, and provision of appropriate services to achieve employment. Any individual with a visual disability and a commitment to find or maintain employment may apply. Each applicant can expect an eligibility decision within 60 days of application. Each applicant, who is blind or has low vision, is eligible for DBVI services if that person:

- has a visual impairment which, for the individual, constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment and
- requires rehabilitation services to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment consistent with the applicant's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.

(Notes: An individual with a visual impairment and additional disabilities may also be served by DBVI. Substantial impediment to employment means that a physical or mental impairment hinders an individual from preparing for, engaging in, or retaining employment consistent with the individual's abilities and capabilities. Required rehabilitative services must be necessary to overcome disability-related barriers. Lack of resources alone does not constitute a disability-related

barrier.) Additionally, there is a presumption of benefit. An individual is presumed able to benefit from rehabilitative services in terms of an employment outcome, unless the DBVI VR counselor can demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that such individual is incapable of benefiting from vocational rehabilitation services due to the severity of the disability of the individual (DBVI Policy Manual, 2013). DBVI doesn't have an actual Policy Manual, but rather has a set of rules governing its VR program. Individuals who receive SSI and/or SSDI are presumed to be eligible for DBVI services. Each individual who applies for services and is determined eligible, works with a qualified VR counselor and others (including specialty-trained blindness professionals) to identify an employment goal and the appropriate services necessary to achieve that goal. The Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) may include guidance and counseling, training in compensatory skills specific to blindness, other types of training, education, job search, and job placement among other things. The successful conclusion of the VR process is an individual working in a job consistent with their capabilities for 90 days with the supposition of continued employment. DBVI uses a set of "status" codes to track an individual's progress as they move through the VR process. This allows both the state agency and RSA to collect data to ensure timely service delivery and fiscal accountability. While helping individuals obtain employment is the ultimate goal of the VR program, many VR cases are closed prior to an individual achieving and maintaining employment for at least 90 days. Such closures occur for a number of reasons and may happen at any step in the VR process. Some individuals who apply do not have a qualifying visual disability and are deemed ineligible. Others, after being found eligible, may leave the VR program because they find employment on their own, have an exacerbation of a chronic health condition, or cannot be located by their VR counselor for an extended period of time. However, anyone who applies for VR services has the right to appeal a decision made by the agency, including the decision to close a case, at any juncture in the rehabilitation process. After being closed successfully, individuals can receive further support through post-employment services, if additional services are necessary to maintain, regain, or advance in employment. This assistance is limited in scope of services and duration. If more comprehensive services are required, a new application for DBVI services must be completed (DBVI Policy Manual, 2013). Maine's Economy and Workforce Maine is a large, primarily rural state, spanning over 33,000 square miles. According to the 2014 US Census, Maine has a population of 1.33 million people with the largest population density in York and Cumberland counties where almost 489,000 people live. The state's population growth is significantly slower than the rest of the country with a rate of only .1% between April 1, 2010 and July 1, 2014 as compared to the national rate of 3.4%. Maine has a predominantly white population (95.2%) and just over half (51%) of its residents are female (US Census, 2014). In addition, the population of Maine tends to be older than in other states – over 20% of the population is 62 years of age and over. The median age in Maine is 43.2 versus a median age of 37.3 in the United States (US Census, 2014). Economy. While the United States overall economy has largely rebounded since the recent economic recession, Maine has not and ranks 44th in the country in terms of jobs recovered since the end of the recession. Overall figures indicate that the U.S. has regained 118% of jobs lost, yet only 57% of jobs lost have been regained in Maine. By comparison, New Hampshire and Vermont (states with similar demographic characteristics) have recovered 97% and 86% respectively (Martin, 2014). Median hourly wage is \$16.29, mean hourly wage is \$20.26; and mean annual wage is \$42,140 in Maine; by comparison, in the U.S. overall the median hourly wage is \$17.09 mean hourly wage is \$22.71, and the mean annual wage is \$47,230 (BLS, 2014). Median annual earned income for people 21 to 65 in 2013 residing in the US is \$30,538 (+/- 42) and in Maine \$27,636 (+/- 322). Median annual earnings for people ages 21 to 65 with visual impairment in Maine is \$30,300 (+/- 5,980); comparable to \$32,300 (+/- 860) nationally, according to the 2012 American Community Survey (Erickson, Lee, & Schrader, 2014). Table 1.0 provides an overview of population characteristics of people with visual impairments, according to the 2012 American Community Survey. Data are included for the United States, Maine, Connecticut, Idaho, New Hampshire, and Vermont to give the reader an understanding of how these states (similar in size, population, or locale) compare to one another and

the country overall (Erickson, Lee, & Schrader, 2014). Table 1.0 Population Characteristics: People with Visual Impairments (Ages 16–64) Location Estimate (%) 90% MOE Base Population Sample Size United States 1.7 ± 3.29 202,892,800 1,938,333 Maine 1.7 ± 3.29 863,600 8,282 Connecticut 1.1 ± 3.29 2,334,700 22,761 Idaho 1.8 ± 3.29 994,400 9,179 New Hampshire 1.1 ± 3.29 880,800 8,726 Vermont 1.7 ± 3.29 417,900 4,263 Workforce. The rate of visual disability in Maine is estimated at 2.3% or approximately 30,590 people across all ages and 1.7% of individuals 16–64 years old or approximately 14,681 (Erickson, Lee, & Schrader, 2014). These data indicate that 42% (+/- 8.64) of individuals with visual impairment between the ages of 16 and 64 were employed in 2012, almost 43% (+/- 8.83) when considering only 21–64 year olds. Seventy-five percent of nondisabled individuals in Maine between the ages of 16 and 64 were employed. The rate jumped to 77% for individuals between the ages of 18 and 64 (Erickson, Lee, & Schrader, 2014). By comparison, the employment rate of individuals with visual impairments in Connecticut (16–24 years old) is estimated as close to 42% (+/- 6.94), in Idaho 44% (+/- 8.49), in New Hampshire 50% (+/- 11.89), and in Vermont 32% (+/- 10.79). When considering New Hampshire and Vermont's more robust economic recovery rates, individuals with visual disabilities in Maine appear to be faring almost as well as those in New Hampshire and better than those in Vermont. However, small sample sizes in New Hampshire and Vermont are troublesome and their employment estimates may not be as reliable as those for Maine, Connecticut, and Idaho. In summary, Maine is a large and predominantly rural state with an aging population. The incidence of visual impairment in Maine (2.3%) is just slightly higher than for the U.S. (2.2) and the employment rate in 2012 for people with visual impairments is indicated as higher than the national rate. However, the economy in Maine has not rebounded in the same robust fashion as has the economy of its neighbor and this may have a detrimental impact on employment moving forward.

Part One: Maine DBVI Outcomes Rehabilitation Services Administration and State Outcomes Data Characteristics of individuals served by Maine DBVI. The following section describes the characteristics of individuals whose cases were closed in Federal Fiscal Years (FFY) 2012, 2013 and 2014. During these three years, DBVI closed a total of 642 cases. More women than men (56% versus 44%) applied for services and were closed. As in previous years, many the people served and closed (38%) were over the age of 65 (n=190) at application. Two hundred seventy-six or 55% of the closed case were individuals over the age of 55 at application. In terms of working-age individuals, the data can only be split grossly here into 23 to 65 year olds and they made up 53% (n=267) of this data set. Overall, there were very few individuals (n=20) who indicated race or ethnicity other than White, non-Hispanic. Of the individuals closed in FFY 2012, 2013, and 2014, 622 (97%) identified as White. Although nearly a quarter (23%) of all applicants closed in this period had not received a high school credential, 36% of DBVI applicants had high school diplomas or the equivalent. Another 22% had some college and 19% of applicants were college graduates. Table 1.1 outlines the salient characteristics of the individuals represented among all closed cases across FFY 2012, 2013, and 2014. Table 1.1 DBVI Individual Characteristics for FFY 2012–2014 Cases

	2012	2013	2014	n	n	n
Gender Male	105	80	95			
Female	122	122	118			
Age at Application Less than 23	17	14	14			
23–54	70	52	59			
55–65	28	36	22			
Greater than 65	62	61	67			
Total	13–65+	177	163	162		
Race White	217	197	208			
Black	5	1	3			
Native American	2	2	0			
Asian	2	2	2			
Hispanic	1	0	0			
Education/Application Less than high school	64	47	30			
HS or equivalent	76	67	86			
Some college	56	55	33			
College or more	31	33	57			
Unknown	1	0	1			

DBVI applications, plans developed, and closures. Table 1.2 provides an overview of DBVI's total applications, including plans developed and closures for FFY 2012 to 2014. During this time period, DBVI received 560 new applications (status 02) and developed 425 new plans. As indicated previously, 642 cases were closed in this time period. Table 1.2 DBVI Applications, Plans

Developed, and Closures 2012 2013 2014 New Applications Received (02) 202 158 200 New Plans
 Developed 133 126 166 All Closures 227 202 213

DBVI active caseload statuses. Table 1.3 details DBVI's active cases at the end of each federal fiscal year from 2012 through 2014 by indicating the number of individuals who were waiting for an eligibility determination (Status 02), were in the process of developing an IPE (Status 10), or who had completed IPEs and were in plan implementation (Statuses 12–24). At the end of 2012, DBVI had 501 active cases, 434 in 2013, and 549 in 2014. There were decreases across all measures of active cases between the end of FFY 2012 and FFY 2013. However, end-of-year activity increased by 27% from FFY 2013 to FFY 2014: Plan implementation cases (Statuses 12–24) increased 32%, plan development (Status 10) increased 21%, and new applications (Status 02) increased 27%.

Table 1.3 DBVI Active Caseload Statuses 2012 2013 2014 Plan Implementation/Active Cases (Statuses 12–24) 133 126 166 Plan Development (Status 10) 166 150 182 New Applicants 202 158 201

DBVI closures. While the intent of the VR process is to assist individuals with disabilities in their efforts to achieve and maintain employment consistent with their capabilities, individuals may exit the program prior to achieving an employment goal. Table 1.4 provides information about when in the VR process individual cases were closed in FFY 2012 to 2014. The different closure types noted indicate how far in the VR process individuals had progressed when their cases were closed. In both 2012 and 2014, DBVI successfully closed 116 cases in Status 26. In 2013 there were 109 successful closures. In both 2013 and 2014, DBVI closed approximately 54% of all closed cases in Status 26. By comparison, in 2012 DBVI closed 51% of all closed cases in Status 26. The number of individuals who were closed in Status 28 (they had developed and participated in IPEs, but did not achieve 90 days of employment) steadily declined from a high of 61 in 2012 to a low of 47 in 2014 (a 23% decrease). Likewise, the number of cases closed because the applicant was found not eligible for DBVI services decreased in 2013 and 2014 by approximately a third. The number of case closures in which the individual had been determined eligible but had not yet developed an IPE (Status 10–30 closures) was constant in 2012 and 2013 at 22 each year, but increased to 32 in 2014 (a 45% increase). Table 1.4 DBVI Closures by Closure Type 2012 2013 2014 Closed as Applicant (Status 08) 27 17 18 Successful Closure (Status 26) 116 109 116 Received Services (Status 28) 61 54 47 IPE Developed – No Services (Statuses 12 – 30) 1 0 0 Closed Before IPE Developed (Statuses 10 – 30) 22 22 32 Column Totals 227 202 213

Average months in VR process by closure type. Another measure of how the system works for the people it serves is the length of time that individuals spend in the overall VR process. Table 1.5 provides this information in a tabular format and shows the amount of time people spent in the VR process whose cases were closed during the three-year period, 2012–2014. The table below presents data for cases from application to closure. The amount of time spent in the VR process that individuals whose cases were closed before an IPE was developed (Statuses 10–30) rose from an average of 12.17 months in 2012 to 17.83 months in 2013, and to 19.22 months in 2014. Likewise, the amount of time that individuals spent in the VR process who were employed at closure (Status 26) increased gradually from 37.46 months in 2012 to 40.48 months in 2013, and 41.38 months in 2014. For individuals in Status 28, who received IPE services but were not employed for 90 days, the average amount of time spent in the VR process in 2012 was 45.12 months, in 2013 39.67, and in 2014 44.36 months. Table 1.5 DBVI Average Months in VR Process by Closure Type 2012 2013 2014 Closed Competitive (Status 26) 37.46 40.48 41.38 Received IPE Services (Status 28) 45.12 39.67 44.36 Closed Before IPE Developed (Statuses 10–30) 12.17 17.83 19.22

Average months in VR process for rehabilitated clients. Table 1.6 details the average amount of time spent in the VR process for rehabilitated (Status 26) clients only. Overall there was little change in the average total amount of time (approximately 26 plus months) that it took a DBVI applicant to progress and ultimately complete the VR process in this three-year snapshot. However, the average did fall slightly from 26.87 months in 2012 to 26.83 in 2013 and 26.49 in 2014 – the final change representing just over a 1.4% decrease in the amount of time in plan for individuals from end-of-year 2012 to 2014. Likewise, there was a slight decrease over this time period in the amount of time it took eligible individuals to move from eligibility determination to completion of their IPEs, hovering around two and a half months and ranging from a high of 2.54 months in 2013 to a low of 2.36 months in 2014 (a 7% decrease). While the length of time it took to determine eligibility remained about one month, as in previous reports, it varied in this review from a low of 1.38 in 2013 to a high of 1.55 in 2014 (a 12% increase). Table 1.6 DBVI Applications, Plans Developed, and Closures for Rehabilitated Clients 2012 2013 2014 IPE to Closure (Time in Plan) (Statuses 12 – 26) 26.87 26.83 26.49 Eligibility to IPE (Statuses 04 – 12) 2.47 2.54 2.36 Application to Eligibility (Statuses 02 – 04) 1.49 1.38 1.55 Total 30.83 30.75 30.40

DBVI Outcomes DBVI rehabilitation rate FFY 2012–2014. A critical measure of success in the Vocational Rehabilitation system is whether or not individuals who receive services move into employment. The standard federal measure is the rehabilitation rate, which represents the total number of successful closures, divided by the total number of closures following the development of an IPE, which includes both successful (Status 26) and unsuccessful (Status 28) closures. The target rehabilitation rate for DBVI defined by the Rehabilitation Services Administration is 68.9%. The total number of DBVI cases that were closed rehabilitated (i.e., worked for at least 90 days in an integrated setting) declined from 2012 to 2013 but then came back up in 2014. However, the rehabilitation rate steadily increased from 66% in 2012, to 67% in 2013, and to 71% in 2014 as indicated in Table 1.7. Table 1.7 DBVI Rehabilitation Rate FFY 2012–2014 2012 2013 2014 n % n % n % Rehabilitation Rate (Status 26 divided by 26 plus 28) 177 66% 163 67% 163 71%

DBVI competitive employment rate. Successful (Status 26) closures are further classified into “Competitive Employment” and “Non-competitive employment” closures. DBVI non-competitive closures are almost individuals closed as Homemakers. The standard federal measure used to compare these outcomes is to divide competitive employment closures by all successful closures. The standard rate that RSA set for DBVI is 35.4%. The actual percent of all successful closures that were competitive employment closures fluctuated slightly from a high of 41% in 2012, to a low of 34% in 2013, and then back up to 39% in 2014 as indicated in Table 1.8. Table 1.8 DBVI Competitive Employment Rate FFY 2012 to 2014 2012 2013 2014 n % n % n % Competitive Employment Rate (Competitive Employment/Total 26) 116 41% 109 34% 116 39%

Average weekly earnings at application and closure for all successful competitive employment closures. Table 1.9 details the difference between the earnings of individuals at the point of application for services with DBVI and their earnings at closure. The greatest increase (109%) was evidenced by individuals closed in 2012 who reported earnings at application of only \$173 a week and at closure were earning \$361 a week. Although the gains in 2013 and 2014 were more modest, these individuals reported earnings at application that were 47% and 70%, respectively, greater than those reported by individuals in 2012 at application. Individuals closed in 2013 saw an increase of 57% and those in 2014 saw an increase of 55% between earnings reported at application and closure. In real money, these increases in weekly earnings were \$144 in 2013 and \$162 in 2014. Table 1.9 DBVI Competitive Employment Closures: Average Weekly Earnings, Earnings at Application, Earnings at Closure Difference application to closure % Change, application

to closure FFY 2012 \$173 \$361 \$188 109% FFY 2013 \$255 \$399 \$144 57% FFY 2014 \$293 \$455 \$162 55%

Education level changes from application to closure. Another way to look at how individuals have gained in terms of quality of life and positive outcomes through their involvement with the rehabilitation system, is to consider their educational levels at application and the change at closure. We have data for all but one of the DBVI cases in FFY 2012–2014, for a total of 641. As mentioned earlier in this report, almost a quarter of the DBVI applicants closed during 2012–14 entered services with less than a high school credential. There was a 19% decrease in the number of individuals with less than high school between application and closure during this same period. Positive educational progress is evident at closure for 28 people who received DBVI services and support between 2012 and 2014. Thirteen people earned a high school credential or its equivalent, four gained some college experience, and eleven acquired college degrees or more. The entire educational credentials picture is captured in a tabular format in Table 1.10. Table 1.10 Education Level Changes from Application to Closure

Year	Application	Closure	Change
2012	Less than HS	64	54
	HS Diploma/GED	76	84
	Some College	56	57
	College or more	31	32
Total	227	227	
2013	Less than HS	47	38
	HS Diploma/GED	67	69
	Some College	55	57
	College or more	33	38
Total	202	202	
2014	Less than HS	36	27
	HS Diploma/GED	86	89
	Some College	33	34
	College or more	57	62
Total	213	213	

Cost of DBVI Services and Expenditures This section presents trends in annual costs of DBVI services and the service areas where these costs are concentrated. Although DBVI classifies services into nearly 100 categories, these categories are aggregated into a smaller set of 15 service groups for ease of presentation in this report. The aggregated service group categories are described below in Figure 1.1. Figure 1.1 Description of Service Groups

Service Group	Example
Contract Services	Services delivered under contract by the Iris Network Rehabilitation Technology
Augmentative computer equipment, software, training	Diagnosis & Treatment
Low vision evaluation, medical treatment, therapy & counseling	Job Development and Job Placement
Job placement assistance, job readiness training, job search assistance	Disability Related
Augmentative Skills Braille instruction, augmentative communication device	On-the-Job Supports
Job coaching both at the worksite and off site & on the job training	Assessment
Community based situational assessments, and disability related evaluations	Technical Assistance
Services Business consultation, assistive technology computer equipment/software	Occupational, Vocational, and Other Training
Business/vocational training, books, supplies, tutoring, fees, adult education, literacy	Transportation
Cab/bus fares, car repair, gas	Maintenance
Clothing, child care, food and shelter to enable IPE	College/University Training
Tuition, boarding, fees, books, school supplies for college/university	Misc. Supplies
Photocopying, other supplies	Occupational Tools and Equipment
Tools, equipment, licenses and initial supplies needed by the individual to obtain employment	All Other Services
Readers/interpreters, services to family members, personal attendant services, purchased counseling and guidance	DBVI services and expenditures.

Although DBVI overall expenditures increased in FFY 2013 from \$1.32 million in 2012 to \$1.57 million in 2013, the fiscal year ending in 2014 saw the lowest expenditure rate in all of these years at \$1.21 million. Expenditures fell 23% in 2014 from the high in 2013. Costs of DBVI purchased services by service group. Although services provided directly by DBVI staff have edged slightly ahead of contract services as the largest single expenditure category, ranging from a high of \$799,424 in 2013 to a low of \$628,040 in 2014, contract services expenditures are extremely close ranging from a high of \$774,974 in 2013 to a low of \$579,123 in 2014. The greatest single (agency-provided) service group expenditure is rehabilitation technology, which ranged from a high in 2013 of \$255,979 to a low of \$175,454 in 2014. The ranking of service groups flip-flopped as DBVI provided less service under 'diagnosis and treatment of impairments,' which ranged from a high in 2013 of \$116,061 to a low of

\$70,315 in 2014, and more expenditures for service under ‘four-year college or university training,’ which ranged from a high of \$94,351 in 2014 to lows of \$83,586 and \$78,860 in 2013 and 2012 respectively. While Table 1.11 details DBVI paid authorizations and contract services from FFY 2012 through FFY 2014 by service grouping, Table 1.12 provides a breakout of the top five service groupings, excluding contract services.

Table 1.11 DBVI: Purchased Services Costs by Service Group FFY 2012–2014 Contracted Services

2012	2013	2014	Public Community Rehabilitation Providers	Private Community Rehabilitation Programs	Other Public Vendors	Other Private Vendors	Sub-total (1)
\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$133,297.03	\$127,116.91	\$120,719.63	\$57,894.06	\$655,814.72
\$59,375.08	\$69,668.37	\$69,668.37	\$464,623.63	\$588,481.94	\$388,734.98	\$388,734.98	\$774,973.93
\$21,158.25	\$7,174.12	\$7,174.12	\$579,122.98	\$19,893.36	\$19,893.36	\$19,893.36	\$579,122.98
\$70,315.29	\$7,174.12	\$7,174.12	\$101,041.52	\$116,061.18	\$116,061.18	\$116,061.18	\$774,973.93
\$70,315.29	\$7,174.12	\$7,174.12	\$3,000.00	\$2,431.25	\$787.50	\$787.50	\$579,122.98
\$0.00	\$0.00	\$5,680.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$774,973.93
\$78,859.61	\$83,586.30	\$94,351.74	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$774,973.93
\$57.98	\$1,843.05	\$11,000.00	\$2,908.72	\$2,908.72	\$2,908.72	\$2,908.72	\$774,973.93
\$1,803.23	\$1,032.08	\$323.70	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$774,973.93
\$3,772.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$450.00	\$1,872.50	\$3,610.00	\$3,610.00	\$774,973.93
\$87,084.08	\$107,677.41	\$68,868.73	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$774,973.93
\$7,825.52	\$4,722.25	\$1,480.00	\$468.38	\$599.30	\$247.50	\$247.50	\$774,973.93
\$83,939.11	\$63,127.70	\$48,034.28	\$18,595.00	\$18,595.00	\$18,595.00	\$18,595.00	\$774,973.93
\$25,215.58	\$5,628.59	\$5,628.59	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$18,367.50	\$18,367.50	\$774,973.93
\$10,752.68	\$6,856.47	\$8,961.00	\$889.82	\$6,447.62	\$7,169.97	\$7,169.97	\$774,973.93
\$176,215.29	\$255,979.49	\$175,453.51	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,250.00	\$1,250.00	\$774,973.93
\$1,661.75	\$164.50	\$796.25	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$774,973.93
\$31,693.34	\$34,976.83	\$17,061.33	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$774,973.93
\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$774,973.93
\$40,595.27	\$9,635.08	\$24,450.13	\$48,917.47	\$48,917.47	\$48,917.47	\$48,917.47	\$774,973.93
\$665,449.80	\$799,424.06	\$628,040.45	\$1,321,264.52	\$1,574,397.99	\$1,574,397.99	\$1,574,397.99	\$774,973.93
\$1,207,163.43							\$774,973.93

Table 1.12, which follows, shows the top five DBVI service groups by federal fiscal year, excluding contract services. Table 1.12 Top 5 DBVI Service Groups by FFY (excluding contract services)

2012	2013	2014	Rehabilitation Technology	Diagnosis and Treatment of Impairments	Disability Skills Related Training	Job Placement Assistance	Four-Year College or University Training
\$176,215.29	\$255,979.49	\$175,453.51	\$176,215.29	\$116,061.18	\$70,315.29	\$83,939.11	\$78,859.61
\$176,215.29	\$255,979.49	\$175,453.51	\$116,061.18	\$70,315.29	\$83,939.11	\$63,127.70	\$83,586.30
\$176,215.29	\$255,979.49	\$175,453.51	\$70,315.29	\$83,939.11	\$63,127.70	\$48,034.28	\$94,351.74
\$176,215.29	\$255,979.49	\$175,453.51	\$83,939.11	\$63,127.70	\$48,034.28	\$78,859.61	\$83,586.30
\$176,215.29	\$255,979.49	\$175,453.51	\$63,127.70	\$48,034.28	\$78,859.61	\$83,586.30	\$94,351.74

Average cost per closure in FFY 2012–2014. The bottom-line in determining cost benefits with regard to rehabilitation services is what it costs an agency like DBVI to provide services and successfully close an individual who needed those services. The following table details average costs per closure based on information drawn from the DBVI case tracking system; therefore, only services that were paid on behalf of a specific client are included and services delivered as part of a fixed contract are not included. These successfully closed cases (Status 26) are further delineated to show the differences between individuals closed in competitive employment and those with non-competitive employment outcomes. As one would anticipate, competitive closures are far and away more expensive than non-competitive closures. The average expenditure for a competitive closure in 2012 was \$8,116, \$6,956 in 2013, and \$9,825 in 2014. By comparison, non-competitive closures averaged \$3,252 in 2012, \$1,824 in 2013, and \$2,642 in 2014. For all closures, the average cost were: \$5,265 in 2012, \$3,566 in 2013, and \$5,429 in 2014. Considering that the largest increase in

service group expenditures by DBVI over this three–year period was for four–year college or university training, this may account at least in part for the increase seen in the average cost for competitive closures in 2014. Table 1.13 presents the average cost per closure for DBVI cases closed both competitively and non–competitively in FFY 2012–2014. Table 1.13 Average Cost per Closure FFY 2012–2014

FFY 2012	FFY 2013	FFY 2014	
Competitive Employment Closures (Status 26)	\$8,116	\$6,956	\$9,825
Non–Competitive Employment (Status 26)	\$3,252	\$1,824	\$2,642
ALL closures	\$5,265	\$3,566	\$5,429

In summary, these outcome data for DBVI cases show that over the three–year period under review, DBVI has performed well on behalf of consumers in Maine. A number of DBVI consumers have evidenced gains in their educational levels and far more have been closed successfully than unsuccessfully. DBVI consumers closed as competitively employed saw increases in their average weekly earnings from application to closure in all three years reviewed. Also noteworthy is the fact that DBVI expenditures were 23% lower in 2014 than in 2013 and the 2014 competitive closure rate of 39% was greater than the previous year’s 34%. Both indicators of movement in a positive direction by DBVI.

