# WIOA STATE PLAN FOR
# THE STATE OF NEW YORK

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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.

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

# 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. No

**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. Yes

## 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.)) Yes

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.

Economic Analysis

Existing Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations.

Occupations with Largest Number of Online Ads, New York State, November 2015

Occupation SOC Code Volume

Registered Nurses 29-1141 9,624

Retail Salespersons 41-2031 8,381

Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers 53-3032 8,029

Marketing Managers 11-2021 7,872

First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers 41-1011 6,855

Software Developers, Applications 15-1132 6,718

Computer User Support Specialists 15-1151 5,571

Customer Service Representatives 43-4051 5,144

Executive Secretaries and Executive Administrative Assistants 43-6011 5,033

Web Developers 15-1134 5,025

Source: Help Wanted Online

Note: Data are not seasonally adjusted and reflect seasonal hiring patterns

• Data from the Help Wanted Online (HWOL) series, which is compiled by the Conference Board, was consulted to determine which particular occupations and industries are currently in demand.

• The table above shows the 10 occupations with the most online ads.

• Ten occupations had at least 5,000 openings in New York State in November 2015.

o These top 10 occupations represent a broad range of industries including: health care, retail trade, transportation and information technology.

• The occupations most in demand in New York State in November 2015, according to online advertised job openings, are: Registered Nurses (9,624); Retail Salespersons (8,381); Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers (8,029); and Marketing Managers (7,872).

Industry Sectors with Largest Number of Online Ads, New York State, November 2015

Industry Sector NAICS Code Volume

Administrative and Support Services 56 23,623

Professional, Scientific and Technical Services 54 20,912

Health Care and Social Assistance 62 20,561

Retail Trade 44 18,388

Finance and Insurance 52 14,032

Manufacturing 31 9,832

Educational Services 61 9,059

Information 51 8,039

Wholesale Trade 42 5,752

Other Services 81 5,274

Source: Help Wanted Online

Note: Data are not seasonally adjusted and reflect seasonal hiring patterns

• The HWOL data series also provides information on the industry sectors that are posting help wanted ads.

• The table above shows the 10 industry sectors with the most online ads in November 2015.

• The industry sectors with the highest current demand for workers include: Administrative and Support Services (23,623); Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (20,912); Health Care and Social Assistance (20,561); Retail Trade (18,388); and Finance and Insurance (14,032).

Industries with Largest Number of Online Ads, Upstate and Downstate New York, November 2015

Rank SOC Code Occupational Title Number of Online Job Ads

Upstate New York

1 53-3032 Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers 6,115

2 29-1141 Registered Nurses 5,136

3 41-2031 Retail Salespersons 4,254

4 41-1011 First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers 3,252

5 43-4051 Customer Service Representatives 2,792

6 15-1151 Computer User Support Specialists 2,755

7 43-1011 First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers 2,107

8 35-1012 First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers 2,013

9 21-1093 Social and Human Service Assistants 1,956

10 49-9071 Maintenance and Repair Workers, General 1,832

Total Ads (Top 10) 32,212

Total Ads (Upstate Region) 131,757

Downstate New York

1 11-2021 Marketing Managers 6,286

2 15-1132 Software Developers, Applications 5,325

3 29-1141 Registered Nurses 4,142

4 15-1134 Web Developers 4,085

5 11-3031 Financial Managers, Branch or Department 3,962

6 41-2031 Retail Salespersons 3,778

7 13-1111 Management Analysts 3,605

8 43-6011 Executive Secretaries and Executive Administrative Assistants 3,466

9 13-1161 Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists 3,111

10 13-2011 Accountants 3,024

Total Ads (Top 10) 40,784

Total Ads (Downstate Region) 170,597

A regional breakdown of online job ads provides a more nuanced look at how job titles in demand differ between the Downstate (New York City &Long Island) and Upstate (balance of NYS) areas. Among our findings:

• Downstate ads are dominated by high-paying, white-collar jobs concentrated in the management, business and financial operations, and computer and mathematical occupational categories, which account for seven of the top ten job titles.