Part Two: Qualitative Input from People with Visual Impairments and the Service Providers Working with Them Consumer and Staff Focus Group Data To clarify the needs of Maine residents with vision loss, and ways of addressing those needs more effectively, the State’s Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired sought consumer and staff input for its 2015 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). One input source was four consumer focus groups that took place during the fall of 2014. Moderated by consultant Dr. Karen Wolffe, the groups took place in Augusta, Bangor, and Portland. To ensure the inclusion of employed people with vision loss, one group met in the evening; the other three convened during the day. Also in the fall of 2014, Dr. Wolffe conducted three focus groups in DBVI’s Portland, Bangor, and Augusta offices with both direct and contract staff. The focus groups for consumers sought input about the most critical challenges facing people who are blind or visually impaired in the state of Maine, from the perspective of people with vision loss themselves. The discussions emphasized the challenges that prevent participants and other visually impaired people from living the lives they want to live, as well as what steps participants suggested for addressing those challenges. Dr. Wolffe also asked participants in the staff groups about their perceptions of the three most important issues facing blind and visually impaired people in Maine. Other topics addressed staff members’ ideas for strengthening DBVI as a service–delivery agency, including how to increase the number of referrals and other strategies for making DBVI more visible, and how to improve DBVI more generally. Sections of this report about improving services include, of course, explicit suggestions that consumers or staff members made (as in "I suggest that ..." or "[DBVI, employers, or cities] should ..."). Limiting the analysis to explicit suggestions, however, would have omitted many good ideas that were only implicit in participants’ accounts of problems. Take, for example, consumers’ complaints about the inaccessibility of evening social activities due to the fact that their week–day bus service ends at 6:00 p.m. Even in the absence of explicit participant suggestions, it logically follows from the description of the problem that it could be addressed by advocacy to extend the hours of public transportation, adding or rescheduling activities to coincide with current bus schedules, or both. One way or the other, the suggested steps for addressing problems appearing in this report originate with participants. Consumer reports and insights will take center stage in this report, partly because learning more about the needs of Maine’s blind and visually impaired population is the CSNA’s overarching purpose. Another reason is to avoid unnecessary duplication; staff and consumers largely agree about the major challenges that people with vision loss face in the State of Maine. Staff members’ unique contribution lies in their insiders’ observations about problems with the blindness service delivery system, both within and outside DBVI, and how those problems might be addressed effectively. This insiders’ perspective, therefore, will be the focus of the analysis of the staff focus group data, which will follow the analysis of data about consumers. Consumer Perspectives Across all four focus groups, consumers discussed problems and possible solutions associated with nine

topics. Of these, participants talked most about finding meaningful employment, which generated the largest number of "discussion segments", that is, units of conversation uninterrupted by conversation about other topics. Specifically, employment generated 68 discussion segments, followed by transportation (54 discussion segments). Most participants, moreover, identified one or both of these topics as a top concern for Maine residents who are blind or visually impaired. Other topics included dissemination of information (48 discussion segments); DBVI and other blindness services in Maine (39); obtaining assistive technology and training (36); informal social integration (35), a composite category that includes references to social isolation, recreation and leisure activities, and social support; environmental access (19); assertiveness and other psychological issues (17); and economic subjects not specifically associated with employment (13). This report discusses consumers' perceived barriers and possible solutions for the two most-discussed topics, employment and transportation. Participants' accounts of these two topics, however, reflect the interrelatedness of the barriers they face. As the following sections will show, barriers to one resource – transportation, for example – can have far flung effects on other aspects of people's lives, including employment, informal social integration, access to vocational rehabilitation services, and the ability to live independently more generally. Employment barriers. The focus groups discussed many barriers to finding meaningful work, which vary in how amenable they are to change. The barriers also vary in how explicitly participants linked them to problems with employment. Although participants discussed most of the barriers covered below specifically in an employment context, they discussed others (e.g., certain DBVI service gaps) primarily as problems in their own right. I include the latter in this section because of their "real world" connection to employment access. The barriers to employment originate primarily in (1) characteristics of Maine; (2) potential employers' business characteristics, attitudes, and knowledge; (3) the programs and practices of Maine's blindness service delivery system; and (4) individual differences that can affect employability. Figure 2.1, on the next page, summarizes the barriers originating in each of these areas.

Figure 2.1 Summary of perceived barriers to finding meaningful employment Origin Barriers
 Characteristics of Maine • Rural: towns are far apart • Few jobs in general, esp. in remote locations •
 Transportation is limited and expensive Employers Business characteristics

Attitudes and knowledge • Assistive technology is unaffordable for small businesses • Most openings
 are entry-level (e.g., in fast food) • Inaccessible workplaces

• Fear of hiring people with vision loss • Do not understand needs and capabilities of visually
 impaired • Do not let blind or visually impaired employees advance

Blindness service delivery system Understaffing

Administrative gaps

Spotty dissemination of information

Overly conservative or outdated equipment and practices • Lack of VR services in remote locations •
 Long waiting list for VR and other services • Incomplete skill set available to clients • Difficult to
 resume service if client needs change

• Lack of information-sharing about jobs among state agencies • Work-related info about clients is
 not computerized • BEP, in some areas, is not a viable employment option

- ... to clients about assistive tech., service options, events
- ... to employers about needs and abilities of b/vi

- Not adapting fast enough to new technology
- Notion of appropriate work is too limited
- Education requirements restrict job opportunities within the blindness field

Individual differences among b/vi that can affect employability

- Physical and health problems (e.g., trouble with balance)
- Fear of new technology; limited knowledge of and experience with technology esp. among older people
- Can't work fast enough
- Embarrassed to be trained in front of co-workers
- Not assertive enough

Characteristics of Maine. Maine's rural character translates into few job openings for residents in general. For people who are blind or severely visually impaired, who cannot drive, jobs (and job interviews) are not only few and far between but also are difficult to get to. Towns are far apart, and transportation service is limited and expensive. (A later section discusses transportation in more detail.) In comparison to the rest of the United States, cities in Maine are relatively small: The 2013 populations of Bangor, Portland, and Augusta, where the consumer focus groups were held, were relatively small, range from 18,793 in Augusta to 66,318 in Portland (US Census, 2013). Even focus group participants who live in a city cannot necessarily find work. I lived originally in Calais, Maine [where I knew everybody, but] I [moved] to the Bangor area ... eight years ago [hoping to find work] and ... I still have no job. Prospective employers' business characteristics and attitudes. Two business characteristics—the type of jobs available and workplace accessibility—are barriers to finding meaningful work. More than one participant observed that most employers in Maine are small businesses that cannot afford to purchase assistive technology. Nor are small businesses, such as the fast food industry (one of Maine's major employers, when one considers the establishments collectively), in the position to offer very many jobs beyond the entry level. Even a four-year college degree and technical skills cannot always protect participants from underemployment or long-term unemployment. I [a college graduate] have pretty much done fast food. Fast food is not my thing. I try very very hard to look at the screen, [but] it is very difficult for me because they're really small. The orders on the screen are small ... Unfortunately I have been let go from the majority of those jobs because of my vision. I'm trained to the t in small engines and business. Can't find a job. Prospective employers' attitudes and knowledge. Participants report that employers, whether due to their attitudes or lack of knowledge, are afraid to hire people with vision loss and, sometimes, to promote them. Whether due to stiff competition for jobs in general or to employers' reluctance to hire people with vision loss, job hunting often results in the frustration of having worked very hard to make a good impression but never receiving a call-back. I've done all of the qualifications. I've had people check my resume. I had a person who was an accounting major, and she was really good at resumes. I put resumes together and it is still very difficult for me to get a job. No one calls me back even when they say they [will] do so. Even people who find work might not be allowed to advance in their jobs. The result can be a very frustrated and disgruntled worker. I had an experience where my employer would not progress me beyond shredding paper and slotting mail. And here I am with a college education, and I'm working beside people who are doing things who didn't have a college education, and it was very difficult not to be angry for eighteen years. A number of participants said that potential employers do not understand what blind and visually impaired people are capable of. Although some employers underestimate the capabilities of people with vision loss, others might overestimate them. Some participants mentioned employers' lack of understanding of the special needs of employees with vision loss and how vision loss can compromise employees' ability to perform some tasks competitively. [A] lot of people they just assume that, like, we know everything... They just assume, like, we can do everything like a normal person, which we can but we may not be as fast... I would expect [employers] to be patient and not just be so rush rush rush all the time, so like down your throat ... At jobs that I've had it's just rush rush rush. Blindness service agencies. Understaffing.

DBVI understaffing, especially for education and independent living services (both important for successful employment), was implicit in some participants' reports. A school administrator spoke about the difficulty of maintaining the needed number of TVIs in light of schools' shifting needs, for example. Another participant said that DBVI has only one mobility instructor for the entire state, and she doesn't know how to work with guide dogs. Understaffing can result in long waiting lists. In addition, service needs can change over time, due to deterioration in vision and alterations of the physical environment (as discussed in the transportation section); job advancement and job retention problems can emerge at any time. Getting DBVI services to address changing needs, however, can be difficult once one's case has been closed. There's no update, there's no follow up. [A DBVI employee] was apparently pressured after about a year to clean up her case load ... You feel like you're kind of left out there hanging because you really don't know what's available.

Administrative gaps. Two sources of inefficiency in information management might reduce the number of jobs available to DBVI clients. The first involves a reported lack of information sharing about jobs among state agencies. The second is that DBVI has not computerized its information about client competencies and other employment-related topics. The lack of computerized documentation poses problems for staff, who cannot easily access important information when they sub for an absent colleague, and for clients, who must "carry ten pounds of papers" every time they visit the department of human services. Maine's BEP came under lengthy criticism for "setting people up to fail." Several participants had tried the program but dropped out after finding that they could not earn a living, despite having worked very long hours. Reported problems included the absence of stands in schools and colleges; inaccessibility to the public; the absence of a kitchen in some places; the lack of distributors, leaving local stores as the source of supplies; and theft from the vending machines. Perhaps the most fundamental problem, however, was competition from commercial fast food establishments. Spotty dissemination of information to clients and potential employers. Participants varied considerably in their awareness of, and experience with, important resources, including assistive technology and programs that could help make that technology available to them. Some participants made explicit references to gaps in their knowledge or awareness of important technologies. Other times, unawareness of resources implied the existence of gaps in the information blindness agencies distribute to clients or potential employers. In one focus group, for example, a tech-savvy participant explained the NLS BARD program and associated smart phone technology to a fellow participant who apparently had never heard of NLS or BARD, a conversation that offered "a perfect example" of "stuff we don't know." Even some of the more tech-savvy participants struggle with the more intensely graphical interface of new versions of Windows and getting their braille output devices to work with their computers, among other things. Other instances of information-sharing that revealed some people's gaps in knowledge were about available payment and loan programs for assistive technology, and built-in accessibility features of Windows and Mac operating systems. Print accessibility also emerged as a dissemination problem for blindness service agencies. One participant, for instance, had received a flyer about a forum that he could not read independently. ...[W]hen you get mail, you know, when you're blind or visually impaired print is always an issue. ... For example, I got mail from the DBVI about these meetings, and I had to have someone read them to me because they are totally in print ... They were not emailed, they were not in braille ... I know that there are things, there's OCR if you have a scanner, or you could use a number of these mobile apps that have come out, but they are not perfect technology. Participants also seemed to vary in their awareness of job coaches as sources of on-the-job training and negotiated internships or apprenticeships, in the case of professional-level employment. More generally, some participants seemed more aware than others of what the moderator referred to as existing national systems "to show [people with vision loss] how blind and visually impaired people in other parts of the country are working." To the degree that participants are not conversant with techniques that enable them to do their work "a little differently" than their sighted colleagues, their skills are, of course, less competitive than they would otherwise be. Some participants who had worked in large firms found their employers very responsive to their need for

accommodation. Others' accounts, however, reflected a lack of employer awareness of assistive technology and other job-related accommodations available to employees with vision loss. It seems likely that lack of information about these resources helps to fuel the counterproductive employer attitudes mentioned previously. Overly conservative or outdated equipment and practices. Another technology-related barrier to employment is that "technology is developing faster than vocational rehabilitation services can adapt," which presumably undermines access both to the latest equipment and to effective training in using it. The commercial sector does not necessarily offer a viable alternative, even for older computer technology that (one assumes) has not been outfitted with assistive software. I have the greatest gift in the world from my family ... a big old Macintosh computer which I'm ready to throw out the window. So is there somewhere to receive training, 'cause let me tell you it's not the Apple store in the Portland office....[I] went through three teachers [there] and left with no better clue than when I went in. As important as assistive technology is to people with vision loss, some are not interested in employment that revolves around computer use. [Vocational rehabilitation's conception of appropriate work] needs to be ... broadened out. It seems like with the Division for the Blind here it's on a computer, they say, oh, we can get you a job on a computer. I'm not a computer person, I'm a physical worker, I've always been a physical worker. I'm not gonna sit behind a desk all day long. For some, the requirement to have a Master's degree unduly limits access to employment within the blindness system. Some participants believe that blindness agencies undervalue the life experience that people with vision loss can bring to work with people whose eyesight deteriorated more recently. The one thing I really have a pet peeve with is that even in DBVI and Iris Network, unless you have a Master's degree in rehabilitation teaching or rehabilitation counseling or some other field you can't get a job even in those organizations, and they're supposed to serve the blind. As a blind person, I am totally disgusted with the simple fact that there aren't enough blind employees in either of the organizations. ... Why does it take a master's degree for something that a lifetime experience could teach a lot more about? Individual differences that can affect employability. Some barriers to employment are not systemic but are characteristic of certain subgroups or individuals with vision loss. One example is having physical or health problems (e.g., trouble with balance) in addition to impaired eyesight. Even by itself, vision loss can make it hard to work as fast as employers expect. Participants also mentioned several psychological barriers to employment. These barriers include fear of new technology which, some participants believe, is especially characteristic of older people, and the expectation that one would feel embarrassed to be trained in front of co-workers. Not being assertive enough, some participants said, is especially a problem for people who experience vision loss later in life. [Such a person] is going to go through a lot of problems psychologically, they don't feel adequate anymore, low self-esteem, assertiveness goes down the toilet ... If there could be ... something to teach assertiveness, something to bring that light bulb back to brightness and say 'I can do this interview, and once that training is over I don't need xyz job coach, I can do the interview on my own provided I have the transportation to go to it.' Willingness to ask for help is an important part of assertiveness. One of the steps ... in this whole process of having decided, oh my god I'm not gonna be able to drive, I'm not gonna be able to do all of these things I [used to do]. ... Getting over that hump will be willing[ness] to turn to others for help. And ask for the help that you need, because sometimes that's exactly what gets in the way. 'Oh, I don't need help, oh, I'll manage.' No, it's not true, you do need that kind of help. Steps that could improve access to meaningful work Apart from taking steps to make BEP a more financially viable employment option or advocating for funding of other disability-specific employment opportunities (e.g., akin to the National Industries for the Blind program for deaf-blind people in Seattle), DBVI would be hard-pressed to address Maine's general scarcity of jobs. Other problems, however, seem more amenable to change. One important strategy involves enabling people with vision loss to become more competitive for existing jobs by, for example, • further developing clients' employment-specific competencies and resources, • making additional concerted efforts to help clients access to assistive technology and training, • improving access to independent living services, and • addressing psychological barriers to pursuing meaningful employment opportunities.

A second strategy would cultivate connections between people with vision loss and • DBVI itself, • potential employers, and • other people with vision loss. Like strengthening competitiveness, cultivating connections seems likely to improve both clients' employability and their quality of life more generally. Strengthening competitiveness. Employment-specific competencies and resources. The analysis of barriers to meaningful employment suggests that the following steps might improve clients' job prospects. • Clarify with clients (whenever appropriate) the importance of developing competitive work skills. Some people's apparent expectation that employers should downgrade their expectations instead (e.g., of how fast employees should be able to work) might in itself be a barrier to finding and keeping meaningful work. • Ensure, as much as possible, that clients—and prospective employers—are fully informed about the services that are available to help people with vision loss learn to work more efficiently, including job coaching and negotiated internships or apprenticeships. DBVI might also want to assess whether their existing coaching staff is sufficient to meet the needs or should be supplemented by additional job coaching staff or mentoring by people with extensive experience dealing with their own vision loss (whether on a volunteer or paid basis). • Some clients are interested in other types of hands-on help in finding work, such as being accompanied to interviews instead of (or in addition to) participating in mock interviews. • To help employed people stay employed, make it possible, and as easy as possible, for people to get help with job retention and advancement problems even after their cases have been closed, and widely disseminate information about the availability of such assistance. Access to assistive technology and skills could be strengthened by making both the equipment and training more current and widely available. Specific steps include • Reducing the time it takes DBVI to adopt new or improved assistive technology and training. • Advocating for funding that would subsidize financial incentives to encourage small businesses and organizations like libraries to buy assistive devices and/or software (e.g., one participant suggested a two-year tax break for employers willing to purchase equipment). • Centralizing some training opportunities in existing public spaces such as libraries to make training easier for clients to get to. • Providing opportunities to "try before you buy" to increase the odds of a good fit between the technology and clients' needs. • Improving dissemination of information about assistive technology, including options for paying for assistive equipment, the latest developments in assistive technology and software, and accessibility features that developers have built in to mainstream operating systems. • Because technology needs, like employment-specific needs, change, dissemination and training initiatives should be available to clients whose cases have been closed, to the greatest extent possible. Using visually impaired technology mentors might be one vehicle for extending help to former clients. • The availability of assistive technology, and of computer technology more generally, can open up opportunities for working from home. Advocating for work-at-home opportunities with potential employers could take advantage of growing employer interest in distributed workforces. Improving access to independent living services. Independent living skills, especially mobility, are an important component of employability. Especially for people who must navigate to bus stops, mobility skills help make it possible to get to and from work. They also enable people to function at the workplace without feeding the stereotype of "blind people knocking everything over." Hiring additional O&M instructors could reduce the long waiting list for services that clients reportedly face; it could also, potentially, expand DBVI's O&M service repertoire by adding an understanding of how to handle guide dogs. Addressing psychological barriers to finding meaningful work. More specifically, vocational rehabilitation professionals could • Reassure clients about, or help them put into perspective, any embarrassment they might feel about being trained in front of co-workers, so that it doesn't actually prevent them from accepting job coaching or other on-the-job training. • Help clients to overcome any fears about assistive technology they might have. Explaining or demonstrating how the technology might give them a competitive advantage in job hunting and help them in other ways that matter to them is one possible technique for doing so, as is connecting clients to other people with vision loss who have successfully overcome similar fears. • Teach assertiveness, including the ability to ask for help. Cultivating connections for people with vision loss. Connections to DBVI and other resources.

Cultivating connections between people with vision loss and DBVI has two major components: (1) increasing awareness of DBVI among people who are not yet receiving blindness services and (2) improving information dissemination and information sharing with current and former clients. Specific steps to consider include

- Disseminating information about vocational rehabilitation and other blindness services to professionals and organizations that people with vision loss, or their family members, are likely to use or join. Examples include low vision specialists, primary care physicians, veterans' organizations, and providers of services to seniors. Including some content that addresses some people's reluctance to ask for help, especially when vision loss is new, might be useful.
- Developing public service announcements about the work-related capabilities of people with vision loss, ideally for prime time distribution by the major networks, cable channels, radio stations, or print media. Exposure to a large audience is especially important because severe vision loss remains a low-incidence condition.
- Investing in and deploying a computerized system for administering services and disseminating information to clients. This step would facilitate information-sharing within DBVI, as well as between DBVI staff and clients. Even considering the relatively advanced age of many adults with vision loss, this effort would not be wasted. According to an analysis by the Pew Research Center, as of 2012, slightly more than half of people aged 65 and older use the Internet or email. Once on-line, older adults tend to make Internet and email use a regular part of their lives (PRC, 2012). Seniors' Internet use, and technological sophistication more generally, seems certain to increase quickly as more and more tech-savvy baby boomers join the ranks of the elderly.
- Building an on-line information clearinghouse about the available services, events, and other resources could be very helpful both as a point of entree into the blindness system for people who are not yet receiving services and an ongoing resource for those who are.
- Advocating for sharing of information about available jobs among state agencies, which some other states have already adopted. A computerized system for administering services would make this information sharing much easier and more effective. Connections to potential employers. Efforts to forge connections between people with vision loss and potential employers might include disseminating information about the capabilities of people with vision loss, and the DBVI resources available to employers and employees. It could also offer opportunities for people with vision loss and potential employers to meet and to learn in-person about each other's abilities and needs.
- Developing widely distributed public service announcements, as described previously in the context of establishing connections to people with vision loss, also might help establish connections to employers. Including concrete information about how vocational rehabilitation and independent living services can help people with vision loss develop competitive skills (e.g., teaching techniques for working faster, navigating the office environment safely, availability of assistive tech or financial assistance) might dispel some negative stereotypes and concerns that reduce employment opportunities.
- Public awareness workshops that bring together people with vision loss and potential employers is another vehicle for showing employers that people with vision loss "can do things" and for educating consumers about employers' needs and expectations.
- Forging connections between young people with vision loss and local employers should begin in high school and college, some participants said. Paid work, internships, and volunteer work help young people to start developing an employment network for the future, begin teaching them what employers want, and demonstrate their value in the work environment. Connections to other people with vision loss. Social isolation is a big problem for many of the focus group participants. It is a problem in its own right (discussed in the next section) but also might contribute to difficulty in finding meaningful work. Having a limited social network reduces the chances of receiving job leads and learning from others' employment experiences. Steps for helping people develop connections to others with vision loss include
- Sponsoring in-person client support groups in as many localities as possible.
- In addition or alternatively, employing technology to make support group participation possible, e.g., via conference calls.
- Taking advantage of some people's interest in mentoring others with vision loss, whether on a paid or volunteer basis. Mentoring could take the form of practical, hand-on assistance (e.g., in crafting a resume) or the sharing of work-related experiences more generally.
- Ensuring

that clients are aware of and know how to access existing systems of information on how people with vision loss are managing various types of work. Transportation Barriers Like employment, transportation came up as a topic in all four of the focus groups. Even participants who have circumvented the limitations of public transportation with the help of family members or friends were aware of the problems. I am very fortunate in that I am married, and my husband can drive me. I am very very blessed and in that way [am] fortunate. But I know that transportation is not only difficult but very very expensive. Figure 2.2, on the next page, summarizes some factors that contribute to the existence of transportation problems, as well as some of their consequences. Transportation is "difficult" partly in that residents of the most rural areas often have no bus service at all. In the more urban areas, most bus routes serve only their immediate localities, especially the malls. We're in Bangor, we have buses [so] we can actually consider ourselves blessed to be in this area. [But if] you go further than like maybe ten miles out of Bangor ... pardon my directness, you're screwed. Even that service runs only until late afternoon, stranding people who want to attend evening events. Service between towns is limited to nonexistent. Where it exists, inter-town service does not run often enough, or late enough, to permit riders to make the round trip in a single day, necessitating additional expenses for eating out and overnight accommodations, which people who depend for income on Social Security can ill-afford. ... I'm sorry, but by the time you pay for a bus to go to Portland, if it's the right time you might have to stay overnight, and go to the activity, you're spending a fortune [and] you can't afford to do it. Because you have no income other than your disability check, and that's all spent on your rent and lights and heat and everything else, so when you get done you got nothing. Making a little too much money or having a spouse who can drive has disqualified some participants from receiving half-fare bus passes or subsidized taxi service from Pentless Cab. Without the financial help, taxi service in particular is beyond many people's reach. ...[F]or transportation we may have had like share ride or, like, taxi service, but it doesn't go very far. ..It costs an arm and a leg just to go a couple miles down the road. Considering Maine's demographics, the weakness of the state's transportation services is, perhaps, not surprising. It would be hard to run an efficient and cost-effective transportation system because the general ridership population is small and widely scattered. Inadequate government funding of transportation services and reduced-cost vouchers, some participants pointed out, surely make matters worse. From the perspective of focus group participants, however, Maine's transportation system not only has problems but also undermines independence and quality of life more generally, as described below. Consequences. Limited and expensive transportation options help to set in motion a cascade of economic and social problems for blind and visually impaired people. Ultimately, these difficulties undermine quality of life and independence, both actual and perceived. Gaps in transportation and their economic costs to visually impaired people function as a negative feedback loop. Limited transportation makes it hard to find and keep an appropriate job. In addition to contributing to the high poverty levels among people with disabilities, unemployment in its turn, combined with disability benefits that are too meager to provide discretionary income, make the available transportation unaffordable. Gaps in transportation also entail social costs, including reduced access to blindness services, especially for clients living in the more remote areas. When clients lack transportation, service providers must come to them, resulting in having to forgo services altogether or to wait months at a time between visits. I [a school administrator] think that transportation is probably one of the biggest road blocks, and we try to set some times for kids to come get together on a regular basis to work on some particular skills, not just computer, like daily living skills and practical things...It's been very challenging to be able to get the kids here from certain areas. Schools don't necessarily find a way to pay for [transportation], some do, some don't. Like up here in Orono [the Iris Network] don't travel up here [to provide home assistance], they don't do it [and the speaker has no transportation options to travel to services]. I had somebody that came up ... from Bangor to Dexter to see me, and they could only come every couple, three months, and we would have needs in between and ... just had to wait. Transportation problems can also result in social isolation, in the form of reduced access to social support and recreation opportunities. They have one disability peer

meetin' here ... every month. It's at the Weatherby place, and it starts at five thirty at night ... [But] there are no buses in the evening. [My son and I] come back to Maine, and it's the same situation. There's nothing here. I mean, he's kind of stuck in his room because there's no education, there's nothing for transportation, there's no activities. I mean, they should have things where [visually impaired people] can be more independent and enjoy their lives. A number of participants spoke, invariably with gratitude, about the help with transportation that spouses, parents, and other family members and friends provide. Reliance on members of one's informal network is not without problems of its own, however. Ongoing responsibility can become burdensome for the driver, compromise the visually impaired person's feeling of independence or, paradoxically, weaken relationships to the people providing help. I only have one person... that I have that takes me ... to doctor appointments, you know, normal doctor appointments [and] things of that nature. And, you know, that gets hard on him as ... he works full time [and has to] take days off. ... You hate to call up your friends all the time, and you say, well, I need to go to the store, can you come get me? ... The only thing that really bothers me is, um, I have to depend on other people to come and get me and take me grocery shopping. .. I love being independent. I love to do things for myself. [The lack of jobs] just hits us harder because we have to rely on others to drive us from point A to point B, and if we don't have the money to help him out with a little gas they're not gonna take us anymore. And for some people, relying on relatives or friends to drive them places is not even an option. One person's family members, for example, have all died and, having moved to a city hoping (so far in vain) to find work, he doesn't "know anybody here". Steps to make getting around easier and more efficient. Participants' comments suggest that Maine's transportation systems—public, commercial, and nonprofit—are very fragmented. Some participants have worked out solutions such as reliance on significant others (as mentioned previously) and churches. Bartering transportation for volunteer work is another strategy that came up. But these are individual (and not universally available) fixes for a problem that affects most Maine residents who are blind or visually impaired and, for that matter, non-drivers more generally. This section, therefore, emphasizes solutions with some potential for a broader impact. One category of solutions involves reducing fragmentation, i.e., better coordinating the available transportation resources. Another category involves workarounds that reduce transportation needs. Coordination of transportation Coordinating existing transportation services has the potential for improving transportation between towns and cities, at least on a limited basis. Offering inter-town service even just once a month would be "amazing", and once a week "would be even more amazing", potentially increasing access to health care or rehab appointments, support groups, and recreational activities. Effective coordination, participants' reports suggest, would need to include three elements over and above the expansion of transportation services per se. • Coordinating the dates and times of the expanded transportation service with the days and times that community events take place. Successful coordination seems likely to require working directly both with transportation providers and the organizations sponsoring events. Adding coordinated carpooling or van service to Maine's transportation mix also could help close some existing the gaps (e.g., by offering either local or inter-town service during evenings or week-ends). • Timely dissemination of information, in a variety of accessible formats, about both the events and the expanded transportation option/s for attending them. Participants spoke of the desire to "know ahead of time what day the bus was coming [so] you could plan your day". Probably reflecting individual differences in computer skills and access to adaptive technology, some participants favored receiving information electronically (email, disk, website, or list serve), while others prefer older technology, including the telephone (e.g., being provided a call-in number to a service that would announce upcoming events), or braille. Several participants specifically mentioned being unable to read large print, or complained about "having to have someone read [a print flyer] to me", suggesting that print (large or standard) is an inadequate dissemination vehicle if information is to reach the widest audience. • Ideally, developing and implementing more generous eligibility criteria for transportation vouchers and subsidized transportation services. Opening eligibility to all non-drivers, including seniors and people with disabilities other than vision loss, would substitute a

functional basis for eligibility for the current medical criteria. This step, in turn, would extend eligibility to people whose vision loss is serious enough to preclude driving but not serious enough to qualify as legal blindness. Members of all non-driver groups stand to benefit from the sharing of transportation resources that might result from expanding eligibility criteria. Transportation workarounds

- Encouraging local event sponsors to schedule their activities during the daytime on week days or Saturdays, or to add daytime events to their existing calendars, to coincide with local bus schedules. This step would not, of course, eliminate the need for expanded transportation, but it would make more efficient use of existing services.
- Implementing telephone-based peer support groups is a possible alternative to groups that meet in person and therefore require participants to travel, even if only locally. One such group, which uses Iris' conference call number and serves the entire state, is just getting off the ground. If successful, it might serve as a model for other peer support groups in Maine.
- Making pedestrian travel easier and safer is another transportation workaround. Some participants who are city-dwellers can and do walk to destinations in their community. Several environmental access barriers, however, make pedestrian travel treacherous, limiting walking as a transportation alternative. Some needed corrections would require the cooperation of State and local governments. For instance, o making it easier for blind or visually impaired people to navigate traffic circles (perhaps with the help of pedestrian-controlled traffic lights or tactile signage at strategic locations); o making it easier to obtain mobility training in a new community to which one has moved after case closure or to help make walking in communities with a challenging terrain easier for both visually impaired people and their guide dogs; o more timely repair of streets, sidewalks, steps, railings, and ramps; prohibiting the use of bicycles, skateboards, and the like (which can injure both pedestrians and their dogs) on sidewalks; and prompt snow removal from sidewalks and streets.

Staff Perspectives As mentioned previously, when asked about the major issues facing Maine residents who are blind or visually impaired, staff were fundamentally in agreement with participants in the consumer focus groups. Like consumers, staff expressed concern about inadequate transportation and employment opportunities, social isolation (especially in relation to access to others with vision loss), "terrible" sidewalks and other infrastructure challenges, the availability of assistive technology devices and training, and the need for more comprehensive mobility training and other independent living services, among other things. Some of the consumers, as we have seen, spoke to problems with Maine's blindness services, including understaffing and the lack of information sharing among agencies and departments. As employees of DBVI and as service providers, however, staff have an insider's perspective—and presumably a broader and more encompassing perspective than consumers can—on how on Maine's system of blindness services works, and doesn't. Based on the moderator's notes from her three staff focus groups, the following section discusses the highlights of staff participants' accounts of problems with blindness services in Maine and suggestions for addressing them. Staff participants' reports point to three major problem areas for blindness services in Maine. These areas are understaffing, lack of coordination and cooperation between departments and agencies, and poor visibility of Maine's blindness services and public awareness of them. The origin of these problems, arguably, lies wholly or in part with the underfunding of Maine's blindness services.

Understaffing. The most prominent result of underfunding is understaffing, especially in the more remote locations in Maine, which limits the range and quality of services that DBVI can offer. The gaps, according to staff, occur across many service areas, including independent living, employment services (including job development), services for elderly people, services for people with multiple disabilities, personal adjustment counseling, family support training, early intervention, and assistive technology and training. Understaffing diminishes service quality. It results in long waiting lists for services. Once services begin, staff cannot spend as much time delivering services as many clients need. DBVI also is understaffed in the sense of ability to hire and retain counselors and other professionals with knowledge of blindness services and issues facing people with vision loss. DBVI does provide training for these staff, but it is not unusual for the best to be promoted out of direct service or to leave Maine after having been trained. As mentioned previously, in the analysis of consumer focus

group data, some clients and former clients seem eager to share their knowledge with others who have more recently experienced vision loss and, more generally, emphasize the importance of peer support. Some staff participants also mentioned value of peer mentoring and support and urged DBVI to resolve confidentiality problems that discourage the development of such programs. With appropriate on-the-job training, peer mentoring might be able to reduce the staffing gaps in targeted areas (perhaps, e.g., training in the use of assistive technology). Other staffing problems include the reported lack of clerical support in some DBVI regional offices. The paucity of services extends beyond DBVI, however. The entire state of Maine has only three low vision specialists, which staff say is not enough to meet the need. Inadequate coordination and cooperation. The staff focus groups revealed important gaps in information-sharing both internally at DBVI and between DBVI and outside agencies and providers. Staff also cited two major areas of inefficiency in DBVI's operations: inconsistent processes and wasteful management of existing resources. Information-sharing. Calls for closing gaps and more consistency in information-sharing were common during the staff focus groups. "Getting eye docs to return their eye reports" to DBVI was a specific source of frustration, as was inadequate coordination between DBVI and doctors more generally, and the fact that, as things stand, "information [of various types] seems to get lost". Computerizing and centralizing information about such things as functional vision assessments and clients' insurance (e.g. along the lines of the cloud drive concept) would allow for sharing important information within DBVI, as well as between DBVI and outside agencies and professionals, including teachers. Efficiency issues. Staff noted inconsistent administrative practices vary from one DBVI office to another. Regional offices, staff said, differ in how they manage funds and in preparation of paperwork, which staff recommended standardizing. Employing a service such as Dropbox or Aware Reports across all Maine offices, some suggested, would not only facilitate effective information-sharing (e.g., of case notes) but also help to standardize the information that staff collect and report. Another strategy for making DBVI more efficient would involve sharing equipment across offices. Other strategies include developing a loaner system to make use of surplus equipment and equipment that clients return or want to exchange. Developing a more organized system for tracking incoming and outgoing inventory would be helpful in reducing waste. DBVI's visibility. A major concern of staff participants is DBVI's lack of visibility to the general public, including potential clients and employers, and to organizations and professionals who would otherwise be potential referral sources for DBVI. This lack of visibility has serious consequences, both for people with vision loss and for DBVI. Some Maine residents with vision loss, staff said, do not even know there are services that could help them. People who do have some level of awareness might not know how to contact DBVI and other providers of blindness services, have a faulty understanding of eligibility criteria (e.g., believe that total blindness is a requirement), or have unrealistic expectations about the kinds of help that DBVI can provide. For example, clients' most frequent requests of staff include financial help with transportation, glasses, costs of surgery, and expensive medical equipment; it is not unusual for clients to want DBVI to "fix" their vision loss. Older clients in particular, as one participant said, "don't really understand what O&M is" and, in general, don't know what they don't know. For its part, DBVI's lack of visibility to potential employers implicitly reinforces negative perceptions of the capabilities of people with vision loss. Employers who are unaware of DBVI and the types of services it offers, moreover, are not in the position to make a timely referral for employees who experience vision loss after having been hired. Eye doctors are currently DBVI's biggest referral source but, some staff believe, are referring fewer people than they probably could be. A number of participants called for education and awareness-building efforts directed not only to eye care professionals but also to other professionals and organizations to which people with vision loss or their families are likely to be connected. These potential referral sources include health care and allied professionals and facilities, such as primary care doctors, home health service providers, skilled nursing and assisted living facilities, hospitals, physical and occupational therapists, University of Maine pre-service docs, veterans' hospitals, and diabetes educators. Non-medical sources that participants mentioned include schools, the Department of Education, Social Security

Administration, DHHS, and insurance companies. Staff participants' suggestions for getting the word out about DBVI to the general public included adding a phonebook listing and information about its website that is easy to find. Other ideas included using Iris as a referral gateway; allowing the use of staff time, and providing flex time, so that staff can work more closely with community groups; using a Talking Book distribution list to publicize DBVI's 800 number; producing a public service announcement for television; creating posters to advertise DBVI; and ensuring that Maine's 211 phone service has the necessary information about the services that DBVI offers. Underfunding. The underfunding of blindness services goes a long way toward explaining why DBVI's staff are stretched so thin, both logically and based on the reports of many participants in the staff focus groups. Arguably, however, underfunding at least partly underlies the other major problems participants mentioned. Although staff did not specifically attribute inadequate service coordination and visibility to lack of funds, effective coordination and public education efforts demand staff time and attention. Whatever the role of underfunding, however, staff reports suggest that inadequate coordination of services and poor visibility of blindness services in Maine are problems in their own right and might even exacerbate DBVI's funding problems.

Summary of Focus Group Input Some of the corrective steps mentioned in this report, such as increasing the number of staff, would require additional funding—probably from all levels of government—that would be hard to come by in the current economic/political environment. Soliciting private donations, however, which some staff suggested, might be both feasible (especially if DBVI succeeds in making itself more visible to the general public) and helpful, as might exploring the potential for developing new funding streams based on existing Independent Living Services for Older Individuals who are Blind (Title VII, Chapter 2) programs or through grants from organizations such as the National Eye Institute. A different tack would involve joining advocacy efforts to promote universal design and universal access, especially as applied to mainstream transit services and infrastructure. Success could result in more accessible and more available transportation in Maine's rural communities and better design and maintenance of the state's roads and sidewalks. Other corrective steps would enable DBVI to make more efficient and effective use of limited resources. Examples suggested by consumers or staff include more systematic tracking of equipment inventory, recycling of discarded or no longer needed pieces of technology as loaners to consumers considering items for purchase, coordinating the timing of community events such as job fairs and social gatherings with existing transportation schedules, modernizing methods of disseminating information to clients and sharing information among the regional offices, and drawing on the mentoring potential of long-time and former clients as a resource, in appropriate capacities, for people with recent vision loss. Ultimately, DBVI is encouraged to be more collaborative and pro-active. However, both consumers and staff are mindful of the limited resources available to the agency. While the key to improving the lives of individuals with visual impairments in Maine may seem to be increased funding at first glance, it is apparent from these focus groups that there are a number of low-cost or no-cost options that could enhance quality of life throughout the state for people who are blind or have low vision.

Part Three: Telephone Interviews & On-line Survey Data DBVI Open Cases In addition to the Consumer Forums, the principal investigator reached out to individuals with visual impairments with open DBVI cases throughout Maine and invited them to provide information about themselves as well as convey their concerns about the needs of people with visual impairments in Maine via telephone interviews and on-line surveys completed via Survey Monkey. Forty-two individuals with visual impairments (with birthdates after January 1, 1950) completed surveys either on-line or via telephone interviews (the surveys on-line were identical to the telephone interview format used). There were 139 individuals with working contact information listed; therefore, the 42 responses equated to a 30% return rate. In three instances, a family member reported for an individual with visual impairment; otherwise, all of the responses to these surveys were by self-report (93%). Only two of the respondents indicated that they were veterans.

Demographics. The majority of the respondents with open cases were male (59%) and had moderate low vision. Visual status was defined as:

- Moderate visual impairment: Individual can read standard print with low vision devices OR individuals can read

large print with or without low vision devices. • Severe visual impairment: Individual has some useable eyesight but not enough to read large print OR individual has very limited eyesight, able to see only shadows and light. • Totally blind: Individual is unable to see. The leading causes of visual impairment for respondents over the age of twenty were retinitis pigmentosa, retinopathy of prematurity, and macular degeneration. The leading causes of visual impairment for respondents twenty years of age or younger tended to be congenital problems (albinism, congenital glaucoma, Leber's congenital amaurosis, Reiter's syndrome, blue cone monochromacy, and nystagmus). Half of all the respondents felt their vision would worsen over time. Detailed demographic information concerning the respondents follows in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Characteristics of Respondents with Open DBVI Cases

%	n	Age
100	39	18 to 20
41	16	21 to 35
18	7	36 to 50
15	6	51 to 64
26	10	
100	41	Gender
59	21	Male
20	8	Female
100	29	Race/Ethnicity
93	27	White (non-Hispanic)
3	1	Native American
3	1	Hispanic
100	40	Visual Status
58	23	Legally blind – moderate visual impairment
23	9	Legally blind – severe visual impairment
20	8	Totally blind
100	30	Cause of vision loss
3	1	Albinism
13	4	Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP)
17	5	Macular Degeneration (MD)
3	1	Diabetic Retinopathy
13	4	Congenital Abnormality
17	5	Unknown Etiology
10	3	Glaucoma
3	1	Combination (cataract, RP, MD)
20	6	Other

NB: Respondents listed the following under the 'other' category: Leber's congenital amaurosis, chronic panuveitis and response to medication. Living arrangements. All but two of the respondents in the younger cohort (who were twenty years old or younger) were living with their parents or guardians. Three respondents indicated that when they were not at home with their parents, they lived in dormitories. One individual was living with other adults and one was living alone. The majority of the respondents over the age of twenty were living with a spouse or partner and children or with a spouse or partner and no children (55%), a quarter (25%) were living alone, and the remainder were living with their children or other adults. Eighteen individuals responded to the query about where they lived and the majority (61%) lived in their own homes. Thirty-three percent lived in apartments and the remainder rented either houses or condos. When asked if they were satisfied with their living situation, 83% said 'yes' and the remaining responses were equally distributed between 'no' and 'unsure.' Transportation options. There were 16 respondents in the younger cohort and they listed the fewest options for transportation of all these respondents. Seventy-six percent of these young people listed using public transportation or riding with family members or friends (unpaid drivers) to get where they needed to go (it was an even split). Two of the youth who listed public transportation also indicated they used taxis on occasion and another indicated that in addition to public transportation he walked. Three young adults used school transportation and one also walked. The older respondents (over twenty years of age) tended to use a more multi-faceted approach to solving their transportation needs. Twenty individuals listed 39 options that they used to get to where they needed to go. Two of the individuals who indicated that they drove their own cars noted restrictions at night. Perhaps of greater interest is that only one of the individuals who drove their own cars listed other transportation options. The respondents were able to select multiple transportation options and the percentage of individuals who chose a specific option are listed below. • Friends/relatives drive (unpaid): 60% • Walk: 55% • Public transportation: 20% • Drive my own car: 20% • Taxi: 15% • Paid driver: 15% • Bicycle: 5% • Coworker: 5% • Paratransit: 10%

Educational activity. Twelve of the younger cohort were in school – one child was in elementary school and one in high school, ten of the older youth were college students. Five of the respondents indicated that they had completed high school or earned a GED and an additional four stated that they had earned certificates beyond high school (in cosmetology, medical office work, and medical assistance). Four reported some college coursework and four that they had earned baccalaureate degrees. An additional five respondents indicated that they had earned graduate degrees. Income streams. Six individuals were employed and they indicated their job income was the primary source they relied on to pay their daily living expenses. Four individuals received retirement benefits, five received SSDI benefits and six received SSI benefits that they used to contribute towards their living expenses. Other sources of income mentioned by the respondents included spousal income and help from family or friends. In a couple of instances,

respondents mentioned relying on housing assistance funds and food stamps as well. Details about individuals' responses to queries related to employment follow. Employment. When asked if they were currently employed, 37 individuals responded. Sixty-five percent said that they were unemployed, 24% were employed part-time, and 11% were employed full-time. Seven respondents identified employers and 57% of those employers were corporate entities. The remaining 43% of these respondents were self-employed. Twenty-four respondents gave reasons for their unemployment including unable to find employment (38%), retired (13%), full- or part-time student (50%), and there were a few mentioned only once – haven't looked, unable to work due to medical condition, and no one is hiring. Respondents were able to choose more than one item. Seventeen individuals responded to the query asking where they'd gone for help in their job search efforts. Seventy-six percent identified DBVI, 29% OFR, 29% One-Stop Career Centers, Independent Living Centers (6%), and technical or vocational schools (6%). Twelve percent indicated that they didn't know where to go. The respondents could choose more than one item. Challenges to employment. The respondents were also asked to evaluate a list of challenges and indicate how often they felt those challenges prevented people with visual impairments from becoming employed. These individuals clearly believe that the challenge most frequently preventing visually impaired people in Maine from becoming employed is availability of transportation, followed closely by job availability, and availability of job accommodations. Their full responses are listed in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 How Often Challenges Prevent Visually Impaired People from Becoming Employed

Challenge	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Total	%	n	%	n	%	n
Availability of job accommodations	0	0	7	1	27	4	67	10	29		
Availability of job development services	0	0	8	1	69	9	23	3	13		
Availability of job retention supports	15	2	23	3	38	5	23	3	13		
Availability of transportation	0	0	0	0	19	3	81	13	16		
Cost of job accommodations	8	1	15	2	31	4	46	6	13		
Employers' attitudes	0	0	0	0	43	6	57	8	14		
Fear of losing medical benefits	15	2	0	0	54	7	31	4	13		
Fear of losing SSI or SSDI	21	3	7	1	36	5	42	6	14		
Fear of losing subsidies	23	3	8	1	8	1	62	8	13		
Inadequate job skills	7	1	14	2	50	7	36	5	14		
Insufficient job search preparation	8	1	31	4	38	5	23	3	13		
Job availability	0	0	7	1	27	4	73	11	15		
Lack of support from service providers	14	2	14	2	43	6	29	4	14		
Personal or family issues	15	2	8	1	38	5	38	5	13		
Inadequate blindness skills	7	1	14	2	29	4	50	7	14		
Weak social skills	14	2	14	2	50	7	21	3	14		

Devices and services needed. Seventy-four percent of the respondents indicated they had needed within the last year tools, equipment, or devices. The items they listed ranged from devices to help with life activities (task lighting, 20/20 pens, canes, bump dots, magnifiers, an adjustable table, etc.) to high tech devices and software to access information (speech output and screen magnification software programs, video magnifiers, SmartBraille, iPad, electronic readers, etc.). Eighty-five percent of the respondents indicated that they had been able to acquire what they'd needed. Two people responded that they were ineligible for the item they felt they needed as the request was not work-related. When individuals with open DBVI cases were asked to rate the areas they felt might help them to live more independently, the service the majority (67%) identified as very important to them was training in assistive technology (AT). Only two people rated AT training as unimportant or not applicable to them. Fifty-four percent rated orientation and mobility as very important and 53% identified learning how to use optical devices as very important. Forty-three percent identified medical care and 33% identified home and personal management skills as very important. (Respondents could choose more than one service.) Life Challenges. At the end of each telephone interview or on-line survey, the participants were asked to specify what they considered to be the three greatest challenges faced by individuals in Maine with vision loss. Twenty-nine individuals replied and the most frequent response was transportation, followed by employment, and access to technology. All responses are listed in Table 3.2. When the respondents' choices were weighted (first choice = 3, second choice = 2, third choice=1), the challenges ranked as follows: Transportation, employment, and access to technology – not unlike what we saw in the consumer

and staff focus groups. These were followed closely by access to educational opportunities and prejudicial attitudes or the lack of awareness about visual impairments. Table 3.3 identifies the greatest challenges respondents felt individuals with visual impairment face in Maine by the frequency with which they were mentioned and provides further insight into this issue. Twenty–nine respondents articulated their views.