• The mix of online ads in the Upstate area is more diverse than the Downstate list, dominated by middle class jobs such as retail salesperson, but also including blue-collar titles such as truck driver and maintenance and repair worker.

• Only one occupation is common to both top ten lists: registered nurse. This shows that RNs are in demand everywhere in the state.

• The quantity of online ad in the Downstate area (170,597) is greater than the number in the Upstate area (131,757).

Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

Emerging Industries in New York State

Industry Code (NAICS) Industry Title 2014 Projected 2016 Net %

(2nd Qtr.) Jobs (2nd Qtr.) Change Percent

Jobs

312 Beverage And Tobacco Product Manufacturing 8,130 8,890 760 9.30%

493 Warehousing and Storage 21,350 22,750 1,400 6.60%

5112 Software Publishing 6,179 9,115 2,936 47.50%

51913 Internet Publishing and Broadcasting and Web Search Portals 21,778 30,098 8,320 38.20%

Source: New York State Department of Labor Division of Research and Statistics

Analysts with the Division of Research and Statistics identified four emerging industries in New York State, based on short-term industry projections spanning the 2014-2016 period. This set of emerging industries covers three broad industry sectors including: manufacturing; trade, transportation and utilities; and information.

The four emerging industries had combined statewide employment of 57,400 in the second quarter of 2014. The two industries with the most employment in the second quarter of 2014 were Internet Publishing and Broadcasting and Web Search Portals (21,778) and Warehousing and Storage (21,350). The total job count at the four emerging industries is expected to rise by 13,400, or 23.4%, between 2014 and 2016. This percentage rate of increase is more than 20 percentage points greater than the state's projected overall increase in jobs (+2.6%) over the 2014-2016 period.

For each of the emerging industries, we present a brief profile as well as information on that industry's top five occupations (i.e., staffing patterns). In general, employment in these emerging industries is relatively concentrated, with the top five occupations accounting for anywhere from 38% to 55% of overall industry employment.

Beverage and Tobacco Product Manufacturing (NAICS 312)

Top 5 Occupations in the Beverage and Tobacco Product Manufacturing Industry

Occupational Code (SOC) Occupational Title Share of Industry Employment %

51-9012 Separating, Filtering, Clarifying, Precipitating, and Still Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders 10.70%

41-2031 Retail Salespersons 10.50%

51-9111 Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders 7.90%

53-7062 Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand 5.40%

49-9041 Industrial Machinery Mechanics 4.50%

Total, Top 5 Occupations 39.00%

Source: Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) Survey

One of New York State's emerging industries is the Beverage and Tobacco Product Manufacturing industry (NAICS 312). In recent years, much of the industry's job growth has been centered in craft beverage manufacturing (i.e., brewers, wineries, distillers) with the number of manufacturers more than doubling since 2011.

Expanding the state's craft beverage manufacturing industry has been a focal point of economic development efforts by Governor Cuomo as evidenced by several statewide "beverage summits." These efforts have been quite successful, and can be attributed to a number of initiatives, such as the Craft Act of 2014. This change in law reduced barriers to entry, eliminated burdensome regulations and secured promotional funding for craft beverage manufacturers.

As a result of the economic development efforts described above and the surging popularity of craft beverages, industry employment is projected to grow by 9.3%, from 8,130 to 8,890, between the second quarter of 2014 and the second quarter of 2016.

Warehousing and Storage (NAICS 493)

Top 5 Occupations in the Warehousing and Storage Industry

Occupational Code (SOC) Occupational Title Share of Industry Employment %

53-7062 Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand 25.80%

53-7064 Packers and Packagers, Hand 10.80%

53-7051 Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators 8.10%

43-5081 Stock Clerks and Order Fillers 6.20%

43-5071 Shipping, Receiving, and Traffic Clerks 4.70%

Total, Top 5 Occupations 55.60%

Source: Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) Survey

There are several reasons why employment is projected to grow in New York State's Warehousing and Storage industry. The first is the state's advantageous geographic location. New York is situated in a critical location, between the New England and Middle Atlantic regions. The second is the rise of e-commerce, and the consequent increase in demand for storage and warehousing services. Businesses are adopting new technology to increase speed and productivity. A third factor is ongoing growth in the U.S. warehousing and storage market, which is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of about 7.0% (CAGR) between 2015 and 2019.