Table 3.3 Three greatest challenges (n=29) by frequency of response

Challenge	%	n
Transportation	69	20
Employment	41	12
Technology	24	7
Prejudicial attitudes & lack of awareness about visual impairments	24	7
Health care, including access to mental health services	14	4
Social skills – need for peer support	14	4
Educational opportunities lacking, adult basic education, life skills	14	4
Environmental inaccessibility (lack of sidewalks)	10	3
Personnel shortages	7	2
Funding	3	1

Qualitative comments. At the end of the telephone interviews and the on–line surveys, the respondents were given an opportunity to make general comments and a sampling of their responses follows. ...Loved working with TVI and VRT – feel that DBVI desperately needs more people to work on public awareness and address safety issues in the environment... ... (people with multiple disabilities (autism, physical disabilities) need attention... ...worked with Vision Quest program as an RA – it was wonderful! ...haven't had to wait for services...DBVI has been wonderfully receptive, caseworker advocated for him to pursue a master's degree in O&M at UMass because he wasn't able to get work with his bachelor's degree..."They get the biggest bang for their bucks!" ...Recently had surgery, has arthritis in hands; primary caregiver for elderly mother...lots of friends who help with transportation. Needs Internet access to stay in touch with friends and former colleagues... With Maine being a rural state, finding reliable, consistent, and affordable transportation outside of the "major" cities is nearly impossible. I rely on coworkers, but they are not always reliable and consistent, and I cannot afford to pay a service (makes it not even worth working). I am also trying to get trained on screen reading software as my vision issue is degenerative, so I am struggling with trying to learn not to use my vision, which is very challenging. It is also difficult that VR no longer provides support for daily living in the way they used to. If a person's basic needs are not being met, they cannot even begin to try to work. It is also very difficult to try to find a job, or get a different, more accessible job because of competition and trying to network and make connections. Even sighted people have a hard time finding jobs in this market without actually making a connection and networking. Excellent job development is a must. It is also essential to find jobs that are accessible with accommodations as many proprietary software applications do not work well with screen readers. Thank you. The work that DBVI does is vital to the success of job placement and retention for people with visual disabilities and blindness. I believe that without the assistance from the department and my Vocational Counselors I would not be employed today and my abilities to manage daily tasks would be significantly compromised. I am very grateful for all of the assistance from this Department and my Vocational Counselors. Thank You! Thank you for being there to help. I do wish however that my DBVI caseworker wasn't on part–time status so she could be more readily available to help my new case move along quicker to get the services I need. DBVI Closed Cases Cases closed successfully (Status 26). There were 124 individuals listed as successfully closed in 2012–2014 by DBVI for whom I had contact information. Of those, 16 were unreachable (telephone numbers not in service or the individual had moved without forwarding information), three individuals had participated in the consumer focus groups and provided feedback in this manner and one chatted briefly to say that he had appreciated DBVI services but didn't want to do a survey or an interview. I attempted calls to the remaining 104 people and I was able to obtain 40 completed surveys through direct telephone interviews or emailed surveys. This gave me a return rate of 38%. Respondent demographics. The majority (54%) of the individuals surveyed were between 45 and 64 years old. Just over half (51%) of the respondents were male and had low vision. Although all of these DBVI consumers were legally blind, most (77%) had some vision. There were

17 individuals who indicated that they had disabilities in addition to visual impairment, including epilepsy, arthritis, balance difficulties, cognitive impairment, brain injury, hearing loss, heart problems, memory loss, or physical limitations requiring the use of a wheelchair. Detailed demographic information concerning the respondents follows in Table 3.4. Table 3.4 Characteristics of Successful DBVI Respondents Percentage Ages (n=33) 18 to 24 12 25 to 34 12 35 to 44 3 45 to 54 27 55 to 64 27 65 to 72 12 75 or older 6 Gender (n=39) Male 51 Female 49 Visual Status (n=31) Individuals who are functionally blind 23 Legally blind – severe visual impairment 58 Legally blind – moderate visual impairment 19 Cause of vision loss (n=31) Other 45 Retinitis Pigmentosa 23 Macular Degeneration 19 Diabetic Retinopathy 10 Birth Defect 10 NB: Respondents listed the following under the ‘other’ category: Peters Anomaly, Wolfran’s Syndrome, Leber’s Optic Neuropathy, keratitis, stroke, brain tumor, genetics, ocular neuropathy, pituitary tumor, and surgery.

Service delivery. In response to being asked whether DBVI personnel had informed them of their rights, 33 people answered and 97% indicated yes and 3% were unsure. The same 97% stated that they had help develop their rehabilitation goals. However, when asked if they had helped choose their rehabilitation services 88% answered yes, 6% said no, and 6% were unsure. The same 33 consumers rated services they had received from DBVI and the vast majority indicated that they were satisfied with the services that they had received. For services received, Table 3.5 provides the numbers and percentages of consumers who received each service and their level of satisfaction. Table 3.5 Successful Consumers’ Ratings of DBVI Services Satisfied Neutral Dissatisfied N/A % N % n % n % n Adjustment to vision loss counseling 74 17 4 1 0 0 22 5 Acquisition of adapted tools – not technology 92 23 4 1 0 0 4 2 Assistive technology acquisition 84 21 12 3 0 0 4 2 Assistive technology training 79 18 13 3 0 0 9 3 Benefits counseling 28 6 9 2 10 2 55 13 Braille instruction 14 3 5 1 5 1 77 18 Employment counseling 46 10 9 2 0 0 45 11 ILS training 77 20 7 2 0 0 19 5 Job accommodation assistance 67 16 4 1 0 0 29 7 Job placement 27 6 5 1 0 0 68 15 Job retention 42 10 4 1 0 0 54 13 Low vision device acquisition 78 21 8 2 0 0 15 4 Low vision device training 70 19 8 2 0 0 22 6 Medical assistance 37 7 0 0 5 1 58 11 O&M training 70 21 10 3 0 0 20 6 Psychological or psychiatric counseling 15 3 0 0 0 0 85 17 Social support (with peers) 19 4 10 2 10 2 62 13 Tuition assistance 21 5 4 1 0 0 75 18

Thirty-four consumers responded to the query of whether they were satisfied, dissatisfied, or neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their DBVI involvement. Seventy-three percent (24) indicated they were extremely satisfied, 21% (7) were quite satisfied, and 6% (2) said they were somewhat satisfied. Only one consumer indicated that he or she was somewhat dissatisfied. Only nine consumers commented when asked what services or assistance from DBVI could have enabled them to be more successful in achieving their goals. The majority of their responses concerned access to technology (wishing for in-home assistance with a personal computer or wanting updated assistive technology) or low vision devices. One individual commented that it would have been nice to have had peer support available and one individual desired help with simple problems such as finding lost objects. Employment. Sixty-five percent of the respondents (34) indicated they were employed when they applied for services. Only 21 responded to the following query asking if they were currently employed with the same company. The majority (13) said they were and in the same position, while one indicated employment with the same company but in a different position. One respondent was working in the same position, but with a different company and six were no longer employed. The most frequently noted services that enabled these individuals to retain employment were: acquisition of equipment or tools adapted for vision loss (81%), assistive technology training (63%), updated assistive technology (25%), and additional vision loss skills training (25%). At the time of these interviews, 54% of the respondents were employed full-time, 17% part-time, and 29% were no longer employed. Employers included: Unum Life Insurance Company, Maine Medical, BEP, DBVI, Bureau of General Services, local school districts, local restaurants, and grocery stores.

However, at least a third were self-employed. Fifty-eight percent of the consumers indicated that they had received assistance from DBVI to find their current jobs. Sixty-one percent indicated that they were extremely satisfied with their current jobs, 26% were quite satisfied, 9% somewhat satisfied, and 4% indicated they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Thirteen percent of those employed felt they would need further support from DBVI to maintain employment and 30% were unsure; however, 57% felt they would need no further support. Of the eight consumers responding to a query about what help they might need, the majority (50%) indicated updated technology and 38% thought they might need technology training. Eleven people responded to the query about whether they would like to gain employment and three (27%) indicated that they would like to do so. Challenges. The respondents were also asked to identify the greatest challenge they face as someone with a visual impairment. The responses provided by 30 individuals to this query focused primarily on difficulties accessing transportation, accessing information, and sundry social and emotional issues. Details concerning challenges respondents identified are embedded in Table 3.6 below. Table 3.6 Challenges Faced by Individuals with Visual Impairments % n Transportation 53 16 Access to information (reading) 17 5 Other (social challenges, frustration) 17 5 Living independently 10 3 Health/physical issues 10 3 Employment 3 1

Qualitative comments. There were 30 comments from these successfully closed individuals and the majority were simply expressions of gratitude, such as: Great services – awesome! When (my) eye doctor recommended DBVI, I was skeptical – best decision I ever made was to contact them – they're the best! They're wonderful!" DBVI staff taught me how to use the vision that I have remaining more effectively!!! wonderful help from DBVI & Iris. They helped find current job and provided great services! As vision fails, I may need further assistance in the future – will call. There were two comments that didn't follow this pattern: one indicating that if support meetings were available that the individual would participate (this individual was also interested in information about any organizations that might provide transportation as a service) and one individual who commented that the wait time (for services) is troublesome, but that once she received services they were great. Cases closed unsuccessfully (Status 28). Initially, I called 58 individuals who were listed as closed unsuccessfully in 2012; however, 30 were unreachable (their contact information was no longer valid), two had moved out-of-state, one was too ill to speak with me and one individual was deceased. I not only experienced similar difficulties with the list from 2013, 13 of 43 listed were unreachable and two had moved; but many of those I was able to contact were over 65 years of age and no longer interested in employment. After conferring with the Executive Director of DBVI, we decided to cull out cases of individuals with birthdates prior to January 1, 1950. Once I removed the individuals from 2013 and 2014 who were born after 1950, those on all the lists who were unreachable, and the one individual who participated in a DBVI Consumer Forum, I was left me with a possible 70 individuals to contact and I was able to complete surveys with 28 of them for a 40% rate of return. Respondent Demographics. The majority (55%) of the individuals surveyed were between 45 and 64 years old. Over half (63%) of the respondents were male and had low vision. Although all of these DBVI consumers were legally blind, the majority (82%) had some vision. There were 11 individuals who indicated that they had disabilities in addition to visual impairment. Their additional disabilities included brain injury, hearing loss, kidney problems (dialysis), neurological issues, psychiatric issues, back problems, cognitive impairment, or physical limitations requiring the use of a walker. Detailed demographic information concerning the respondents follows in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7 Characteristics of Unsuccessful DBVI Respondents % n Age (n=20) 25 to 34 15 3 35 to 44 15 3 45 to 54 30 6 55 to 64 25 5 65 to 72 10 2 75 or older 5 1 Gender (n=27) Male 63 17 Female 37 10 Visual Status (n=23) Individuals who are functionally blind 17 4 Legally blind – severe visual impairment 65 15 Legally blind – moderate visual impairment 17 4 Cause of vision loss (n=24) Retinitis Pigmentosa 38 9 Other* 14 3 Macular Degeneration 14 3 Diabetic Retinopathy 14 3

Congenital Impairment* 10 4 Unknown 10 2 *Respondents listed the following under the 'other' category: Explosion, brain injury, and albinism. Single instances of Retinopathy of Prematurity and Foveal Dystrophy Due to rounding, some columns may total over 100. Services. The vast majority (95%) of the consumers (19) who responded to the query about whether they were informed of their rights and responsibilities when they applied for DBVI services indicated that they were informed and only one person was unsure. When asked if they'd helped develop their rehabilitation goals and choose their rehabilitation services, 84% (16) answered affirmatively, one stated no, and the remaining two were unsure. Twenty-three consumers responded to the query of whether they were satisfied, dissatisfied, or neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their DBVI involvement. Forty-eight percent (10) indicated they were extremely satisfied, 30% (7) were quite satisfied, 4% (1) said somewhat satisfied, 9% (2) said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 4% (1) said somewhat dissatisfied, 9% (2) reported they were quite dissatisfied, and none indicated that they were extremely dissatisfied with their DBVI involvement. Although these respondents had been closed in Status 28 (unsuccessful), they reported high levels of satisfaction with services they had received from DBVI for the most part. Twenty-one of these consumers rated various services that they had received from DBVI and the vast majority indicated they were satisfied with the services they had received. Only one individual reported being dissatisfied with DBVI services. For services received, Table 3.8 provides the numbers and percentages of consumers who received each service and their level of satisfaction.

Table 3.8 Respondents' Satisfaction with DBVI Services Satisfied Neutral Dissatisfied N/A % n % n % n % n Adjustment to vision loss counseling 79 11 0 0 7 1 14 2 Acquisition of adapted tools – not technology 85 11 4 1 8 1 8 1 Assistive technology acquisition 70 7 0 0 10 1 20 2 Assistive technology training 50 5 13 3 10 1 40 4 Benefits counseling 29 2 0 0 14 1 57 4 Braille instruction 25 3 0 0 0 0 75 9 Employment counseling 11 1 0 0 11 1 78 7 ILS training 75 12 0 0 6 1 19 3 Job accommodation assistance 10 11 0 0 0 0 90 9 Job placement 10 11 0 0 0 0 90 9 Job retention 43 10 4 1 0 0 52 12 Low vision device acquisition 69 9 8 1 8 1 15 2 Low vision device training 58 7 0 0 0 0 42 5 Medical assistance 0 0 0 0 13 1 88 7 O&M training 80 12 0 0 7 1 13 2 Psychological or psychiatric counseling 0 0 0 0 10 1 90 9 Social support (with peers) 40 4 0 0 10 1 50 5 Tuition assistance 33 4 0 0 8 1 50 6

Sixteen respondents gave reasons for exiting from DBVI services. Thirty-eight percent (6) of the consumers indicated that they had received what they wanted from DBVI. Thirty-one percent (5) indicated that they were too ill or were having personal problems that inhibited their ability to access services, and 20% departed from services because the agency couldn't provide what they wanted (services that weren't offered such as specialty lenses or an unproven medical regimen). One individual indicated that he didn't believe there were jobs in his area and that transportation constraints made it impossible for him to commute to another community and another indicated that he was unable to make contact with his case manager. Table 3.9 presents the respondents' rationale for exiting DBVI services. Table 3.9 Respondents' Rationale for Exiting from DBVI Services Reasons % n Got what I needed 38 6 Too ill or personal issues prohibit continuing with services 31 5 Didn't offer what I wanted 19 3 Unable to make contact 6 1 No jobs in my area 6 1 No transportation in my area 6 1

Employment. Six (27%) of the 22 individuals who responded indicated they were employed when they applied for services and four were employed at departure from services: two full-time and two part-time – they indicated that they were extremely satisfied (2), quite satisfied (1), or neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the services they'd received. The two who had previously been employed but were unemployed at the time of the survey indicated that they wanted to work and would reach out to DBVI for services, if necessary. There was one additional consumer who

indicated that he was employed at the time of the survey and didn't indicate that he was employed when he applied for services. He was reticent to discuss his situation with the interviewer, but did indicate that he felt he'd been "forgotten" by the agency. Only two of the five consumers who were employed at the point of contact were working full-time. Eleven people responded to the query about whether they would like to gain employment and three (27%) indicated that they would like to do so. Twenty-four individuals responded to the query about whether they needed further support from DBVI and 17% indicated that they did, 46% were unsure, and 38% felt they needed no further support. Only two individuals indicated what support they might need and both said they needed additional equipment or tools, one also mentioned additional vision loss skills training and another mentioned technology training. Qualitative comments. Consumer comments varied, although most were positive about the services that they had received. There were two instances where individuals interviewed expressed very negative feelings about DVBI services. One individual came across as somewhat out-of-sorts in general; however, the second was truly angry and disparaging of everyone and everything. Her comments were so tangential as to make them unreliable. I have provided the comments from the former below: ...Wait time for program contacts are remarkably long so it seems as a waste of time. No assistive technology programs in place. The DVBI should have programs for the low income to help them to get retrained or new technology or even guide dogs. There should be transportation for those that want to go to work, as well as training. Unfortunately for me my disabilities happened during the recession when a lot of these programs were cut or if they existed I was never made aware of them. There should be a newsletter given out for upcoming news and new programs starting. Consumers who were satisfied with DBVI services: ...services received as a child and young adult helped my parents feel comfortable keeping me home rather than sending me to a residential school; voc rehab helped with summer work via WIAA; DBVI helped with coordination of program while in college and they were a tremendous support fiscally, too... Closed unsuccessfully because I moved out-of-state for a number of years. ...wait time is problematic for folks, although Iris was great about moving me to the top of the list when I had a sudden vision loss... I now do volunteer work and find it very rewarding, health inhibits competitive employment – can't meet time demands. ...I need to progress in employment (current job is only part-time) – DBVI counselors have been a great help – home situation problematic, grim... ...computer access is biggest hassle, AT difficult to explain... case closed, purchased my own equipment...took early retirement mostly because transportation is an ongoing problem – it's half mile to nearest bus stop, then I had to transfer to another bus. DBVI was great... DBVI Consumers Who Participated in the Employability Skills Program There was a small subset of DBVI consumers (14) who had participated in the agency's Employability Skills Program (ESP) training, which was offered twice in this three-year period under review, and I was able to reach 13 of them to interview. When I called them, six (46%) were employed. Five had open cases with DBVI and two had been closed as unsuccessful (Status 28). The five individuals with open cases were studying and volunteering (1) or looking for work; in fact, one of those looking for work reported she had a job pending. All but one of these individuals indicated that they gained considerably from attending the ESP. The one who did not said that he had misunderstood the purpose of the ESP and that it was of little benefit to him (however, he was employed at point of contact). The other participants uniformly rated the program highly and pointed out the following as important components of the ESP to them:

- Meeting other individuals who are visually impaired,
- Having an opportunity to prepare for and practice interviewing skills in a safe and nonjudgmental environment,
- Getting updates on technology and how to use it efficiently in the workplace,
- Learning how to create résumés and cover letters, and
- Discovering what they needed to do to find work.

The ESP graduates (excepting the one disgruntled participant) were enthusiastic in their endorsement of the ESP and indicated that they would welcome opportunities to be involved in future offerings as mentors or role models. DBVI Staff Feedback on Services Although I didn't complete telephone interviews with DBVI staff, I did share a link to an accessible on-line survey with DBVI's Director and he disseminated it to DBVI staff, both direct-report staff and contract staff working for Catholic Charities and the Iris Network

(the two largest subcontractors working with DBVI). Forty–seven individuals completed the on–line survey and their responses are discussed in the following section.

Staff Roles. Table 3.10 presents the information that 42 of the respondents shared concerning their DBVI roles and responsibilities.

Table 3.10 DBVI Staff Responsibilities

Role/Position	%	n
Vision Rehabilitation Therapist/Teacher	24	10
Teacher of Students with Visual Impairment	24	10
Orientation & Mobility Instructor	19	8
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor	17	7
Management	14	6
Rehabilitation Counselor I (ILS)	2	1
Total Responses	42	42

Staff Perceptions of the Needs of People with Visual Impairments. The staff's responses to a query about what they believed the greatest needs of people with visual impairments in Maine were unsurprisingly similar to responses received in the consumer and staff focus groups. They believed that access to transportation and employment were the greatest needs, followed closely by access to assistive technology. The next cluster of items were access to personal adjustment counseling, peer support, and disability–specific skills training. The third cluster of items included access to computer training, low vision device fitting and training, career development, education and training options, and job search skills training. The final cluster included access to information, housing, mental health counseling, benefits counseling, and medical interventions.

Table 3.11 presents all of the staff responses concerning the greatest needs of people with visual impairments in Maine.

Table 3.11 Greatest Needs of People with VI in Maine

Access to	%	n
transportation	83	39
Access to employment	70	33
Access to assistive technology	67	31
Access to personal adjustment counseling	60	28
Access to peer support	55	22
Access to disability–specific skills training	51	24
Access to computer training	47	22
Access to low vision device fitting and training	45	21
Access to career development	43	20
Access to education and training options	43	20
Access to job search skills training	40	19
Access to information	32	15
Access to housing	28	13
Access to mental health counseling	19	9
Access to benefits counseling	13	6
Access to medical interventions	11	5

Requested services. The staff who responded to the query about services most often requested by consumers (n=44), struggled to rank order them. In fact, 70% of the respondents did not rank order their responses to the services listed. Many considered two or three items as at the same rank (for instance, they listed employment and independent living skills as most frequently requested, rather than employment first and independent living skills second or vice versa). Therefore, I have extrapolated rankings based on the responses that I received and manually computing by weighting the responses to get at ranking. Clearly, the most frequently requested services (listed as the number one requested service by the most respondents) were employment and independent living skills training, followed requests to acquire assistive technology. In Table 3.12 the rank order of services most often requested by DBVI consumers is reported by total number of requests noted by the respondents.

Table 3.12 Services Most Often Requested by DBVI Consumers

Rank order	1	2	3
Service	Number of times chosen	Employment	11 4 2
Independent living skills	11	6	9
Acquisition of assistive technology	9	12	8
Medical assistance	3	3	5
Educational assistance	2	5	6
Peer mentoring	8	0	0
Acquisition of aids & appliances	7	6	3
Orientation & mobility	5	8	6
Vocational training	5	9	5
Benefits counseling	1	3	1

Although not listed for respondents, a couple of respondents mentioned peer counseling and other forms of counseling as frequently requested by consumers. One individual also mentioned mental health services as needed, but rarely requested. Some of the respondents' comments representative of these needs follow. ...specific counseling/support for loss of vision also is a frequent request among my clients. While do consider it an aspect of my job, the clients' need to talk about these issues does at times interfere with making progress in skills training, especially when the person begins to see me as the person that sits and listens/talks, VS the one with whom they DO things. Computers and devices are the really attractive things that people are often aware of, so they often want them even when they don't know what they'd do with them. A lot of ADL's and O&M skills seem

unreachable to newly blind people, so they don't always ask for them because they aren't sure they could reach those goals... Peer mentoring and exposure to peers is 1 ...Although MH services are not often requested they are most often needed. Consumer challenges. DBVI staff were also asked to consider challenges that have been reported by consumers as inhibiting their ability to obtain or maintain employment. They were first asked to consider a list of challenges and consider whether they never, rarely, occasionally, or frequently prevented DBVI consumers from obtaining employment. Not surprisingly, the three challenges identified by the largest number of respondents as frequently preventing consumers from obtaining employment were: Lack of accessible transportation (76%), high cost of transportation (63%), and the economy due to a lack of available jobs (72%). Fear of losing SSI or SSDI and fear of losing medical benefits were the only other challenges identified as frequently preventing consumers from getting jobs by 50% of the respondents. A full accounting of their responses is available in Table 3.13. Table 3.13 Staff Responses Concerning Challenges that Prevent DBVI Consumers from Obtaining Employment

Challenge	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Total	Respondents	%	n	%	n	%	N	N			
Difficulty obtaining job accommodations	7	2	17	5	41	12	34	10	29	Lack of available jobs/economy	0	0	3	1	25	8
	72	23	32							Fear of losing SSI or SSDI	0	0	3	1	50	15
										Fear of losing medical benefits	0	0	13	4	37	11
										Fear of losing subsidies	0	0	13	4	40	12
										High cost of transportation	0	0	6	2	31	10
										Inability to meet production standards	0	0	26	8	65	20
										Insufficient job search preparation	0	0	10	3	59	17
										Lack of accessible transportation	0	0	6	2	21	7
										Lack of DBVI staff knowledge	19	6	48	15	32	10
										Lack of DBVI staff time	3	1	41	12	38	11
										Lack of DBVI staff resources	10	3	34	10	38	11
										Lack of job development services	4	1	23	6	58	15
										Lack of specific job skills	0	0	6	2	55	17
										Lack of support at home	0	0	17	5	55	16
										Unrealistic job goals	0	0	17	5	53	16
										Unrealistic expectations of consumers	3	1	16	5	52	16
										Unrealistic expectations of employers	3	1	21	6	48	14
										Weak computer skills	3	1	19	6	55	17
										Weak social skills	0	0	16	5	44	14

In the following table, Table 3.14, staff responded to how often they felt that the challenges listed prevented DBVI consumers from maintaining employment. As in the previous query, the majority of staff responses (67%) indicated that the availability of transportation was the challenge most frequently preventing consumers from maintaining employment. This was followed by cost of transportation, which 56% of the respondents noted as frequently causing difficulty. The other challenge identified as frequently causing consumers to lose employment by 31% of respondents was personal issues (mentioned as occasionally causing difficulty by 69% of respondents). Other challenges mentioned by at least half of the staff as occasionally preventing consumers from maintaining employment were: lack of job retention services (79%), personal issues (69%), weak social skills (65%), unrealistic expectations of consumers (62%), lack of support at home (55%), and inability of consumers to meet production standards (55%). All of the staff responses to this query are listed in Table 3.14.