Growth in the Warehousing and Storage industry is closely tied to the downstream markets of Manufacturing and Wholesale Trade. In addition to storing goods and materials, Warehousing and

Storage provides a wide range of value-added services, such as assortment and sorting, packaging and labeling and logistics along with other SCM (supply chain management) services.

Software Publishing (NAICS 5112)

Top 5 Occupations in the Software Publishing Industry

Occupational Code (SOC) Occupational Title Share of Industry Employment %

15-1132 Software Developers, Applications 17.10%

15-1133 Software Developers, Systems Software 10.80%

15-1151 Computer User Support Specialists 7.50%

41-4012 Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Except Technical and Scientific Products 7.00%

15-1131 Computer Programmers 5.10%

Total, Top 5 Occupations 47.40%

Source: Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) Survey

Another one of New York's emerging industries is Software Publishing (NAICS 5112). In recent years, economic development initiatives such as the Cuomo administration's START-UP NY program have sought to create a favorable business climate in the state for start-up companies.

As a result of these initiatives -- as well as businesses and consumers increasing their investments in software, computers, and mobile devices -- New York's software publishers are flourishing. In fact, employment in the industry grew by 44.6% from June 2011 to June 2015. Looking ahead, the industry's statewide employment count is projected to grow by 47.5% (from 6,179 to 9,115) between the second quarter of 2014 and the second quarter of 2016, which is the most rapid of any of the four emerging industries analyzed here.

Internet Publishing and Broadcasting and Web Search Portals (NAICS 51913)

Top 5 Occupations in the Internet Publishing and Broadcasting and Web Search Portals Industry

Occupational Code (SOC) Occupational Title Share of Industry Employment %

15-1132 Software Developers, Applications 13.60%

15-1133 Software Developers, Systems Software 7.90%

41-3011 Advertising Sales Agents 6.90%

27-3031 Public Relations Specialists 6.00%

13-1161 Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists 4.20%

Total, Top 5 Occupations 38.60%

Source: Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) Survey

The Internet Publishing and Broadcasting and Web Search Portals industry (NAICS 51913) has grown, with demand driven by consumers and business needs for information and on-demand entertainment. The Internet has exploded over the past 20 years. In 1995, only 1% of the world's population had an Internet connection. That figure has increased from one billion in 2005, to two billion in 2013 and three billion in 2014.

As more people access the web, there has been a rapid increase in demand for skilled workers in this industry. Although the Internet is now over 20 years old, the rapid proliferation of smartphones since Apple introduced the first iPhone in 2007 has contributed to ongoing demand for web services and skilled workers. As Internet penetration and smartphone ownership increase, industry employment is expected to grow accordingly as advertisers continue to shift resources toward Internet and mobile platforms. The number of Internet users is forecasted to double by 2019, while digital advertising spending is also expected to grow to almost $83 billion by 2018.

New York City, sometimes referred to as "Silicon Alley," is home to a thriving tech sector with over 300,000 employees. As such, New York is in a unique position to benefit from the increasing connectivity trends. Between the second quarter of 2014 and the second quarter of 2016, industry employment is projected to increase by 38.2% (from 21,780 to 30,100), the second most rapid growth rate among our four emerging industries.

Businesses' Employment Needs

Identifying employment needs of businesses in New York State requires developing and maintaining current business customer relationships. This is essential due to the dynamic economic environment which drives business needs.