Table 3.14 Staff Responses Concerning Challenges that Prevent DBVI Consumers from Maintaining Employment

Challenges	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Total	Respondents	%	n	%	n	%	N	N			
Availability of transportation	0	0	3	1	30	10	67	22	33	Cost of transportation	0	0	9	3	34	11
										Personal issues	0	0	0	0	69	22
										Lack of support at home	0	0	29	9	55	17
										Lack of job retention services	0	0	7	2	79	23
										Difficulty obtaining job accommodations	3	1	32	10	48	15
										Unrealistic expectations of consumers	0	0	17	5	62	18
										Unrealistic expectations of employers	3	1	29	9	48	15
										Inability of consumers to meet production standards	3	1	29	9	55	17
										Weak social skills	0	0	19	6	65	20

Recommendations and comments specific to DBVI changes. In addition to being asked about challenges to individuals with vision loss in Maine and service requests from the consumers with

whom they work, DBVI staff were also asked for input concerning how they support each other in meeting consumers' needs. They were provided with a listing of ten opportunities (action items) that DBVI could facilitate for staff support and asked to rate the actions as not needed, adequate, or high priority for improvement. Their assessments follow in Table 3.15. The action item that garnered the most evidence of being a high priority for improvement was a perceived need to streamline paperwork processes – identified by 66% of the respondents. The second and third action items identified by staff as high priorities for improvement revolved around communication – improving external communication identified by 56% and improving internal communication identified by 51% of respondents. All other action items were identified by less than half the staff as high priorities for improvement by the respondents. Table 3.15 Staff Ratings of DBVI Support Options

Action Item	Not Needed	Adequate	High Priority for Improvement	Total Responses
Strengthen staff relationships	13	5	63	24
Increase teamwork	16	6	58	22
Improve internal communications	14	2	34	12
Improve external communications	6	2	38	13
Increase general communication	32	12	49	18
Strengthen ethical practices	47	18	37	14
Clarify staff roles & responsibilities	13	5	42	16
Enhance resource awareness	14	5	49	18
Streamline paperwork	5	2	29	11
Increase training opportunities	19	7	46	17

DBVI improvement suggestions. Staff were also asked what internal changes that do not require funding are needed most in DBVI services. Although not all of their responses fit the “do not require funding” criterion, their open-ended responses follow. ...Improve/increase PR – employers and general public are often not aware of the skills and potential of our consumers. We need to increase DBVI presence in the community. ...Maine blindness system needs to work on alternative funding, grants for IL and Homemakers. Create more learning opportunities in group format rather than [as] individually [completed]. Staff mentioned the need for mentors, both for staff and for consumers: ... (true) mentors in the disciplines to truly be of value/help to staff when perplexing cases come along. Involvement in supporting Mentoring opportunities; i.e., connecting individuals with other individuals and families who face similar challenges and building on successes of one another... ...Clients need to see what other disabled individuals are doing to be successful. Facilitate/develop consumer-run support groups. Access to the AWARE case management system and reductions in paperwork were mentioned by numerous staff, as in the following examples: ...all staff to be able to get into the AWARE case mgmt. system. Including the VRTs or at least to be able to read and post case notes. This would eliminate some steps and time in the process. Reduce duplication of paperwork/computer documentation in order to save time. Every email, letter, medical report etc., must be entered into Aware. Electronic signing for IPE's and releases and similar documents would save significant time. Reduce the number of forms used to obtain services i.e. use one release of information. Provide additional letters in Aware for example a 10-day letter, a closure letter, etc. Issues concerning staff competencies, assignments, and understanding of the rehabilitation system came up repeatedly: More respect for the competencies of each profession. Clearly there may be issues for any one of the disciplines on an isolated basis, but to make the generalizations that are made consistently in this state is a real shame. It divides rather than connects services for clients. If the culture of DBVI and the contract agencies was such that we were secure in what we did, and not assuming that it could be done better if it were done by us, we would improve services greatly. There is a wide range of comfort level and skills when dealing with teenagers and those with multiple issue[s] (such as autism). If it is possible to have only those who work best with those groups either work with them and/or assist those less comfortable with them it may be helpful. Better communications, clarification re: expectations/roles and staff retention would sure help so everyone knows their job and who they go to for what. Starting from scratch repeatedly has not helped smooth things in our region. ...Training of VRTs to understand that DBVI goes by our IPE and not their treatment plan and we have to justify why we are purchasing items and that they need to go with the plan. Some VRTs think that we should purchase everything for every client with no questions asked. I think client should be asked to buy items themselves and to help out when they can. I think we

could look at what they can afford as some have money but will take everything they can get for free. ...Make sure that staffing levels remain constant with the number of consumers. Vacancies, especially in high caseload areas need to be filled ASAP (so maybe redistributing territories); explore and evaluate whether or not adding VRC positions would help to more evenly divide caseload sizes and demands; VRCs should not be dispensing aids and appliances, marking appliances, or doing the job of a CVRT. ...our contracted service providers [need] to understand how our system works and what our jobs are. There seems to be a misunderstanding with certain people that we need to go by their treatment plan and not our IPE. Finding ways to cut down on shipping costs so that we are not paying more or the same for the shipping cost as we are for the items. VRTs need to understand not to expect VRCs to okay the giving of an older device without a warranty to a client and them taking the new device. VRTs should be getting rid of items on hand that they have a stockpile of so they don't become out-of-date (examples: sun lens, bump dots, kitchen timers, pill containers). As they dispense them, they request VRC to repurchase them. VRT and O&M not giving out equipment and expecting VRC to approve the purchase after the fact.

Greater awareness of services provided and how to access services – greater understanding among eye docs about role of rehab services, little out of pocket cost, greater information provided at intake. More than one staff person identified perceived staffing inequities or shortages in the Portland/Lewiston region: ...Equitable staffing resources – Portland has twice the population of Bangor but has the same staffing for VRCs, BRS & RCI. DBVI needs to convey mission and values consistently. My colleagues are second to none! However, I think we all operationalize "rehabilitation" and "independence" differently. It's challenging to be a "blindness" agency working within VR guidelines. All of the rehab team is responsible for the outcomes but only the VR staff are held accountable. It would be helpful if we could develop a two tier system – provide primary vision rehabilitation services and THEN the VR services. We need more personnel in the Portland office. We need a person to handle clerical and a counselor working with families, helping them navigate the system. ...more equitable (re)distribution of staff resources. Portland has the highest numbers, and yet DBVI Portland has the least resources (per client) staff-wise. Portland (and Lewiston combined) NEEDS a BRS...we have 2/3 the state's children and no one is here to work directly with the families to help them move developmentally to see how far their child who is b/vi CAN go vocationally and in life skills!! NEED this MOST! Time management issues were mentioned by a number of staff, as well: Having more time to spend on the phone with clients... to track medical reports from doctors... to manage case load Need more time to actually do rehab counseling with clients, not just paperwork. Better implementation of customer service oriented service delivery, and speeding up the referral-to-receiving services process. Reconnect blindness professionals and consumer groups. Finding a way to streamline the process through which necessary information is gathered from the client/applicant so that the VRC is able to complete the required CARN prior to developing an IPE and referring for service provision. Identifying a more efficient method of completing the required Low Vision protocol which would be an excellent resource for completion of the CARN. General suggestions and comments: Dealing with the larger socio-economic issues...access to transportation, housing, ongoing supports, long-term care supports; development of appropriate jobs for those who are not college bound and lack computer skills. Many clients have multiple disabilities that include vision loss and require ongoing support. DBVI might work more closely with other outfits serving the multi-impaired such as Goodwill or Creative Works in developing jobs for visually impaired people. ...Better flow of communication. Clearly defined role of DBVI and consumer. ...Clear policies, improved communication... ...Faster response to new referrals – more clear method to access services. More involvement of DBVI staff with students in last four years of schooling, attendance at all IEP/504 meetings. Observe at schools to get better sense of student skills, get input from TVIs and school staff. MUCH CLOSER WORK WITH SCHOOLS! Provision of transportation from all over state to trainings held across state. ... Develop/facilitate consumer AT support groups and service maintenance agreements with providers.

Just having staff that realize the differences in working with adults and students. Students need more guidance and support because they may not be as motivated as adults. Staff and consumers should be given more advanced notice of programs that are organized by DBVI. Although not specific to the previous query about internal changes not requiring funding, there were some additional staff comments inserted at the end of the staff survey that warrant insertion here. Those are listed below. ...Having I-pads to type up notes when meeting with clients would be easier for our jobs. Also, I-phones or a more modern phone would be helpful also. Begin able to text our clients would be a great asset in connecting to them. ...training for regular doctors and eye doctors on filling out our forms so that we have the info we need to assist our clients. Referrals through Region 1 are often having to wait for a low vision appointment as a gateway to accessing additional services, causing delays, misunderstanding of services available, cost of services, array of services. Referrals from doctors in region 1 for rehabilitation services are being interpreted as referrals for low vision doctor appointments so there is a delay in...referrals. ...Recent loss of personal adjustment services is a critical loss. Uncertainty of reading service funding for Newline is another critical issue. Needs: Personal adjustment counseling statewide from qualified counselors Changing the Iris Network contract so that services are not based on number of VR hours predetermined in a contract but instead based on real numbers. Increased focus on underserved: refugee population, deaf/blind, intellectually disabled. ...Compensatory skills need to be linked to employment... Many more resources available to transition age and working age people who comprise a very small part of the visually impaired/blindness population. Services to the largest group, the elderly, who are dealing with age-related eye diseases are dwindling. ...the majority of my clients remain elders and their need for rehab is as important as that of any work aged individual. Safety and comfort and independence within the home are vital, but [sic] [and] many of these folks are the primary or significant care giver for another as well. Lack of appropriate jobs for the non-college bound persons and persons with multiple disabilities. Huge need for counseling for our consumers with mental health professionals who are familiar with the issues of blindness....training of professionals already working in the region. I think the lack of reliable and affordable transportation is the biggest challenge to our consumers in rural Maine. It makes it difficult or impossible for them to access employment, education, social, and medical services. Many of them continue to drive longer than the probably should because it is so difficult to get anywhere without driving. AT is an endless process as products and services change daily. Find a separate funding stream to allow clients to maintain and upgrade their AT equipment. Offer the ESP course more than 1x per year. Change the perspective from what can DBVI do for me to how can we work together to accomplish a common goal. Change staffing so that support services are available for counselors, O&M and other staff throughout the state. ...Baby boomers are getting older, and our caseloads are only going to get bigger. ...work to change the culture of low expectations. Summary DBVI staff and professionals from across Maine's blindness system responded to the on-line surveys enthusiastically and made a considerable number of suggestions for improving services to consumers and the efficiency of the agency. They also provided additional insight into the types of services most frequently requested by consumers and services that were not requested but that staff felt were gaps in service delivery such as mental health counseling. Their perceptions of the challenges people with visual impairments face in Maine paralleled those identified by consumers and their family members. Eye Care Professionals We heard from 16 eye care professionals: 7 optometrists, 8 ophthalmologists, and one provider who offers both optometric and ophthalmological services. Thirteen respondents identified specialty areas within their practices as indicated in Table 3.16 and one practitioner stated that his/her practice co-managed all of the listed specialty areas. The leading specialization noted was treatment of glaucoma, followed by cataract and refractive surgery, retinal disease, and low vision. Table 3.16 Eye Care Providers' Specialty Areas Specialty Areas Identified* % n Glaucoma 54 7 Cataract & refractive surgery 38 5 Retinal disease 31 4 Low vision 23 3 Neuro-ophthalmology 8 1 Oncology 8 1 Orthoptic care 8 1 Pediatric ophthalmology 8 1 Total respondents 13 *Respondents were allowed to choose all that were applicable.

Services. All respondents indicated the variety of services offered through their practices. The vast majority (94%) indicated that they provided comprehensive vision evaluations, diagnostic services, and treatment services. Half of the respondents indicated that they provided surgical services, while only 19% identified low vision device fitting and training as services offered through their practices. The latter were an ophthalmologist, an optometrist, and the combined (ophthalmology and optometry) practice. The sixteen respondents identified services as noted in Table 3.17. Table 3.17 Services Offered by Eye Care Providers Services offered through practice* % N Comprehensive vision evaluations 94 15 Diagnostic services 94 15 Treatment services 94 15 Low vision device fitting 19 3 Low vision device training 19 3 Surgical services 50 8 Total respondents 16

*Respondents were allowed to choose all that were applicable.

Knowledge of DBVI. Fifty percent (n=16) of respondents indicated that they knew where the closest DBVI field office was in proximity to their offices. Likewise, 50% indicated that they were aware of DBVI services that might benefit their patients, 19% said they were not aware of the services, and the remainder (31%) were unsure. When asked if they had referred patients to DBVI, 67% (n=15) indicated that they had. When asked how often they referred patients to DBVI, all 16 respondents answered. The majority (50%) indicated they rarely referred and 38% indicated they referred only occasionally. All of their responses are included in Table 3.18. Table 3.18 Referrals to DBVI by Eye Care Providers Referrals to DBVI % N Frequently 6 1 Occasionally 38 6 Rarely 50 8 Only once 6 1 Total respondents 16

When asked if they would like more information regarding services offered by DBVI, 53% (n=15) indicated that they would. Sixteen individuals responded when asked what DBVI staff could facilitate in the referral process. The leading ideas identified by the respondents were: provide brochures describing DBVI services (75%) and also provide a list of services available to DBVI consumers (75%). All responses are included in Table 3.19 below. Table 3.19 What DBVI staff can do to facilitate the referral process Ideas % n Provide DBVI staff business cards 44 7 Provide brochures describing DBVI services 75 12 Provide directions to DBVI offices 44 7 Provide a list of services available to DBVI consumers 75 12 Provide patient paperwork and referral forms 50 8 Provide addresses/contact numbers to DBVI offices 44 7 Provide an explanation of processes/screening requirements for patients to receive DBVI services 50 8 Other (Keep referral form simple) 6 1 Total respondents 16

Unmet eye care needs. Asked what the greatest unmet eye care needs are in their communities, the majority of the respondents said financial assistance to meet the eye care needs of patients (71%) and access to low vision services (57%). Their responses are provided in Table 3.20.

Table 3.20 Unmet Eye Care Needs in Local Communities Identified by Providers Needs* % N Access to low vision services 57 8 Access to routine eye exams 0 0 Eye care training/education 14 2 Financial assistance to meet eye care needs of patients 71 10 Screenings for cataracts 0 0 Screenings for diabetes 7 1 Screenings for glaucoma 0 0 Training with low vision aids/devices 29 4 Other (funding to purchase video magnifiers; transportation to access services) 14 2 Total respondents 100 14 *Respondents were allowed to choose all that were applicable.

Comments Although all of the eye care professionals surveyed were asked to make any comments they wished, only two responded. Their comments are inserted below: I have a concern that DBVI feels physicians specializing in low vision examinations are not qualified to provide such services. [The agency representative states] physician referrals to [the low vision physician] should go through the LVTs first, interrupting the intent of those referring physicians to get the patients to [the low vision physician] first. With limited funding available, a multidisciplinary approach to services for our visually

impaired population is difficult. However, this is still the ideal; and coordination of these essential resources should be emphasized throughout the network of caregivers.

Employers The final phase of the CSNA was outreach to employers and to that end, I attempted to contact the twenty top employers in Maine according to the Maine Department of Economic & Community Development (Business Climate blog, 2014). The employers listed were: • Hannaford Bros • Walmart/Sams • Maine Medical • Bath Iron Works • LL Bean • Eastern Maine Medical Center • Maine General Medical Center • Central Maine Healthcare • T D Bank • Unum Provident • Shaws Supermarket • Webber Hospital Association (dba Southern Maine Health Care) • Mercy Hospital (Portland) • Home Depot • Lowes Home Centers • Verso Paper • Goodwill Industries • S D Warren Paper Mill • Circle K • Pratt Whitney Aircraft I searched on-line for contact information and in the process I realized that Verso Paper was undergoing significant changes in its structure and presence in Maine; therefore, I removed them from the list. I was able to retrieve contact information for all of the employers on my list and I initiated contact. I began with telephone calls; however, I soon discovered that some of the employers listed would not take telephone calls from non-applicants. I was advised to email them in some instances and I did so. I did not receive responses from any of those. Many of those with whom I connected via telephone calls would not complete surveys with me about their employment practices. A few had me email them links to my survey, but none responded. I was able to chat with one company's human resources department at some length. Their personnel advised me that it was company policy not to respond to surveys; however, they were willing to chat with me informally. They indicated that they would be pleased to attend any job fairs that DBVI invited them to and would be willing to work with DBVI if there were a point person. They really only wanted one-point of contact and were averse to hearing from multiple agency representatives. I shared a DBVI contact name with the HR department staff. There were two companies with whom I went back and forth, trying to make contact with the individuals they indicated I needed to chat with for information about their hiring processes. I left multiple messages with call back information and called each of these individuals a number of times – all to no avail. They would not respond to my inquiries. The large, out-of-state entities such as Walmart/Sams, Lowes, Home Depot, Shaw's Supermarkets, and Circle K were the same. I would call, chat with two or three people – all of whom sent me to someone else – I would have to leave a message, and then I wouldn't hear back from them. It was a thankless, unproductive attempt to make contact in this way. My recommendation to DBVI is to only work with larger employers statewide in conjunction with colleagues from the Department of Labor. VRCs and other local service providers need to establish rapport with local employers and provide them with a point-of-contact within the agency for follow up. Summary Overall, the telephone interviews and on-line surveys have reinforced the outcome data presented in Part One of this report and the data collected have validated the qualitative data secured in the consumer and staff focus groups, which was presented in Part Two of this report.

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

See section 1 and 3A (above)

C. OTHER AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON THE OPERATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE VR PROGRAM, INCLUDING ANY REPORTS RECEIVED FROM THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL AND FINDING AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MONITORING ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED UNDER SECTION 107.

See section 1 and 3A (above)

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.

DBVI is not implementing an Order of Selection.

B. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER.

n/a See section 1. A. (above)

C. THE SERVICE AND OUTCOME GOALS.

See section 1. A. (above)

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

See section 1. A. (above)

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

See section 1. A. (above)

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.

See section 1. A. (above)

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 Division continues to use Title VI–B money to provide services for individuals with the most severe disabilities as an integral part of our VR program. Securing long–term employment resources continues to be a primary challenge for the Division. DBVI continues to collaborate with Department of Health and Human Services' Offices of Aging and Disability Services and Substance Abuse Mental Health Services to explore long–term support mechanisms for those individuals completing their VR plan and who have been utilizing Title VI, Part B funds.

Based on level funding, the division's goal will be to continue to use the Title VI–B funding on a fee–for–service arrangement, providing services to a minimum of 23 consumers with the most significant disabilities for whom supported employment is an appropriate vocational alternative. Priorities for supported employment are services to individuals who need intensive supported employment services because of the nature and severity of their disabilities. In addition to being blind or having low vision, these may be consumers with a most significant disability due to mental illness, traumatic brain injury, cognitive deficits or other severe physical disabilities.

The plan is to continue to purchase services for designated Title VI–B clients. Purchased services will continue to be primarily job coaching, job development, and transitional employment services for individuals with vision impairment and mental illness. We will also continue to work with relevant stakeholders, i.e., consumers and CRP's, to expand the availability of supported employment services.

DBVI continues to identify more diversified employment opportunities in the supported employment Title VI program. The Division places a small number of blind and visually impaired consumers in supported employment settings. We are finding that many clients are able to work in the competitive labor market without supports, due to the increased availability of technology, technology adaptations and both technological and natural supports available in today's market.

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

See section 1 (above)

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.

Maine DBVI receives approximately \$48,000 in Supported Employment funds each year. The set-aside for youth with the most significant disability at 50% is quite small. Staff have received trainings

on long term supports and the criteria for consumers to be eligible for the various state waivers. Using our case management system, DBVI staff will be able to continue to identify those youth with the most significant disabilities who would qualify for supported employment funds. DBVI continues to have state funds to use for extended services after the VR case is closed.

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.

Goal 1: To stabilize DBVI's financial situation, ensuring that expenditures are budgeted consistently within existing and available federal and state funds.

Objective: DBVI's operational expenses will be equal to its federal grant award and matching state funds, allowing re-allotment funds to serve as a reserve in times of budget constraints, such as federal continuing resolutions, and a resource for one-time initiatives that will benefit people who are blind and visually impaired in Maine.

Strategies: a. Work with the SRC's re-alignment workgroup to identify and implement changes that will increase DBVI efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of client services. b. Further develop budget reports with the Department of Administrative and Financial Services to better monitor and manage expenditures in real time. In accordance with State of Maine procurement policies and procedures, ensure that the required and necessary services for the education of blind children are available July 1, 2016 after the current contract expires. c. In accordance with State of Maine procurement policies and procedures, ensure that the required and necessary services for community based vision rehabilitation services are available July 1, 2016 after the current contract expires.

Goal 2: To increase successful competitive employment outcomes for DBVI clients. Objective: Reduce the amount of time it takes to achieve a competitive employment outcome for DBVI clients from 54 months in FFY 2010 to 31 months in FFY 2013, to 27 months in FFY 2015 and to 26 months for FFY2017.

Strategies:

a. Continue re-establishment of a center-based blindness rehabilitation facility in Maine that utilizes an immersion model to teach blindness skills in a manner that can be easily integrated into work activities and transferred to an employment setting. b. Expand the use of assistive technology to increase the rate of competitive closures. Objective: Contribute to Maine's WIOA Performance Accountability and Unified Plan measures by increasing the number of successful competitive employment outcomes for individuals who receive services from DBVI from 30 in FFY 2015 to 36 in FFY 2017.

Strategies: a. Work with WIOA core partners at MDOL and Adult Education to ensure that job seekers with visual impairments are included in the growth and diversification of Maine's workforce. b. Increase DBVI's relevance to employers through technical assistance and support regarding vision loss, rehabilitation technology and employment. c. Refer and support participation of six DBVI clients at the Iris Rehabilitation Center at any given time through Individualized Plans for

Employment. d. Deliver at least one session of the DBVI Employability Skills Program every other year to clients who are long-term unemployed/underemployed or otherwise are stuck in job seeking.

Objective: Implement new WIOA regulations that affect individuals who have been historically served through DBVI's VR program with the goal of "homemaker."

Strategies: a. Assist current DBVI clients to achieve the goals outlined in their IPE. b. Assess newly referred clients to determine if they can be served under the VR program through IPE's that identify competitive employment goals but start with blindness rehabilitation and independent living skill development services. Provide staff training and supervisory support in the development of these types of plans. c. For new referrals that cannot be served under the VR program, provide IL case management and track needs that are unmet due to absence of resources. d. Seek advice and advocacy from the SRC's homemaker workgroup for individuals with visual impairments who may be negatively affected by these changes.

Goal 3: To deliver Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) to youth who are blind and visually impaired, assisting them to successfully live and work independently in the community.

Objective: Use the equivalent of 15% of DBVI's federal allotment to serve students who are blind and visually impaired.