Developing and maintaining these relationships is accomplished through targeted daily outreach by NYS Career Center business service representatives. Multiple lead sources are used to perform this outreach. Foremost among these is analysis of existing business demand based on current job openings posted on the New York State Job Bank, which averaged about 115,000 unique job openings per day over the past year. In addition, analyses of labor market information on emerging business demand; and business needs identified through the State's REDC strategic planning are used to target business outreach efforts.

As a result, to date the NYS Career Center system had over 65,000 business customers in Program Year 2014, and conducted outreach to over 80,000 businesses over the past two years. Employment needs identified by these business customers include: human resources consultation and technical assistance; hiring and training incentives; providing labor market information; layoff aversion planning; and various recruiting services. The most common services used to assist the business in recruiting candidates are: Job development and Job postings; Customized recruitments (1,668 in 2015); Career fairs (111 in 2015); and On-the-Job Training hiring incentives.

## 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’.

Workforce Analysis

Employment and Unemployment

In November 2015, New York State’s private sector job count increased by 13,100, or 0.2%, to 7,869,600, a new record high, according to preliminary figures. Since January 2013, the state’s economy has added an average of 13,200 private sector jobs per month. Under Governor Cuomo, New York State’s economy has added 759,300 private sector jobs and experienced employment growth in 51 of the past 59 months.

The statewide unemployment rate was 4.8% in November 2015. The rate is significant because it is the state’s lowest since before the state’s recession (April 2008-November 2009), and is below the comparable U.S. rate of 5.0% in November 2015.

Labor Market Trends

During the state's economic recovery and expansion, which started in November 2009, three industry sectors -- Educational & Health Services (+273,900), Professional & Business Services (+184,800), and Leisure & Hospitality (+177,200) - have added the most private sector jobs in New York State. The two private sector industries that have lost the most jobs in November 2009-November 2015 include Manufacturing (-10,700) and Natural Resources & Mining (-600).

Of the state's 10 labor market regions, New York City (+18.7%) is the only one that has added jobs at a faster pace than the nation as a whole (+12.5%) since November 2009. Other regions that have seen their private sector job counts grow by at least 5.0% since November 2009 include Long Island (+10.7%), Capital (+8.7%), Hudson Valley (+7.2%), Finger Lakes (+6.7%) and Western New York (+6.7%). Regions that have added private sector jobs at the slowest pace between November 2009 and November 2015 include: Central New York (+3.8%), Southern Tier (+2.4%), North Country (+1.6%) and Mohawk Valley (+1.4%).

In November 2015, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 4.8% in both New York City and the balance of the state. While the unemployment rate has declined in both New York City and the balance of the state, the rate has fallen much more rapidly in New York City. In November 2009-November 2015, the rate in New York City has dropped from 10.2% to 4.8%. This steep rate drop reflects, in part, the strong private sector job growth experienced in New York City over the past six years. The rate decline in the balance of the state has been much more gradual, falling from 8.0% to 4.8% over the same timeframe.

The table below shows the change in unemployment rates (not seasonally adjusted) by labor market region between November 2009 and November 2015. The rate in New York City has dropped the most (-4.9 percentage points) over the past six years -- from 9.9% to 5.0%. Most other regions in the state experienced rate drops in the range of 3.0 percentage points.

Unemployment Rates, New York State, by Region, November 2009 and November 2015

(not seasonally adjusted)

Region Nov-09 Nov-15 Change

(in percentage points)

Capital 7.00% 4.10% -2.9

Central New York 8.10% 4.90% -3.2

Finger Lakes 7.80% 4.60% -3.2

Hudson Valley 7.30% 4.20% -3.1

Long Island 7.10% 4.10% -3

Mohawk Valley 7.90% 5.10% -2.8

New York City 9.90% 5.00% -4.9

North Country 8.90% 6.00% -2.9

Southern Tier 8.00% 5.00% -3

Western New York 8.10% 5.00% -3.1

New York State's economic recovery has been relatively robust as it experienced the third largest net gain in private sector jobs in the country (calculated as jobs gained during the recovery/expansion minus jobs lost in the recession). However, the job gains have been uneven, with the New York City and Long Island regions adding jobs at a much more rapid percentage rate than regions in the rest of the state.