Strategies: a. Receive assistance from the SRC's workgroup in identifying ways that PETS can be provided that will make the best use of the funds that must be set aside. b. Increase the number of students who are referred to the VR program as part of their educational plan. This will be done in part through the case management by the Blindness Rehabilitation Specialists (BLRS) who connect families with transitional and community resources. c. Hold regional meetings with DBVI staff, and contracted partners toward the beginning of each school year to determine VR eligibility on all students 14 years of age and older. d. Make optimal use of the existence of a Maine-based immersion center to offer summer programs, including blindness rehabilitation, independent living, work experiences and college preparation. College preparation will include AT, VRT, VRC-vocational, volunteer, O&M. Another planned program is for those 8th – 12th graders not planning on pursuing a college program. Another anticipated program at the immersion center will focus on volunteer, CBSA's, work experiences, job club, VRT, AT, and O&M skills. There is a planned session for parents to educate them on resources, independence with their kids, and a Q&A session. e. Create a summer youth employment, job shadow, CBSA, job club and/or work internship experience for all students by age 16.

Goal 4: To ensure that a larger number of individuals, with disabilities, who may be unserved or underserved or have minority status, have access to DBVI services.

Objective: DBVI will work with WIOA core partners to address the transportation needs regionally.

Strategies:

a. DBVI staff will provide input regarding accessibility needs of their consumers.

Objective: DBVI will work with Maine's Section 121 VR Grant – Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation to identify an increased number of individuals eligible to be served by both programs.

Strategies: a. Maine DBVI will include Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation in training and technical assistance opportunities offered or funded by DBVI. b. A representative from the Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation will participate on DBVI's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) c. The Wabanaki VR Program will provide technical assistance to Maine DBVI on issues related to cultural competency and best practices in Native employment supports. d. DBVI will provide in-service training to staff at tribal health or community centers of the four Maine tribes (Passamaquoddy Tribe, Penobscot Indian Nation, Houlton Band of Maliseets, and Aroostook Band of Micmac Indians) on an annual basis.

Objective: DBVI will continue its efforts to cultivate a communication network for consumers who are deaf-blind or dual sensory impaired (hearing and vision) so there are professional Deaf-Blind Interpreters and Support Service Providers (SSP) available statewide to assist them in their endeavor for employment. Strategies:

a. Secure funding for coordinated operation of the Maine SSP program. b. Work with collaborative partners to increase training opportunities for Deaf-Blind Interpreters and SSP's. c. Encourage more deaf-blind/dual sensory impaired consumers to take an active role on the steering committee working on the interpreting and SSP project. d. Work with collaborative partners to identify funding for SSP's. e. Expand the number of trained SSP's in the northern half of the state (Waterville and north). f. Provide outreach activities in three areas across the state to introduce the SSP project to persons with dual sensory impairment.

Objective: DBVI attempt to expand the number of New Mainers who are receiving services from the agency.

Strategies:

a. DBVI will communicate with advocacy organizations to identify New Mainers who would benefit from DBVI VR services.

Goal 5: To increase awareness of services and resources for individuals who are blind or have low vision.

Objective: DBVI will become more publically visible and recognized as a primary source of information and services for individuals with visual impairments, as well as their families and employers.

Strategies: a. With input from the SRC, DBVI's website will be updated and made more helpful to end users. b. DBVI contractors will be required to include acknowledgement of Rehabilitation Services DBVI grant funding on program materials and public documents. c. DBVI and contracted partners will provide congruent services across the state.

Objective: DBVI will work with the Maine blindness community to promote the services and resources available to individuals who are blind or have low visions.

Strategies:

a. Maine DBVI staff will provide in-service trainings to other service providers within their region. b. Maine DBVI Staff will provide service awareness and assistive technology/adaptive device activities for consumers and the general public within their regions. c. DBVI will coordinate cooperative

training with Maine Department of Transportation. d. DBVI will work with its main contractors to create a more organized and more centralized public education effort. e. DBVI will continue to explore collaboration with the Veteran's Administration Blind Rehabilitation program to streamline the referral process between the two agencies. f. Encourage all staff to regularly attend local Lions Club meetings. g. Maine DBVI staff and contracted partners will provide service awareness to doctors within their region.

Supported Employment Program – The Division has remained committed to assuring that individuals with the most severe disabilities receive supported employment services when this is appropriate. An Individual Plan of Employment (IPE) is developed that describes the services provided, the need for extended services, if appropriate, and an assurance that the individual has been able to make an informed choice in the provision of these services and the goal itself.

DBVI worked with 23 consumers in the supported employment program in FFY15 which was up higher than the previous year. At least two of those consumers were closed successfully into integrated employment.

The lack of adequate long term funding, as well as the lack of a variety of natural supports, has limited the number of consumers within DBVI achieving supported employment.

Performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA – DBVI is a partner with Adult Education, the SWIB, and the larger workforce development system to incorporate and apply the new rules related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), including drafting a unified state plan adopting new performance measures and further collaboration with the One-Stop system. DBVI is a member of the Maine WIOA steering committee, which is guiding the Act's implementation, and also has participants on multiple related sub-committees.

DBVI will be using wage data from the Maine Department of Labor's Unemployment Insurance to establish baseline and initial WIOA performance targets for employment outcomes. Although it does not provide information on individuals who are placed in self-employment or other jobs, such as federal and out-of-state positions, this is the only data set available at this time. DBVI is seeking further definition and data sources for the other WIOA performance indicators.

Innovation and Expansion – Title I resources continue to be used for development and expansion of assistive technology and low vision rehabilitation services for DBVI consumers in collaboration with all of our blindness rehabilitation services partners throughout the state.

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.

See section 1 (above)

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.

See section 1 (above)

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).

See section 1 (above)

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

See section 1 (above)

6. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE STATE WITH RESPECT TO THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA.

See section 1 (above)

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

See section 1 (above)

8. HOW THE AGENCY'S STRATEGIES WILL BE USED TO:

A. ACHIEVE GOALS AND PRIORITIES BY THE STATE, CONSISTENT WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT;

See section 1 (above)

B. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES; AND

See section 1 (above)

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.

See section 1 (above)

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.

Below are the goals described in the FY 2015 State Plan (Attachment 4.11(c) (1)), along with activities that took place and progress made on the goals, and strategies used to help DBVI towards achieving those goals.

Goal 1: To increase successful competitive employment closures for DBVI clients in each of the next three federal fiscal years.

Objective 1: Reduction of the amount of time it takes to achieve a competitive employment outcome for DBVI clients from 54 months in FFY 2010 to 42 months in FFY 2013, to 36 months in FFY 2014.

Strategies: Continue efforts to re-establish a center-based blindness rehabilitation facility in Maine that utilizes an immersion model to teach blindness skills in a manner that can be easily integrated into work activities and transferred to an employment site.

Update: The Rehabilitation Center opened in September 2015. Competitive employment outcomes: FFY 2013=40.48 and FFY 2014=41.38

Objective 2: To increase the numbers of successful competitive employment closures for individuals who receive services from DBVI from 33 in FFY 2011 to 40 in FFY 2012, 46 in FFY 2013, and 50 in 2014 and 2015.

Strategies: Expand the network of work experience/training opportunities whereby clients can learn to integrate blindness skills into work activities and employment sites.

Update: In 2014, an Employability Skills Program was held with nine participants. Also, DBVI provided a College Vision Quest program to eight students during the summer of 2014.

Overall progress on Objective 2: DBVI achieved 48 competitive closures in 2012, but decreased in FFY13 to 37. In FFY14, DBVI achieved 45 competitive closures then dropped to 30 in FFY15.

Objective 3: To expand the number of Maine employers who implement diversity hiring activities through engagement with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services' Business Relations Specialists from two in FFY 2011 to four in FFY 2012 to six in FY 2013.

Strategies: • Support the re-establishment of a Maine Chapter of the US Business Leadership Network • Partner with the Maine State Chamber of Commerce and the Society of Human Resource

Managers (SHRM) to expand business outreach/network • Identify and train local VR and CRP personnel to coordinate referrals and start up activities for new business partners, in each region of the state

Update: The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services expanded its Business Employment Team from one full-time position in 2012, to two full-time Business Relations Specialists in 2013, but has been unable to successfully retain staff since the retirement of one staff person in January 2015 and further turnover in the position in June 2015. At this juncture, both positions remain unfilled and business relations activities are being covered by other Central Office and regional staff. Recruitment of new businesses has, however, been slowed by this staff turnover.

Another continuing strategy is to emphasize the options of the levels of engagement in which the business can engage. Although employment remains the ultimate goal of any partnership, we are encouraging a commitment to other activities such as informational interviewing, tours of the business, mentoring, interview practice sessions, etc. This new focus is also being adopted by the Maine Business Leadership Network in order to engage new business members

Goal 2: To provide more focused activities to transition-age youth that will yield an increase in successful outcomes in each of the next three federal fiscal years.

Objective: To reduce the percentage of students we “lose” from our VR Program just before or after graduation from the 40% noted by RSA during the 2011 Site Monitoring Review, to less than 10% by FFY 2015.

Strategies: a. Create a college preparation Program consisting of taking a college course in the summer between junior and senior year, living in the dorms, utilizing services available on-campus, skills of blindness instruction, and a work experience.

Update: DBVI has planned a College Vision Quest Program for every other year. In 2014, a five week College Vision Quest, which is a program to prepare students for college, took place during the summer from July 6 until August 8. Eight students attended along with 4 RA's with visual impairments participated as a summer youth employment experience. The students took an entry level English course for credit, and lived in the dorms. DBVI staff, Iris Network staff, and UMaine staff taught or facilitated the various seminars and learning labs.

b. Create a summer youth employment and/or work experience for all students by age 16.

Update: In 2014, four participants were involved in a Summer Youth Internship as Resident Assistants for the College Vision Quest which is a college preparatory program.

c. Utilize the Transition Competencies Checklist with each VR eligible school-age student.

Update: The Transition Competencies Checklist continues to be used with students 10 and older since academic year 2011–2012.

d. Re-establish DBVI positions that specifically serve this population. This would allow more early intervention and resource development, especially in the areas of career education and vocational exploration

Update: DBVI has three positions that will serve this population statewide. These DBVI staff participated in statewide Transition Fairs held at local community colleges in the spring of 2015. Also, the Transition Tote materials are being used to facilitate early intervention and resource development, especially in the areas of career education and vocational exploration. e. Having Transition teams in each region. The teams could coordinate and/or be points of contact for exchange of info. Update: A functioning transition team has been formed in the southern, central and northern regions. Two meetings occur annually with DBVI, CC Maine (TVI) and Iris Network (VRT) staff to discuss student (pre-transition age and transition aged youth).

Goal 3: To ensure that a larger number of individuals, with disabilities who may be unserved or underserved or have minority status, have access to DBVI services.

Objective: DBVI will work with Maine's Section 121 VR Grant – Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation to identify an increased number of individuals eligible to be served by both programs.

Strategies: a. Maine DBVI will include Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation in training and technical assistance opportunities offered or funded by DBVI.

Update: The Director or designee of the Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation has participated in numerous training activities with DBVI staff. Some of these included the SRC Annual Training and a transition workshop with all of BRS transition VR Counselors. b. A representative from the Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation will participate on DBVI's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

Update: The Director or the designee of the Wabanaki VR Program continues to actively participate on DBVI's SRC.

Objective: DBVI continues its efforts to cultivate a communication network for consumers who are deaf-blind or dual sensory impaired (hearing and vision) so that there are professional Deaf-Blind Interpreters and Support Service Providers (SSP) available in each of DBVI's five state regions.

Strategies: Secure funding for coordinated operation of the Maine SSP program.

Update: The Independence Without Fear advisory committee is exploring additional resources in collaboration with an Outreach Coordinator. This coordinator has begun to systematically address identification of persons who are deaf-blind or dual sensory impaired throughout the State of Maine.

Goal 4: To provide increased activities for public outreach, education and awareness of existing services and resources for the community and consumers who are blind or have low vision.

Objective: Maine DBVI will work with providers to create a better awareness of the resources available to individuals who are blind or have low vision by providing at least three public education activities in each of the five DBVI Regions.

Strategies: a. Maine DBVI staff will provide in-service trainings to other service providers within their region.

Update: Staff attended Career Café to provide information about DBVI services to other career counselors. In April 2015, staff attended EPIC ME resource fair and the Piscataquis Career and

Resource Fair at Foxcroft Academy to provide information about DBVI services and jobs to students, consumers, providers and adults.

b. Maine DBVI Staff will provide service awareness and assistive technology/adaptive device activities for consumers and the general public within their regions.

Update: In November 2015, staff participated in the Piscataquis County Expo in Monson, ME. They provided information about services and demonstrated adaptive equipment.

c. DBVI will collaborate with the Veteran's Administration Blind Rehabilitation program to streamline the referral process between the two agencies.

Update: Staff from the VA Blind Rehab. program attended a DBVI training to present on their program so staff would gain a better understanding of how the two agencies can best serve consumers who are blind or have low vision. In addition, DBVI Director met with the Blindness Rehabilitation Outreach Specialist and the Vision Impairment Services Team Coordinator to refine a more streamlined referral process.

Goal 5: To improve opportunities and access for DBVI consumers within the larger workforce development system.

Objective: DBVI will partner with Maine's Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) Grant to identify non-VR CareerCenter customers who are blind or have low vision who may require DBVI services.

Strategies: Maine DBVI will work with a designated point of contact with the Bureau of Employment Services.

Update: There has been a small but impactful interaction with DBVI customers, primarily around something referred to under the DEI grant objectives as Accelerated Resource Coordination (ARC). During an ARC, customers will meet with a team within a CareerCenter made up of DEI coordinators, members of BES, or NMDC, or DVR, or DBVI to find a solution to a customer's immediate, pressing need. In most cases DEI's involvement has been to use its Flexible Employment Fund (FEF) to financially assist the customers to overcome a barrier in order to continue going to their job or finding employment.

Objective: To increase the number of DBVI clients achieving an employment outcome at one of the BRS Single Point of Contact businesses from one to three in the next year.

Strategies: DBVI will have direct representation on the business liaison teams utilizing the single point of entry approach and the Walgreen's universal design model.

Update: The BRS Single Point of Contact position has been vacant. However, DBVI staff have been successful working with employers, such as the Iris Network, AAA, Cuddledown and Seafax Inc. to find competitive employment for consumers.

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

See section 1. A. (above)

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.

See section 1. A. (above)

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

See section 1.A. (above)

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

See section 1. A. (above)

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

See section 1. A. (above)

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.

The Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired continues to provide and expand supported employment services for individuals who are blind or have low vision living in Maine. We are committed to assuring that the individuals with the most severe disabilities for whom a supported employment setting is most appropriate will have an IPE that describes the services to be provided, documents the need for post-employment services and how they will be provided, and gives assurance that extended employment services will be in an integrated setting. The applicant will receive information concerning the availability of employment options and vocational rehabilitation services to supported employment in an integrated setting. If the individual chooses not to pursue employment in an integrated setting, he/she will be referred to other systems for services.

Quality of Supported Employment Services:

The Division made the commitment to participate in the development of an electronic information system – ME Aware, the case management system that monitors these services and streamlines the case management process in the VR Program. The staff now have access to up-to-date information on weekly wages, hours worked, public assistance at the time of application and closure, the cost per case, and the average cost by counselor, region, and state. We are now able to track the individuals who are eligible for VR but for whom the lack of long-term support prevents the development of a plan. The system enables us to evaluate who is being served, costs related to supported employment, its benefit to the client, and other systemic issues.

The Division gets technical assistance in supported employment that is available through the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center at Virginia Commonwealth University.

The agency remains committed to continuous quality improvement in order to provide better services to our customers. There is an ongoing self-evaluation process that will positively impact the quality of all service areas, including supported employment.

Scope of Supported Employment:

The primary service provided to clients in supported employment continues to be job skills training. This service is performed by a job coach who also provides intervention with supervisors and peers towards integrating into the company's social environment. Other services which are provided when a need has been identified include: supplemental assessments, job development and placement, social skills training, specific skills of blindness training, transportation, support services to parents, spouse and children, and/or facilitation of natural supports. Trial work settings are available to assess the consumer's ability to work in an integrated, competitive setting. The agency provides whatever is required to achieve and maintain integrated competitive employment.

The majority of supported employment services are being provided to individuals who are blind or have low vision along with developmental disabilities or with severe and prolonged mental illness.

There still is some restriction in getting long-term support commitment through the Department of Health and Human Services (Developmental and Mental Health Services) due to funding limitations, but progress has been made in the availability of home and community based waiver services.

Due to these current restrictions and the fact that the success of the supported employment model, as a whole, will ultimately hinge on the ability of the system to continue to develop options for extended/long-term support, the Division focuses on greater utilization of natural supports and the various SSI/SSDI work incentives as well as trying to explore new ideas for extended support. The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Act (TWWIA) offers additional support to persons in Supported Employment.

The Division participates in the state-funded Long-term Support Program, which allows us to purchase extended support for individuals who are blind or have low vision. In addition, DBVI receives state funds for extended support for individuals with brain injuries, who are also blind or visually impaired. Both of these appropriations are very limited in the number of people who can be supported.

Extent of Supported Employment Services:

The Division served twenty-three clients in the supported employment program in FFY 2015 with at least two individuals getting closed successfully in an integrated setting.

2. THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES.

Timing of Transition from Extended Employment to Integrated Employment:

In day-to-day practice, a team approach is used to determine when an individual has stabilized and reached an acceptable level for transitioning to integrated employment.

This process calls for continual communication between the DBVI Rehabilitation Counselor, a representative of the state agency providing extended support and the job coach. The team determines each agency's responsibility, estimates of costs, time in training and the criteria for extended support. Once the agreement to provide extended support is signed, the team meets a minimum of every three months to evaluate progress, and, if needed, amend the agreement. The Division will pay the cost of the rehabilitation services only when the extended support will lead to integrated employment.

Each individual, including those with the most significant disabilities, should get the services and support that he/she needs to work in an integrated, competitive setting.

CERTIFICATIONS

Name of designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate

Name of designated State agency

Full Name of Authorized Representative:

Title of Authorized Representative:

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1. The **designated State agency or designated State unit (as appropriate) listed above** is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by WIOA*, and its supplement under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.** Yes

2. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the **designated State agency listed above** agrees to operate and administer the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan , the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations , policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of VR services and the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan; Yes

3. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated State agency agrees to operate and administer the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan* , the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations , policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under title VI are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan;** Yes

4. The designated State agency and/or the designated State unit has the authority under State law to perform the functions of the State regarding the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement; Yes

5. The State legally may carry out each provision of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement. Yes

6. All provisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement are consistent with State law. Yes

7. The **Authorized Representative listed above** has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement; Yes

8. The **Authorized Representative listed above** has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services; Yes

9. The agency that submits the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement. Yes

FOOTNOTES

Certification 1 Footnotes

* Public Law 113-128.

** Unless otherwise stated, "Rehabilitation Act" means the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA, signed into law on July 22, 2014.

Certification 2 Footnotes

* All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

** No funds under title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

*** Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76,77,79,81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3485; and the State VR Services Program regulations.

Certification 3 Footnotes

* No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

** Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in *** under Certification 2 footnotes

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON THE CERTIFICATIONS FROM THE STATE

CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING — VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions.

(3) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, subgrants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly. This certification is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

STATEMENT FOR LOAN GUARANTEES AND LOAN INSURANCE

The undersigned states, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

Applicant's Organization **Department of Labor - Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Jeanne S.Paquette**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Commissioner**

SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (only if applicable)
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>). If applicable, please print, sign, and email to MAT_OCTAE@ed.gov

CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING — SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions.

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The undersigned states, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

Applicant's Organization **Department of Labor - Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Jeanne S. Paquette**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Commissioner**

SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (only if applicable)
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>).

ASSURANCES

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances: **The State Plan must provide assurances that:**

1. PUBLIC COMMENT ON POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.

2. SUBMISSION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT:

The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a unified plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.

3. ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN:

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:

A. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS REQUIRED BY SECTION 101(A)(2) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

B. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF EITHER A STATE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION OR STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, AS REQUIRED BY SECTION 101(A)(21) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable **(B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council**

C. CONSULTATIONS REGARDING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(16)(B) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

D. THE FINANCIAL PARTICIPATION BY THE STATE, OR IF THE STATE SO ELECTS, BY THE STATE AND LOCAL AGENCIES, TO PROVIDE THE AMOUNT OF THE NON-FEDERAL SHARE OF THE COST OF CARRYING OUT THE VR PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(3).

E. THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(2)(A) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

The designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds **No**

F. THE SHARED FUNDING AND ADMINISTRATION OF JOINT PROGRAMS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(2)(A)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

The designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs: **No**

G. STATEWIDENESS AND WAIVERS OF STATEWIDENESS REQUIREMENTS, AS SET FORTH IN SECTION 101(A)(4) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

Is the designated State agency requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan? See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan. **No**

H. THE DESCRIPTIONS FOR COOPERATION, COLLABORATION, AND COORDINATION, AS REQUIRED BY SECTIONS 101(A)(11) AND (24)(B); AND 606(B) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

I. ALL REQUIRED METHODS OF ADMINISTRATION, AS REQUIRED BY SECTION 101(A)(6) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT .

J. THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT, AS SET FORTH IN SECTION 101(A)(7) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

K. THE COMPILATION AND SUBMISSION TO THE COMMISSIONER OF STATEWIDE ASSESSMENTS, ESTIMATES, STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES, STRATEGIES, AND PROGRESS REPORTS, AS APPROPRIATE, AND AS REQUIRED BY SECTIONS 101(A)(15), 105(C)(2), AND 606(B)(8) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

L. THE RESERVATION AND USE OF A PORTION OF THE FUNDS ALLOTTED TO THE STATE UNDER SECTION 110 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO EXPAND AND IMPROVE THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH

DISABILITIES, PARTICULARLY INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES.

M. THE SUBMISSION OF REPORTS AS REQUIRED BY SECTION 101(A)(10) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

4. ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES:

The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:

A. COMPLY WITH ALL REQUIREMENTS REGARDING INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTIONS 101(A)(5)(D) AND (20) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

B. IMPOSE NO DURATION OF RESIDENCE REQUIREMENT AS PART OF DETERMINING AN INDIVIDUAL'S ELIGIBILITY FOR VR SERVICES OR THAT EXCLUDES FROM SERVICES UNDER THE PLAN ANY INDIVIDUAL WHO IS PRESENT IN THE STATE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(12) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT .

C. PROVIDE THE FULL RANGE OF SERVICES LISTED IN SECTION 103(A) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT AS APPROPRIATE, TO ALL ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE WHO APPLY FOR SERVICES IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(5) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT?

Agency will provide the full range of services described above

D. DETERMINE WHETHER COMPARABLE SERVICES AND BENEFITS ARE AVAILABLE TO THE INDIVIDUAL IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(8) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

E. COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 102(B) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

F. COMPLY WITH REQUIREMENTS REGARDING THE PROVISIONS OF INFORMED CHOICE FOR ALL APPLICANTS AND ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 102(D) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

G. PROVIDE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES TO AMERICAN INDIANS WHO ARE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING IN THE STATE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(13) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

H. COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CONDUCT OF SEMIANNUAL OR ANNUAL REVIEWS, AS APPROPRIATE, FOR INDIVIDUALS EMPLOYED EITHER IN AN EXTENDED EMPLOYMENT SETTING IN A COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAM OR ANY OTHER EMPLOYMENT UNDER SECTION 14(C) OF THE FAIR

LABOR STANDARDS ACT OF 1938, AS REQUIRED BY SECTION 101(A)(14) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

I. MEET THE REQUIREMENTS IN SECTIONS 101(A)(17) AND 103(B)(2) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT IF THE STATE ELECTS TO CONSTRUCT, UNDER SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, FACILITIES FOR COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

J. WITH RESPECT TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, THE STATE,

I. HAS DEVELOPED AND WILL IMPLEMENT,

A. STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS IDENTIFIED IN THE ASSESSMENTS; AND

B. STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED BY THE STATE, TO IMPROVE AND EXPAND VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES ON A STATEWIDE BASIS; AND

II. HAS DEVELOPED AND WILL IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES TO PROVIDE PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES (SECTIONS 101(A)(15) AND 101(A)(25)).

5. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION FOR THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT TITLE VI SUPPLEMENT:

A. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT ASSURES THAT IT WILL INCLUDE IN THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN ALL INFORMATION REQUIRED BY SECTION 606 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

B. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY ASSURES THAT IT WILL SUBMIT REPORTS IN SUCH FORM AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH SUCH PROCEDURES AS THE COMMISSIONER MAY REQUIRE AND COLLECTS THE INFORMATION REQUIRED BY SECTION 101(A)(10) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT SEPARATELY FOR INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES UNDER TITLE I AND INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

C. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL COORDINATE ACTIVITIES WITH ANY OTHER STATE AGENCY THAT IS FUNCTIONING AS AN EMPLOYMENT NETWORK UNDER THE TICKET TO WORK AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROGRAM UNDER SECTION 1148 OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT.

6. FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM:

A. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY ASSURES THAT IT WILL EXPEND NO MORE THAN 2.5 PERCENT OF THE STATE'S ALLOTMENT UNDER TITLE VI FOR ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS OF CARRYING OUT THIS PROGRAM; AND, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR AGENCIES WILL PROVIDE, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY THROUGH PUBLIC OR PRIVATE ENTITIES, NON-FEDERAL CONTRIBUTIONS IN AN AMOUNT THAT IS NOT LESS THAN 10 PERCENT OF THE

COSTS OF CARRYING OUT SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROVIDED TO YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES WITH THE FUNDS RESERVED FOR SUCH PURPOSE UNDER SECTION 603(D) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 606(B)(7)(G) AND (H) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

B. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY ASSURES THAT IT WILL USE FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT ONLY TO PROVIDE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING EXTENDED SERVICES TO YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, WHO ARE ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE SUCH SERVICES; AND, THAT SUCH FUNDS ARE USED ONLY TO SUPPLEMENT AND NOT SUPPLANT THE FUNDS PROVIDED UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, WHEN PROVIDING SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES SPECIFIED IN THE INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 606(B)(7)(A) AND (D), OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

7. PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES:

A. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY ASSURES THAT IT WILL PROVIDE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AS DEFINED IN SECTION 7(39) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

B. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY ASSURES THAT:

- I. THE COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF INDIVIDUALS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES CONDUCTED UNDER SECTION 102(B)(1) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT AND FUNDED UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT INCLUDES CONSIDERATION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT AS AN APPROPRIATE EMPLOYMENT OUTCOME, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF SECTION 606(B)(7)(B) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT
- II. AN INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT THAT MEETS THE REQUIREMENTS OF SECTION 102(B) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT , WHICH IS DEVELOPED AND UPDATED WITH TITLE I FUNDS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTIONS 102(B)(3)(F) AND 606(B)(6)(C) AND (E) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON THE ASSURANCES FROM THE STATE

VII. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS

States choosing to submit a Combined State Plan must provide information concerning the six core programs—the Adult Program, Dislocated Worker Program, Youth Program, Wagner-Peyser Act Program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program, and the Vocational Rehabilitation Program—and also submit relevant information for any of the eleven partner programs it includes in its Combined State Plan. When a State includes a Combined State Plan partner program in its Combined State Plan, it need not submit a separate plan or application for that particular program.* If included, Combined State Plan partner programs are subject to the “common planning elements” in Sections II and III of that document, where specified, as well as the program-specific requirements for that program (available on www.regulations.gov for public comment). The requirements that a State must address for any of the partner programs it includes in its Combined State Plan are provided in this separate supplemental document. The Departments are not seeking comments on these program-specific requirements, which exist under separate OMB control numbers and do not represent requirements under WIOA. For further details on this overall collection, access the Federal eRulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov> by selecting Docket ID number ETA-2015-0006.

* States that elect to include employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.) under a Combined State Plan would submit all other required elements of a complete CSBG State Plan directly to the Federal agency that administers the program. Similarly, States that elect to include employment and training activities carried by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) and 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 that are included would submit all other required elements of a complete State Plan for those programs directly to the Federal agency that administers the program.

APPENDIX 1. PERFORMANCE GOALS FOR THE CORE PROGRAMS

Include the State's expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability indicators based on primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA.

Instructions: Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each State submitting a Unified or Combined Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The State is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education on state adjusted levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

TABLE 1. EMPLOYMENT (SECOND QUARTER AFTER EXIT)

Program	PY 2016 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2016 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2017 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2017 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level
Adults	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Dislocated Workers	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Youth	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Adult Education	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Wagner-Peyser	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Vocational Rehabilitation</	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

User remarks on Table 1

TABLE 2. EMPLOYMENT (FOURTH QUARTER AFTER EXIT)

Program	PY 2016 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2016 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2017 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2017 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level
Adults	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Dislocated Workers	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Youth	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Adult Education	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Wagner-Peyser	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Vocational Rehabilitation	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

User remarks on Table 2

TABLE 3. MEDIAN EARNINGS (SECOND QUARTER AFTER EXIT)

Program	PY 2016 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2016 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2017 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2017 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level
Adults	5,250.00	Baseline	6,250.00	Baseline
Dislocated Workers	6,250.00	Baseline	6,250.00	Baseline
Youth	2,000.00	Baseline	2,000.00	Baseline
Adult Education	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Wagner-Peyser	4,300.00	Baseline	4,300.00	Baseline
Vocational Rehabilitation	3,000.00	Baseline	3,000.00	Baseline

User remarks on Table 3

TABLE 4. CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT RATE

Program	PY 2016 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2016 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2017 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2017 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level
Adults	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Dislocated Workers	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Youth	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Adult Education	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Wagner-Peyser	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Vocational Rehabilitation	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

User remarks on Table 4

TABLE 5. MEASUREABLE SKILL GAINS

Program	PY 2016 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2016 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2017 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2017 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level
Adults	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Dislocated Workers	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Youth	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Adult Education	32.00	34.00	33.00	35.00
Wagner-Peyser	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Vocational Rehabilitation	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

User remarks on Table 5

TABLE 6. EFFECTIVENESS IN SERVING EMPLOYERS

Program	PY 2016 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2016 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2017 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2017 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level
Adults	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Dislocated Workers	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Youth	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Adult Education	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Wagner-Peyser	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Vocational Rehabilitation	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

User remarks on Table 6

TABLE 7. COMBINED FEDERAL PARTNER MEASURES

Measure	PY 2016 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2016 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2017 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2017 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level

User remarks on Table 7

APPENDIX 2. OTHER STATE ATTACHMENTS (OPTIONAL)

Eligibility for Services: • Written policies and procedures to ensure veterans and eligible spouses meet the statutory eligibility requirements applicable to the specific employment and training program. • Written policies and procedures to ensure veterans and eligible spouses are given priority of service where statutory or mandatory priorities are in effect and particularly where local areas have instituted mandatory priorities. • Written policies and procedures to ensure that veterans and eligible spouses receive access to service or resources earlier than non-covered persons, or before a non-covered person, if resources or services are limited. • Written policies that target special populations of veterans, including Special Disabled Veterans, Campaign Badge Veterans, Disabled Veterans and eligible spouses when services or resources are limited.

To determine whether veterans are receiving priority of service in core programs funded by the U.S. Department of Labor and administered in Maine by the Maine Department of Labor (MDOL), several measurements will be incorporated. The following benchmarks were established to provide a baseline from which to measure the impact of priority of service to covered participants: A. Benchmark the number of covered participants in core programs for program year 2008. B. During each successive program year, identify how many participants were enrolled in core, intensive and training services during this period. C. During each successive program year, identify how many covered veterans and/or eligible spouses were enrolled in core/basic, intensive/individualized career and training services during this period. D. Determine that all eligible veterans and/or eligible spouses are registered for training first and that the remaining slots/funds may be used to register non-covered persons for training.

1. LWDBs must develop and issue local policy to providers to ensure that the priority of service for Veterans requirements are included in all written agreements for services (plans, contracts and subcontracts).

2. MDOL, in conjunction with Maine's DVET (Director of Veteran Employment and Training Services), will monitor LWDB issuance, implementation and compliance of the priority of service statute and policy. LWDBs are subsequently required to conduct the same monitoring with any and all contractors receiving Department of Labor funds. DVOP Specialists and LVERs are responsible for advocating for veterans and monitoring the priority of service principle within the Maine's workforce development network. Any case where a Veteran or eligible spouse is denied services over a non-veteran will be documented and brought to the attention of the Bureau of Employment Services for review and further action as appropriate.

Monitoring Compliance with State Plan: Monitoring compliance with the state plan will meet legislated oversight requirements and support the State Workforce Development Boards requirement of accountability. Monitoring compliance fulfills the mandate of the State oversight agency (MDOL BES) to ensure that statutes, regulation, and policies are being followed.

The Bureau of Employment Services anticipates using its comprehensive monitoring plan to review compliance with laws, regulations, state policies, and state and local plans pertaining to veterans' priority of service. This comprehensive plan covers all programs for which the BES has administrative responsibilities and monitoring obligations including WIOA formula grants, American, National Dislocated Worker Grants, Trade Assistance Adjustment Act and CSSP programs and services.

Identifying and Informing Covered Persons • The regulations require all recipients of funds for qualified job training programs to identify covered persons at the point of entry to programs and/or services so they can take full advantage of priority of service. Point of entry includes physical locations, such as One–Stop Career Centers, as well as web sites and other virtual service delivery resources. • The regulations require all recipients to implement policies to ensure that covered persons are aware of: o Their entitlement to priority of service; o The full array of programs and services available to them; and, o Any applicable eligibility requirements for those programs and/or services.

Implementing Priority of Service • The regulations provide that priority of service means the right of eligible covered persons to take precedence over eligible non–covered persons in obtaining services. They further specify that taking precedence may mean: o The covered person receives access to the service or resource earlier in time than the non–covered person; or o If the service or resource is limited, the covered person receives access to the service or resource in–stead of or before the non–covered person. • The regulations specify how priority of service is to be applied across three different types of qualified job training programs: o Universal access programs that do not target specific groups; o Discretionary targeting programs that focus on certain groups but are not mandated to serve target group members before other eligible individuals; and, o Statutory targeting programs that are mandated by federal law to provide priority or preference to certain groups.

Responsibilities of States and Localities • States must develop policies for the delivery of priority of service by: o State Workforce Agencies; o Local Workforce Development Boards; and, o One–Stop Career Centers. • The State’s policies must require Local Workforce Development Boards to develop policies for delivery of priority of service by: o Local One–Stop Career Centers; and, o Local workforce preparation and training providers.

Monitoring Compliance with Priority of Service • DOL will monitor recipients of funds for qualified job training programs to ensure that covered persons are made aware of and provided priority of service. • Monitoring will be performed jointly by the Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (VETS) and the DOL agency responsible for administering the program. • If monitoring identifies non–compliance with priority of service, the results of the monitoring: 1) will be handled in accord with each program’s compliance review procedures; and, 2) may lead to imposition of a corrective action plan.

Data Collection and Reporting on Priority of Service • The regulations refer to covered persons at the point of entry as covered entrants. • Those qualified job training programs that have served an average of 1,000 or more covered persons per year over the three most recent years of operation are required to collect and report data on covered entrants. • Six programs currently meet the size threshold for reporting on covered entrants: 1) WIA Adult; 2) WIA Dis–located Worker; 3) National Emergency Grants; 4) Wagner–Peyser State Grants; 5) Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA); and, 6) Senior Community Service Employment Program. • The Information Collection Request (ICR) accompanying the regulations provides that those programs that meet the size threshold will be required to: a) implement reporting on covered entrants; and, b) apply the new definitions for veterans and eligible spouses in their existing reporting on covered participants. • The ICR further provides that programs below the size threshold will be required to apply the new definitions for veterans and eligible spouses in their existing reporting on covered participants. The means for affording veterans priority in labor exchange referrals is through "first opportunity." When a job match is made to a new job order, the applicant database is first searched for disabled veterans and non–disabled veterans. When veterans are identified, they are provided referrals to positions prior to

referrals being made to the general public. Disabled veterans receive first priority. The priority service requirement is communicated to CareerCenter managers who, in turn, communicate it to all staff. DVOPs and LVERs are responsible for advocating for veterans and monitoring the priority of service principle. Any case where a veteran is denied services over a non-veteran will be documented and appropriate follow-up will occur. Definitions

Key Definitions • Covered person – The regulations adopt and apply this statutory term, which includes eligible spouses, as defined by the statute, and veteran, as defined by the regulations.

- Disable Veteran – A veteran who is entitled to compensation (or who, except for the receipt of military retired pay, would be entitled to compensation) under the Department of Veteran Affairs, or a veteran who was discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability.

- Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist: The individual who provides intensive/individualized career services and facilitates placement to meet the employment needs of veterans;

- Eligible Spouse – An individual who is one of the following: a. The spouse of any person who died of a service-connected disability. b. The spouse of any member of the Armed Forces serving on active duty who, at the time of application for assistance, is listed in one or more of the following categories and has been so listed for a total of more than 90 days; ? Missing in Action; Captured in the line of duty by a hostile force; Forcibly detained or interned in the line of duty by a foreign government or power for a total of more than 90 days; or ? The spouse of any person who has a total 100% disability permanent in nature resulting from a service connected or the spouse of a veteran who died while a disability so evaluated was in existence. • Eligible Veteran a person who a. served on active duty for a period of more than 180 days and was discharged or released with other than a dishonorable discharge; b. Was discharged or released from active duty because of a service connected disability; or c. Is a member of a reserve component under an order to active duty pursuant to section 12301 (a), (d), or (g), 12302 or 12304 of U.S.C. Title 10, served on active duty during a period of war or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge was authorized, and was discharged or released from such duty with other than dishonorable discharge.

Contact: David Klein, Director Division of Workforce Programs Bureau of Employment Services
Maine Department of Labor 55 State House Station Augusta, ME 04333-0055
David.Klein@maine.gov

APPENDIX X—ADULT PRIORITY OF SERVICE STATE OF MAINE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
BUREAU OF EMPLOYMENT SERVICES 55 STATE HOUSE STATION AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0055

Subject of Policy: Priority of Service – Adult Formula Funds Policy No. PY15-03 To: Local Workforce Development Boards? Chief Elected Officials Career Centers Core Partners From: Richard Freund, Acting Bureau Director and Deputy Commissioner of Labor Issuance Date March 8, 2016 Status ACTIVE Reference/ Authority, WIOA Section 3- Definitions WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(E) & NPRM 20 CFR 680.600, TEGL 03-15

Purpose: This policy outlines requirements for ensuring individuals who are low income, recipients of public assistance, and who are basic skills deficient get priority for receipt of individualized career or training services using WIOA Title-I Adult formula funds.

Background: The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 required that if funds allocated to a local area for adult employment and training activities were limited, priority of service was to be provided to recipients of public assistance and other low-income individuals for intensive services and training services. WIOA makes several changes to the priority of service requirement by adding individuals who are basic skills deficient as a priority population and removing the provision stating priority of service is only applied if funding is limited. WIOA requires that certain individuals receive priority of service regardless of funding levels. Veterans and eligible spouses continue to receive priority of service for all Department of Labor (DOL) funded programs among all participants. This requirement remains the same, is not affected by the passage of WIOA, and must still be applied in accordance with guidance previously issued by the U.S. Department of Labor and Maine Department of Labor.

Policy: Priority of service for Adult Program Participants requirement: As stated in WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(E), with respect to provision of individualized career services and training services funded with WIOA Title I –Adult funds, priority of service must be given to: a. Recipients of public assistance; b. Other low-income individuals; and c. Individuals who are basic skills deficient.

Sequence of priority for all populations served: The following sequence of priority will apply: 1. First priority will be provided to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient in the local area who are covered persons with respect to veterans' priority. Per 683.230 when past income is an eligibility determinant for a veteran, any amounts received as military pay or allowances by any person who served on active duty and certain other specified benefits must be disregarded for the veteran and for other individuals for whom those amounts would normally be applied in making an eligibility determination for the purpose of determining if the veteran or covered person is a low-income individual. 2. Second priority will be provided to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals and individuals who are basic skills deficient who are not covered veterans; 3. Third priority will be covered persons with respect to the veterans' priority, those covered persons not considered to be recipients of public assistance, low-income or basic skills deficient – who meet one or more of the barriers to employment identified as a priority by the local area, as defined in local board policy. 4. Fourth priority will be with respect to non-veterans, who are not recipients of public assistance, low income, or basic skills deficient but who meet one or more of the barriers to employment identified as a priority by the local area, as defined in local board policy. 5. Fifth priority will be with respect to adults with other barriers as identified in Local Board policy.

Dislocated Workers/Youth Priority of service does not apply to the dislocated worker or youth populations.

People with Disabilities Income Status For the purpose of establishing income eligibility for priority of service, people with disabilities are considered a household of one. As outlined in WIOA Section 3(36) (A) (vi), a person with a disability can be considered a low-income individual under the priority of service if the individual's own income meets the income requirement described in WIOA Section 3(36) (A) (ii), even if the individual is a member of a family whose income exceeds the poverty line or is 70 percent of the Lower Living Standard Income Level.

Services Subject to Priority of Service Individualized career services and training services, outlined in WIOA Section 134(c) (2) (A) (xii), are subject to priority of service. Basic career services, outlined in WIOA Section 134(c) (2) (A) (i)–(xi), are not subject to the priority of service as they must be made available to all. Local Board Discretion to Include Other Populations The Local Board has discretion to identify populations in the local area who are not low income, basic skills deficient, or recipients of public assistance but who are individuals documented as having other barriers to employment. Local Board Policy Required Local Boards must establish local policy regarding the determination and implementation of a priority of service specific to the local area. State Review of Priority

Implementation The Bureau of Employment Services will, at the culmination of the third quarter of each program year, review the percentage of Adult participants, who are low income, recipients of public assistance, or basic skills deficient, to compare with previous program years and to support that priority for these populations is indeed being provided.

Related Terms and Definitions: Basic Skills Deficient – An individual that is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society (WIOA Section 3[5]). Or an individual that has English reading, writing or computing skills at or below the 8th grade functioning level as identified using a standardized test such as the CASAS. Individual with a Barrier to Employment – The term "individual with a barrier to employment" as defined in WIOA Section 3(24) means a member of one or more of the following populations: • Displaced Homemakers • Low Income Individuals • Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians, as such terms are defined in WIOA Section 166 • Individuals with Disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities • Older Individuals • Ex–Offenders • Homeless individuals • Youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system • Eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers, as defined in WIOA section 167(i) • Individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under TANF (Part–A of the Social Security Act 42 U.S.C 601 et seq.) • Single parents (including single pregnant women) • Long–term unemployed individuals • Individuals who are English language learners and have low levels of literacy • Individuals facing substantial cultural barriers • Veterans or other individuals identified as having Significant Barriers to Employment

Individual with a Disability – The term "individual with a disability" means a person with a disability as defined in Section 3 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12102). Disability means: ? A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a record of such an impairment, or ? Being regarded as having such an impairment (established if the individual has been subject to an action prohibited under the law because of actual or perceived physical or mental impairment, whether or not the impairment limits or is perceived to limit a major life activity)

Low–Income – An individual that meets one of the criteria below (WIOA Section 3[24]): • Receives, or in the past six months has received, or is a member of a family that is receiving or in the past six months has received: a. assistance through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance program (SNAP) established under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.) referred to as Food Stamps; b. assistance through the program of block grants to States for Temporary Assistance to Need Families (TANF) under part A of Title–IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et. seq.), or State or local in–come–based public assistance; • Is in a family with total family income that does not exceed the higher of: a. the poverty line; or b. 70% of the lower living standard income level (LLSIL) (Note: LLSIL means that income level, adjusted for regional, metropolitan, urban, and rural differences and family size, determined annually by the USDOL on the most recent lower living family budget issued) • Is homeless – Is a homeless individual (as defined in section 41403(6) of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (42 U.S.C. 14043e–2(6)) or homeless children and youths (as defined in section 725(2) of the McKinney–Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434 a (2)). • Receives, or is eligible to receive, free or reduced priced school lunch (under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq.)). • Is a foster child on behalf of whom State or Local government payments are made; or • Is an individual with a disability whose own income meets the income requirements 1 or 2 above, but who is a member of a family whose income does not meet this requirement Public Assistance –Federal, state, or local government cash payments for which eligibility is determined by a needs or income test (WIOA Section 3[50]). Questions may be

directed to: Ginny Carroll, Division Director Bureau of Employment Services Maine Department of Labor Augusta, ME 04333-0055 Virginia.A.Carroll@maine.gov 207-623-7974

APPENDIX XI—REFERRING VETERANS WITH SIGNIFICANT BARRIERS TO DISABLED VETERAN'S OUTREACH PROGRAM SPECIALISTS STATE OF MAINE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR BUREAU OF EMPLOYMENT SERVICES 55 STATE HOUSE STATION AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0055

Subject of Policy: Referring Veterans with Significant Barriers to DVOP Specialists Policy No. PY15-20

To: ? Local Workforce Development Boards, Title I Program Directors, BES Managers & Directors ? BRS Managers & Directors, Adult Education Providers From: Richard Freund, Acting Bureau Director and Deputy Commissioner of Labor Issuance Date March 08, 2016 Status ACTIVE Reference/ Authority: VPL 03-14, change 1, change 2 ? VPL 04-14 ? VPL 08-14 Definitions of Terms at end of this document

Purpose: This policy provides guidance on referring eligible veterans and spouses to Disabled Veteran's Outreach Program specialists.

Background: Committed to serving transitioning service members, veterans, and their families by providing resources to assist and prepare them to obtain meaningful careers and maximize their employment opportunities, the Maine Department of Labor (MDOL) continues to provide priority of service to veterans and eligible spouses for all its funded programs. With the release of VPL 03-14 on April 10, 2014 and VPL 03-14 Change-1, on February 11, 2015, the populations eligible to receive services from DVOP specialists were refocused to individuals with "significant barriers to employment" or "SBEs". This policy reflects the clarifications in the definition of SBEs outlined in VPL 03-14, Change-1 and replaces references to the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) with the Workforce Opportunity and Innovation Act (WIOA), which superseded WIA in 2014.

Policy: Priority of Service Veterans and eligible spouses must continue to receive priority of service from among all participants for all programs funded by the Maine Department of Labor (MDOL). This requirement remains the same under WIOA and must still be applied in accordance with guidance in the Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment Services Policy PY15-23. DVOP Responsibilities In USDOL employment programs, including Jobs for Veterans' State Grants (JVSG), Wagner-Peyser (W-P), and WIOA programs, intensive or individualized services are provided to both unemployed participants who require such services to obtain employment and to employed participants who require such services to obtain or retain employment leading to self-sufficiency. In accordance with 38 U.S.C. 4103A (a), DVOP specialists must provide intensive/individualized career services to eligible veterans and eligible spouses to help address their employment needs, prioritizing services to special disabled and other disabled veterans and to other eligible veterans in accordance with priorities determined by the USDOL. The statute also requires that DVOP specialists place maximum emphasis on assisting veterans who are economically or educationally disadvantaged. To ensure that DVOP specialists are able to fulfill their statutory responsibilities to provide intensive/individualized career services to these categories of veterans, MDOL has developed the following guidance to identify the veterans prioritized and emphasized by the DVOP requirement.

Realignment of DVOP Responsibilities In order to realign the role of DVOP specialists, MDOL is directing that DVOP specialists must limit their activities to providing services to eligible veterans and

eligible spouses who: a. Meet the definition of an individual with a Significant Barrier to Employment (SBE) who have self-attested to belonging to at least one of the six criteria below: 1. Special-disabled or disabled veteran, as defined in 38 U.S.C. §4211(1) & (3), is a veteran who: Is entitled to compensation (or who but for the receipt of military retirement pay would be entitled to compensation) under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; or, ii. Was discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability; 2. Homeless – A homeless person, as defined in Sections 103(a) and (b) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 1302 (a) and (b), as amended. This is updated to include paragraph (b) of Section 103 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which considers “homeless” to be any individual or family member who is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions in the individual’s or family’s current housing situation, including where the health and safety of children are jeopardized, and who have no other residence and lack the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing. 3. Recently separated service member means an eligible veteran who during the three-year period beginning on the date of such veteran’s discharge or release from active duty has been unemployed for 27 or more weeks in the previous 12 months (does not have to be 27 consecutive weeks); 4. An offender, as defined by WIOA Section 3 (38), refers to any eligible veteran or eligible spouse who is currently incarcerated or has been released from incarceration; 5. Lacking a high school diploma or equivalent certificate; or 6. Low-income as defined by WIOA Section 3 (36).

b. Are members of a veteran population identified by the USDOL under 38 U.S.C. 4103(a) (1) (C) as eligible for DVOP services and detailed in VPL04-14 and VPL 08-14. The current such categories include: 1. Transitioning service members (TSMs) of the Armed Forces who have been identified as in need of intensive/individualized career services; 2. Members of the Armed Forces who are wounded, ill, or injured and receiving treatment in military treatment facilities or warrior transition units; 3. The spouses or other family caregivers of such wounded, ill, or injured members; and 4. Any veteran between the ages of 18-24.