In addition, New York City and the balance of the state experienced much different trends in their labor force participation rates since the start of the current economic recovery/expansion in November 2009. In New York City, the participation rate has increased slightly, from 59.7% to 60.8%. Outside of New York City, the participation rate has decreased sharply, from 64.2% to 61.0%, over the same period. As a result of these trends, labor force levels in New York City are up 230,000 since November 2009, while they are down by more than 140,000 in New York State outside of New York City.

Businesses in a variety of industries report some level of difficulty in filling their job openings. Some of the most difficult-to-fill titles include various finance and accounting occupations, retail salesperson, truck drivers, customer service representatives, advertising managers, various IT job titles (e.g., network architect, web developer), engineering job titles (e.g., biomedical engineer), health care practitioners (e.g., surgeon, optometrist) and health care support titles (e.g., home health aide, nursing assistant).

Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce

Educational Attainment for Population Age 25+: New York State and Labor Market Regions

Area Population Age 25+ (in 1000s) Less than high school diploma High school graduate (includes equivalency) Some college or Associate degree Bachelor degree Graduate or Professional degree

New York 13,211.10 14.80% 27.10% 24.80% 18.90% 14.30%

Capital 743.3 9.10% 29.60% 29.20% 17.80% 14.40%

Central NY 522.9 11.00% 31.00% 29.90% 15.90% 12.10%

Finger Lakes 820.1 10.70% 28.90% 29.70% 17.50% 13.20%

Hudson Valley 1,535.10 11.90% 25.10% 24.80% 20.30% 17.80%

Long Island 1,932.20 10.00% 27.50% 25.60% 20.40% 16.60%

Mohawk 340.4 13.20% 34.70% 31.20% 12.30% 8.60%

New York City 5,640.90 20.20% 24.50% 20.80% 20.40% 14.10%

North Country 287.3 13.50% 36.60% 29.90% 11.00% 9.00%

Southern Tier 437.4 10.60% 33.70% 29.60% 13.50% 12.60%

Western NY 951.5 10.60% 31.40% 30.60% 15.20% 12.20%

Source: 2009-2013 ACS 5-Year Estimates Table B15002.

The above table presents information on the educational attainment of the state's population age 25 and older. 58% of the state's population (age 25+) have at least some college or an associate degree, including 18.9% who have a bachelor's degree and another 14.3% who hold a graduate or professional (e.g., medical or law) degree.

Looking at the state's labor market regions, populations in the Hudson Valley (38.1%) and Long Island (37.0%) have the highest share with at least a bachelor's degree. In contrast, the North Country (20.0%) and the Mohawk Valley (20.9%) have the smallest share.

Conversely, 20.2% of New York City's population (age 25 and older) has less than a high school diploma. This reflects in large part the large share of the city's population that is foreign born. The Capital (9.1%) and Long Island (10.0%) regions have the smallest share of population with less than a high school diploma.

Despite having a highly educated population and a readily available talent pool, anecdotal accounts indicate that many businesses in the state are still having trouble finding workers with the skills they require. This suggests that local workforce boards need to continue working closely with businesses to develop the worker skills that are in demand.

Almost 1 in 7 New Yorkers do not have a high school diploma. Anecdotal accounts suggest that many businesses will not consider a job applicant, even for the lowest-level positions, unless they have a high school degree.

Another barrier facing many workers in New York State, especially those without a high school diploma, is a lack of English proficiency. This can frequently be attributed to the large number of foreign-born residents in the state. Therefore, it is critical for any workforce development plan to implement a strategy to increase the percentage of potential workers with a high school diploma as well as provide English as a Second Language (ESL) programs.

School Status of Population Age 16-19 (levels in 1000s), New York State and Labor Market Regions

Area Population Enrolled in Not Enrolled in School High School Graduate Not High School Graduate % Not Enrolled and Not HS Graduate

Age 16-19 School

New York

1,085.30 948.2 137.1 85.6 51.4 4.70%

Capital

62.8 54.9 7.9 5.1 2.7 4.40%

Central NY

53.1 47.6 5.5 3.4 2.2 4.10%

Finger Lakes

74.3 65.4 8.9 5.4 3.5 4.70%

Hudson Valley

136.5 121 15.5 10.3 5.2 3.80%

Long Island

160 144.2 15.8 11.4 4.4 2.70%

Mohawk

30.1 26.1 4.1 2.5 1.5 5.10%

New York City

415 354.7 60.2 34.5 25.8 6.20%

North Country

26.5 22.7 3.7 2.7 1 3.90%

Southern Tier

45.8 40.9 5 3.4 1.6 3.40%

Western NY

81.1 70.6 10.6 7 3.6 4.40%

Source: 2009-2013 ACS 5-Year Estimates Table B14005.

Among the more than 1 million New York youth aged 16-19, about 51,400, or 4.7%, are not enrolled in high school and have not graduated high school. More than half of the youth (50.1 %) in this category reside in New York City. As noted, in the discussion above, persons without a high school diploma are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to finding a job in today's competitive labor market. The share of this age group not in school and without a high school degree ranges from a high of 6.2% in New York City to a low of 2.7% on Long Island.

**Civilian Population with a Disability (in 1000s), New York State and Labor Market Regions**

| Area | Total civilian population | With a disability | No disability | Percent with a disability |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| New York State | 19,231.2 | 2,090.8 | 17,140.5 | 10.9% |
| Capital | 1,061.5 | 126.7 | 934.9 | 11.9% |
| Central NY | 779.9 | 91.8 | 688.1 | 11.8% |
| Finger Lakes | 1,195.5 | 148.1 | 1,047.4 | 12.4% |
| Hudson Valley | 2,259.9 | 233.0 | 2,026.9 | 10.3% |
| Long Island | 2,815.0 | 246.2 | 2,568.8 | 8.7% |
| Mohawk Valley | 485.7 | 71.3 | 414.5 | 14.7% |
| New York City | 8,202.8 | 845.9 | 7,356.9 | 10.3% |
| North Country | 407.0 | 57.2 | 349.8 | 14.1% |
| Southern Tier | 645.1 | 87.6 | 557.5 | 13.6% |
| Western NY | 1,378.8 | 183.1 | 1,195.7 | 13.3% |

Source: 2009-2013 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Table S1810.

The table above presents information on the number and share of the overall civilian population with a disability. As shown, 10.9% of the overall civilian population has a disability. Note that demographic information on the skill level of this population is not available. This means more than two million NYS residents have a disability. More than 40% of state residents with a disability live in New York City. Another 22.9% of state residents with disabilities reside in the Hudson Valley or Long Island.

Long Island (8.7%) is the only labor market region in which the disability rate is below 10%. In contrast, there are four regions in which the disability rate exceeds 13%. The regions with the highest disability rates in the state include: Mohawk Valley (14.7%); North Country (14.1%); Southern Tier (13.6%); and Western NY (13.3%).

Share of Population in Poverty and Percent of Households Receiving Public Assistance, New York State and Labor Market Regions

Area % of Population with Income below poverty level % of Population % of Households % of Households

Under 18 years with Income below poverty level with cash public assistance income with Food Stamp/SNAP benefits in the past 12 months

New York State 15.30% 21.70% 3.40% 14.50%

Capital 11.40% 15.80% 2.60% 10.00%

Central NY 14.60% 21.00% 3.30% 13.20%

Finger Lakes 13.80% 19.90% 3.80% 12.60%

Hudson Valley 10.80% 15.40% 2.30% 8.80%

Long Island 6.20% 7.90% 1.90% 5.20%

Mohawk Valley 15.80% 23.70% 2.80% 15.30%

New York City 20.30% 29.40% 4.20% 19.80%

North Country 16.20% 23.40% 3.40% 15.30%

Southern Tier 16.10% 21.70% 3.10% 13.00%

Western NY 15.10% 22.80% 3.20% 15.30%

Source: 2009-2013 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Tables DP03, S1701, B17001.