This guidance is meant to limit the number of eligible veterans and eligible spouses served by DVOP specialists. Limiting DVOP specialists to serving only the veterans and eligible spouses who meet the criteria in paragraphs (a) and (b) above will ensure that the DVOP specialists are serving the specific population of eligible veterans and eligible spouses prioritized by 38 U.S.C. 4103A. It will also ensure that DVOP specialists are better able to fulfill their primary responsibility of providing intensive/individualized career services to all the people they serve.

While the DVOP specialists’ provision of intensive/individualized services to these veterans and eligible spouses may include some core services, serving a more limited population will allow DVOP specialists enough time to devote a majority of their time to providing intensive or individualized services. The veterans who do not fall into one of the categories that are served by DVOP specialists are eligible to be served by other WIOA and Wagner Peyser CareerCenter staff and are eligible for priority of service.

The SBE categories were developed to implement the priority and maximum emphasis requirements of 38 U.S.C. 4103A (a). As required by that subsection, “special disabled veterans” and “disabled veterans” (as those terms are defined in 38 U.S.C. 4211(1) and (3) are included in the group of veterans who are given priority because they have a significant barrier to employment. In addition, the SBE categories give priority to the other categories of veterans and eligible spouses identified by the Secretary and give maximum emphasis to serving veterans and eligible spouses who are educationally or economically disadvantaged, such as certain groups of veterans and spouses who

have been removed from the workforce for significant periods of time. Additionally, under 38 U.S.C. 4103A (a) (1) (C), USDOL may choose to prioritize additional categories of veterans and eligible spouses who may receive intensive services from DVOP Specialists. Any additional priorities will be set forth in separate guidance.

USDOL will regularly reassess the definition to ensure it reflects the best available data and trends associated with veteran employment and continues to identify those veterans who are to be given priority and maximum emphasis for DVOP services under 38 U.S.C. 4103A (a). An eligible veteran or eligible spouse who is identified as having an SBE must be immediately referred to a DVOP specialist or, in instances where a DVOP specialist is not available, another CareerCenter provider of intensive/individualized services. For planning purposes, ETA and VETS anticipate that approximately 30 percent of veterans seeking CareerCenter services nationwide will be identified as having an SBE. Case management continues to be an appropriate service delivery strategy or framework within which intensive services may be delivered, particularly for veterans. Intensive/individualized career services should be delivered following the case management framework in most cases. However, case management itself is a process, not a service, and is therefore not to be reported as a service, intensive/individualized career or otherwise. Managing the DVOP Caseload In the event that a DVOP specialist does not have a full case-load of eligible veterans and eligible spouses who meet the criteria in paragraphs a. and b. above the DVOP specialist may perform additional activities, in the order specified below:

1. Review all open case files of current participants with an SBE or in a priority category and perform case management duties.
2. Conduct relationship building, outreach and recruitment activities with other service providers in the local area, to enroll SBE and priority category veterans. In addition, W-P, WIOA, and other partner staff will continue to provide services, including intensive/individualized career services, to veterans and eligible spouses as appropriate under the programs the staff administer. This guidance does not limit the ability of non-JVSG staff to provide intensive/individualized career services to veterans who do not have an SBE or are not in a veteran category specified by USDOL. Also, veterans with an SBE or in a specified category must have access to all appropriate CareerCenter services and are not limited to receiving services only from DVOP specialists. Those veterans not meeting the SBE definition or not within a specified category identified by DOL are to be referred to appropriate non-JVSG CareerCenter staff member(s) to receive core/basic career, intensive/individualized career, and/or training services, on a priority of service basis. MDOL will provide technical assistance to local areas to assist in the coordination of efforts between DVOP specialists and CareerCenter staff to ensure that all veterans are receiving needed services. Sequence of Priority USDOL does not interpret the VPL to require priority to be given in the order that these groups are listed in the VPL. Instead, DVOP specialists must provide the same priority to serving special disabled, other disabled and other veterans prioritized by USDOL, including those identified as having Significant Barriers to Employment in this guidance.

Definitions Eligible Veteran — A person who: a) served on active duty for a period of more than 180 days and was discharged or released with other than a dishonorable discharge; b) was discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability; c) was a member of a reserve component under an order to active duty, served on active duty during a period of war or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge is authorized and was discharged or released from such duty with other than a dishonorable discharge; or d) was discharged or released from active duty by reason of a sole survivorship discharge. **Eligible Spouse** —Spouses of any of the following: a. Any veteran who died of a services-connected disability; b. Any member of the Armed Forces serving on active duty who, at the time of application for the priority, is listed in one or more of the following categories and has been so listed for a total of more than 90 days: i. Missing in

action; ii. Captured in the line of duty by a hostile force; or iii. Forcibly detained or interned in the line of duty by a foreign government or power; or c. Any veteran who has a total disability resulting from a service-connected disability, as evaluated by the Department of Veterans Affairs or any veteran who died while such a disability was in existence.”

Family Caregiver—Family caregiver is defined under 38 U.S.C. 1720G (d) as – Assistance and support services for caregivers: 1) The term ‘caregiver’, with respect to an eligible veteran... means an individual who provides personal care services to the veteran. 2) The term ‘family caregiver’, with respect to an eligible veteran... means a family member who is a care-giver of the veteran. 3) The term ‘family member’, with respect to an eligible veteran means an individual who— A. Is a member of the family of the veteran, including— i. A parent; ii. A spouse; iii. A child; iv. A step-family member; and v. An extended family member; or B. Lives with, but is not a member of the family of the veteran.

For the purposes of this policy and U.S.C. Title 38, caregivers support members of the Armed Forces who are wounded, ill, or injured and receiving treatment in military treatment facilities or warrior transition units, rather than veterans. Individuals with significant barriers to employment (SBEs) – Veterans and eligible spouses are defined in Veteran’s Program Letter (VPL) 03–14 as eligible for services from Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists. The updated list of SMEs as defined in VPL 03–14, change 1, VP VPL 04–14, and VPL 08–14 means a member of one or more of the following populations: • Special disabled or disabled veterans – a veteran who: a. Is entitled to compensation (or who but for the receipt of military retired pay would be entitled to compensation) under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; or, b. Was discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability; • Homeless – Individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence as defined in Section 103(a) of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act 42 U.S.C. 11302 (a). This is updated to include paragraph (b) of Section 103 of the McKinney–Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which considers homeless to be any individual or family member who is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions in the individual’s or family’s current housing situation, including where the health and safety of children are jeopardized, and who have no other residence and lack the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing. • Recently separated service member means an eligible veteran during the three-year period beginning on the date of such veteran’s discharge or release from active duty, and who have been unemployed for 27 or more weeks in the previous 12 months (does not have to be 27 consecutive weeks); • An offender, as defined by WIOA Section 3 (38), refers to any eligible veteran or eligible spouse who is currently incarcerated or has been released from incarceration; • Lacking a high school diploma or equivalent certificate; or • Low-income (as defined by WIOA Section 3 (36)). • Transitioning service members (TSMs) of the Armed Forces who have been identified as in need of intensive / individualized career services; • Members of the Armed Forces who are wounded, ill, or injured and receiving treatment in military treatment facilities or warrior transition units; • The spouses or other family caregivers of such wounded, ill or injured members; and • Any veteran between the ages of 18–24. Low-Income – An individual that meets one of the criteria below (WIOA Section 3[36]): • Receives, or in the past six months has received, or is a member of a family that is receiving or in the past six months has received: a. assistance through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance program (SNAP) established under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.) referred to as Food Stamps; b. assistance through the program of block grants to States for Temporary Assistance to Need Families (TANF) under part A of Title-IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et. seq.), or State or local income-based public assistance; • Is in a family with total family income that does not exceed the higher of: a. the poverty line; or b. 70% of the lower living standard income level (LLSIL) (Note:

LLSIL means that income level, adjusted for regional, metropolitan, urban, and rural differences and family size, determined annually by the USDOL on the most recent lower living family budget issued)

- Is homeless (see above definition);
- Receives, or is eligible to receive, free or reduced priced school lunch;
- Is a foster child on behalf of whom State or Local government payments are made; or is an individual with a disability whose own income meets the income requirements 1 or 2 above, but who is a member of a family whose income does not meet this requirement?

Questions may be directed to: David Klein, Division Director Workforce Programs Bureau of Employment Services Maine Department of Labor 55 SHS, Augusta, ME 04333-0055
David.Klein@maine.gov APPENDIX XII—LOCAL BOARD MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS
POLICY STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD 120 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0120 SWIB.DOL@MAINE.GOV

Subject of Policy Local Board Membership Criteria Policy No: PY15-02 To: ? Local Workforce Development Boards ? CEOs From: Garret Oswald, Director State Workforce Development Board Issued On: ? July 1, 2015 Status Active Authority: ? WIOA Section 107 (b)(1) ? 20 CFR 679.300-350 proposed

Purpose: This policy provides the criteria to be used by Chief Elected Officials (CEOs) in appointing members to Local Workforce Development Boards. Per WIOA Section 107(b) (1), the Governor, in partnership with the State board, shall establish criteria to be used by Chief Elected Officials (CEOs) of each local area in the appointment of members to the local boards in such local areas.

POLICY

Nomination Requirements: Chief Elected Officials (CEOs) must establish a formal nomination process for the appointment of local board members that ensures: Business (employer) members to be appointed to the local board have been nominated by local or business organizations such as Chambers of Commerce or business trade associations; Representatives of labor organizations to be appointed to the local board have been nominated by local labor federations (or, for an area in which no employees are represented by such organizations, other representatives of employees); and ? When there is more than one local area provider of adult education and literacy activities as defined under WIOA Title II, or multiple institutions of higher education providing workforce investment activities described in WIOA 107(b) (2) (C) (i) or (ii), nominations of these members to the board are solicited from among those particular entities; in accordance with WIOA 107(b) (6).

By-Laws Requirement: The Chief Elected Official(s) in each local area must establish by-laws that identify: 1. The nomination process used to select and appoint members; 2. The term limits and how the term appointments will be staggered to ensure only a portion of board membership expires within any given year; 3. The process the local board will use to notify the chief elected official(s) of a board member vacancy to ensure prompt nomination and appointment of a replacement; 4. The proxy and alternative designee process that will be used when a board member is unable to attend a meeting and assigns a designee; the process must include a provision that confirms that the proxy designee is one with demonstrated experience and expertise and that has optimum policy-making authority. 5. The process used to elect a Chair for the board from among the members representing businesses; 6. The use of technology, such as phone and web-based meetings; that will be used to promote board member participation; 7. The process to ensure board members actively participate in convening the workforce development system's stakeholders, brokering relationships with a diverse range of employers, and leveraging support for workforce development activities; and 8. A

description of any other conditions governing appointment or membership on the board as deemed appropriate by the CEO(s).

Local Board Membership Requirements: CEOs must appoint members to each local board as follows: A. A majority of members must be representatives in the local area, who: a. Are owners of businesses, chief executives or operating officers of businesses or other business executives or employees with optimum policymaking or hiring authority; and b. Represent businesses, including at least two (2) who represent small businesses as defined by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), that provide employment opportunities in in-demand industry sectors or occupations, as these terms are defined in WIOA Section 3 (23); B. Twenty Percent (20%) of members must be representatives of workforce, that: a. Must include at least two (2) or more representatives of labor organizations, where such organizations exist in the local area. Where labor organizations do not exist, representatives must be selected from other employee representatives; b. Must include at least one (1) or more representatives of a joint labor-management, or union-affiliated registered apprenticeship program within the area who must be a training director or a member of a labor organization. If no union-affiliated registered apprenticeship programs exist in the area, a representative of a registered apprenticeship program with no union affiliation must be appointed, if one exists; c. May include one or more representatives of community-based organizations that have demonstrated experience and expertise in addressing the employment, training or educational needs of individuals with barriers to employment, including organizations that serve veterans or provide or support competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities; and d. May include one or more representatives of organizations that have demonstrated experience and expertise in addressing the employment, training or education needs of eligible youth, including organizations that serve out-of-school youth. C. Local Board membership must include at least one eligible provider administering adult education and literacy activities as defined by WIOA title II in the local area; and D. At least one representative from an institution of higher education providing workforce investment activities, including community colleges from the local area; and E. At least one representative from each of the following governmental and economic and community development entities: a. Economic and community development; b. State labor exchange office under Wagner Peyser Act (29 USC 49 et sq.) serving the local area; and c. The programs carried out under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, other than sect 112 or part C of that title.; F. The membership of local boards may include individuals or representatives of other appropriate entities, with optimum policy-making authority within the organizations they represent, including: a. Entities administering education and training activities who represent local educational agencies or community-based organizations with demonstrated expertise in addressing the education or training needs for individuals with barriers to employment; b. Governmental and economic and community development entities who represent transportation, housing and public assistance programs; c. Philanthropic organizations serving the local area; d. Other appropriate individuals as determined by the chief elected official;

Additionally: • An individual may be appointed as a representative of more than one entity, if the individual meets all the criteria for representation including the criteria in sections B through E above, for each entity. • All required board members must have voting privilege; the CEO may convey voting privileges to non-required members. • Local board membership will be certified every two years in accordance with this policy. • Board membership information, including the required categories each member represents must be kept up-to-date and posted on the Local Board Website.

This policy goes into effect on July 1, 2015, local boards that do not have the required membership or CEO By-Laws in place on July 1, 2015, have until September 30, 2015 to do so.

Inquiries may be addressed to:

Garret Oswald, SWDB Director 120 State House Station Augusta, Maine 04333-0120
Garret.J.Oswald@maine.gov 207-621-5087 APPENDIX XIII—LOCAL BOARD CERTIFICATION

STATE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD 120 STATE HOUSE STATION AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0120 SWIB.DOL@MAINE.GOV

Policy Subject Local Board Certification Policy No: PY15-22 To: ? Local Workforce Development Boards ? Chief Elected Officials From: Garret Oswald, Director State Workforce Investment Board Issued On: ? February 23, 2016 Status DRAFT Authority: ? WIOA Sections: 107 (b)(1); 107 (c)(2); 107(c)(3); 107(d) and 116(g)(2) ? NPRM 20 CFR 679.300-350 proposed

Purpose: This policy identifies requirements for ongoing Local Board Certification.

Background: The Local Board serves as a strategic leader and convener of local workforce development system stakeholders for the purpose of providing strategic and operational oversight in collaboration with and to help develop a comprehensive and high-quality workforce development system in the local area and planning region. The Local Board assists in achievement of the State's strategic and operational vision and goals as outlined in the State plan and works to improve the quality of services, customer satisfaction, and effectiveness of the services provided.

The certification process reviews the extent to which the local board has ensured that the workforce investment activities carried out in the local area have enabled the local area to meet performance accountability measures and achieve sustained fiscal integrity. At the onset of WIOA, local boards that met the requirements for initial designation and local board membership were granted initial certification under WIOA on July 1, 2015. Evaluation and granting of subsequent Local Board Certification will occur once every two years from that date, with subsequent certification occurring on July 1, 2017, 2019, and so on. Policy: In order for the State Workforce Development Board, on behalf of the Governor, to certify a Local Board for a second or subsequent period the Local Board must ensure that it has: 1. Maintained local board membership requirements as identified in WIOA Section 107(b); 2. Performed successfully by meeting or exceeding negotiated performance measures; 3. Sustained fiscal integrity as defined in WIOA Section 106(e)(2); and 4. Performed the functions required under WIOA Section 107(d).

Process: On or before July 1, of each biennial certification period (2017, 2019, 2021 and so on) the local board must submit a request for Board Certification and provide documentation and assurances that the above criteria have been met; including: 1. A current list of local board members and the categories they represent; 2. Assurance that the local board has sustained fiscal integrity (citing fiscal reviews and audits as evidence); 3. Assurance, citing reports, that negotiated performance goals have been met for two consecutive years; and 4. A brief report explaining how the local board has carried out required functions.

Decertification: The State Board, on behalf of the Governor, has the authority to decertify a Local Board (after providing an opportunity for public comment) for the following reasons: • Fraud or abuse; • Failure to carry out the functions of the local board as specified in WIOA Section 107(d) • Failure to meet local performance accountability measures for two consecutive years

Failure to Achieve Certification will result in appointment and certification of a new Local Board for the local area pursuant to the process described in WIOA Section 107(c)(1). Contact: Garret

Oswald, SWDB Director 120 State House Station Augusta, Maine 04333-0120
Garret.J.Oswald@maine.gov 207-621-5087

APPENDIX XIV—TRANSFER OF FUNDS POLICY STATE OF MAINE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
BUREAU OF EMPLOYMENT SERVICES 55 STATE HOUSE STATION AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-
0055

Subject of Policy: WIOA Transfer of Funds Policy No. PY15-04 To: ? Local Workforce Development Boards ? Chief Elected Officials ? CareerCenter Managers From: Richard Freund, Acting Bureau Director and Deputy Commissioner of Labor Issuance Date December 18, 2015 Rescinds WIOA Policy 06-07 Reference/ Authority: WIOA Section 133(b)(4) Status ACTIVE Funds Transfer Authority Upon Governor approval, WIOA Section 133(b)(4) allows a Local Board to transfer up to and including 100 percent of the formula funds allocated to the local area for Adult formula program services, and up to and including 100 percent of funds allocated to the local area for Dislocated Worker formula program activities for a fiscal year, between A. Adult employment and training activities; and B. Dislocated Worker employment and training activities.

Policy: On behalf of the Governor, the Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Employment Services (BES) will review and approve requests from a Local Board seeking to transfer funds between the Adult and Dislocated Worker formula programs. Local Areas may not transfer funds to or from the Youth formula program allocation.

Local Boards seeking to transfer funds must submit the request to the BES using the attached form. The request must articulate the benefits of and explain the situation necessitating the need for the transfer. Such rationale should also be supported by the Local Area/Regional Plan and include assurance that the target group from which funds will be taken (Adult or Dislocated Worker) will not suffer negative consequences as a result.

Local Board minutes reflecting that the board has approved the transfer must be attached or referenced as a link.

Transfer of funds does not require a fiscal amendment to the service contract but may require a modification of the participant service implementation plan of that contract if the number of participants to be served under either program changes by 30% or more.

As funds identified for transfer are used they must be reported on the FR10 as directed by lines s and t.

Please direct questions to: Carroll, Director, and Division Director Bureau of Employment Services
Maine Department of Labor SHS 55, Augusta ME 04330 207-623-7974
Virginia.A.Carroll@maine.gov

FORM TO REQUEST FOR TRANSFER OF WIOA FUNDS

Local Board Date Requested Address By: Title: Program Year PY2015 Program Year PY2015
Program Transferred From DW Program Transferred To ADULT Percent to be Transferred Original
Amount \$ Original Amount \$ Revised Amount \$ Revised Amount \$ Expended to Date \$ Expended to

Date: \$ Original to be served Original to be served Revised to be served Revised to be served 1.
Describe the situation necessitating the transfer of funds:

2. Explain how the services from the WIOA allocation you are transferring from will not be negatively impacted:

3. Explain how the services of the WIOA allocation you are transferring to will be positively impacted:

Copy of Local Board meeting minutes attached documenting board approval? Yes____ No ____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name/Title: _____

For use by MDOL staff only. A copy of this request/approval must be attached to the contract file.
Request Approved By Date Contract Number CT Total Amount \$ Contract APPENDIX XV—ADULT
BASIC EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROGRAMS CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES

By signing below, the Maine title II Adult Basic Education and Literacy Program certifies the following:

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROGRAMS CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1. The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan;
2. The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program;
3. The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan;
4. All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law;
5. A State officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan;
6. The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan;
7. The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan; and
8. The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program;

The State Plan must include assurances that:

1. The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding supplement and not supplant provisions);

2. The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA;

3. The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not “eligible individuals” within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA;

4. The Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be delivered on combination with integrated education and training activities:

5. The Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to (1) prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency and (2) integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program; and

6. Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Print: _____

OMB Approval No. 0348-0040

ASSURANCES – NON-CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMS

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 15 minutes per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0348-0040), Washington, DC 20503

PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR COMPLETED FORM TO THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET. SEND IT TO THE ADDRESS PROVIDED BY THE SPONSORING AGENCY.

Note: Certain of these assurances may not be applicable to your project or program. If you have questions, please contact the awarding agency. Further, certain Federal awarding agencies may require applicants to certify to additional assurances. If such is the case, you will be notified.

As the duly authorized representative of the applicant I certify that the applicant:

1. Has the legal authority to apply for Federal assistance, and the institutional, managerial and financial capability (including funds sufficient to pay the non-Federal share of project cost) to ensure proper planning, management, and completion of the project described in this application.
2. Will give the awarding agency, the Comptroller General of the United States, and if appropriate, the State, through any authorized representative, access to and the right to examine all records, books, papers, or documents related to the award; and will establish a proper accounting system in accordance with generally accepted accounting standards or agency directives.
3. Will establish safeguards to prohibit employees from using their positions for a purpose that constitutes or presents the appearance of personal or organizational conflict of interest, or personal gain.
4. Will initiate and complete the work within the applicable time frame after receipt of approval of the awarding agency.
5. Will comply with the Intergovernmental Personnel Act of 1970 (42 U.S.C. ??4728–4763) relating to prescribed standards for merit systems for programs funded under one of the 19 statutes or regulations specified in Appendix A of OPM's Standards for a Merit System of Personnel Administration (5 C.F.R. 900, Subpart F).
6. Will comply with all Federal statutes relating to nondiscrimination. These include but are not limited to: (a) Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (P.L. 88–352) which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin; (b) Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended (20 U.S.C. ??1681–1683, and 1685–1686), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex; (c) Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. ?794), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of handicaps; (d) the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended (42 U.S.C. ?? 6101–6107), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of age; (e) the Drug Abuse Office and Treatment Act of 1972 (P.L. 92–255), as amended, relating to nondiscrimination on the basis of drug abuse; (f) the Comprehensive Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation Act of 1970 (P.L. 91–616), as amended, relating to nondiscrimination on the basis of alcohol abuse or alcoholism; (g) ?? 523 and 527 of the Public Health Service Act of 1912 (42 U.S.C. 290 dd–3 and 290 ee 3), as amended, relating to confidentiality of alcohol and drug abuse patient records; (h) Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3601 et seq.), as amended, relating to nondiscrimination in the sale, rental or financing of housing; (i) any other nondiscrimination provisions in the specific statute(s) under which application for Federal assistance is being made; and (j) the requirements of any other nondiscrimination statute(s) which may apply to the application.
7. Will comply, or has already complied, with the requirements of Titles II and III of the uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (P.L. 91–646) which provide for fair and equitable treatment of persons displaced or whose property is acquired as a result of Federal or federally assisted programs. These requirements apply to all interests in real property acquired for project purposes regardless of Federal participation in purchases.
8. Will comply, as applicable, with the provisions of the Hatch Act (5 U.S.C. ??1501–1508 and 7324–7328) which limit the political activities of employees whose principal employment activities are funded in whole or in part with Federal funds.
9. Will comply, as applicable, with the provisions of the Davis–Bacon Act (40 U.S.C. ??276a to 276a–7), the Copeland Act (40 U.S.C. ?276c and 18 U.S.C. ??874) and the Contract Work Hours

and Safety Standards Act (40 U.S.C. ?? 327–333), regarding labor standards for federally assisted construction sub agreements.

10. Will comply, if applicable, with flood insurance purchase requirements of Section 102(a) of the Flood Disaster Protection Act of 1973 (P.L. 93–234) which requires recipients in a special flood hazard area to participate in the program and to purchase flood insurance if the total cost of insurable construction and acquisition is \$10,000 or more.