One of the major challenges facing the state's population as it seeks to attain the education, skills, and training needed to obtain employment is achieving economic security. Data in the above table from the American Community Survey tell us about poverty rates as well as the percent of New York State households receiving cash public assistance or Food Stamp/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits in the past 12 months.

About 1 in 7 New Yorkers, or 15.3%, were living in poverty, according to the American Community Survey. This figure, however, was much higher (21.7%) for those under the age of 18 in New York State.

These statewide figures mask wide variation in poverty rates across the different labor market regions. For example, less than 10% of residents in Long Island (6.2%) regions lived in poverty, while over 20% of New York City residents were in poverty.

The contrast in poverty rates is even greater for residents under the age of 18. For example, only 7.9% of Long Islanders under the age of 18 lived in poverty, while the comparable rate was three times higher (23.7%) in the Mohawk Valley and more than three and a half times higher (29.4%) in New York City.

Over 3% of households in New York State received cash public assistance income. As with the various poverty measures, discussed above, Long Island had the lowest rate (1.9%) of households receiving cash public assistance income, while New York City had the highest rate (4.2%). Similarly, Long Island had the lowest percentage share (5.2%) of households receiving Food Stamp/SNAP benefits in the past 12 months, while New York City topped the list at (19.8%).

Description of Apparent Skill Gaps

In today's global economy, however, industries in the United States, Europe and elsewhere are experiencing rapid growth in "middle skill" occupations, which require more than a high school diploma, but less than a four-year bachelor's degree. In New York State, average annual wages for middle skill occupations range from $18,750 to $105,060, with an average of $51,122 per year across all occupations.

It's these jobs that many businesses in New York State and the nation as a whole are struggling to fill. It is estimated that New York State faces a middle skills labor shortage of about 152,000 workers

over the next seven years. Failure to address this gap will: erode the state's ability to strengthen middle class economic justice; and cause New York State businesses to be less competitive in the global economy due to losses in productivity.

Analysts cite the lack of a pipeline of skilled workers. Contributing to this lack of a pipeline is the fact that 23% of high school students in New York State fail to graduate on time, and only 35% of our public school students graduate "college and career-ready."

Occupational projections from the New York State Department of Labor indicate there will be 5.18 million job vacancies in New York between 2012 and 2022 as a result of new jobs (i.e., growth need) and openings from retirements and career changes (i.e., replacement need). While 15% of New Yorkers do not have a high school diploma or equivalent, only 9% of these job vacancies will be available for those who fall into the "middle skill" category. On the other hand, nearly seven out of every 10 vacancies will require some type of formal education beyond high school. This trend will result in 69% of all jobs in New York in 2022 requiring some postsecondary education - the 17th highest rate in the country.

Unfortunately, only 58% of New Yorkers aged 25 or older have this level of education. Some of the professions that are likely to be hard hit by a skills gap are pharmacy technicians, software developers and physical therapists. Among science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) occupations, more than 90% will require postsecondary education by 2022.

It is important to note that skill gaps go beyond those related to specific occupations. Business owners are also increasingly concerned about the lack of important soft skills, which are required for virtually any job in today's labor market. In the U.S., nine out of 10 executives said that soft skills like communication, collaboration and critical thinking are important to support business expansion. However, less than half of those executives rated their employees as above average in those skills.

## 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.*

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* 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 ACTIVITIES

The New York State workforce development system, specifically referred to as the New York State Career Center System, is well equipped to provide the services necessary to support the employment and training needs of the individuals and businesses served through the system even beyond the requirements of WIOA. Details on the workforce development activities the State provides to participants are described in the sections that follow.

## STATEWIDE

In New York State, workforce development activities span a broad array of organizations and programs. At the State level, there are three agencies with responsibility for the six WIOA core programs:

- *The Department of Labor, Division of Employment and Workforce Solutions* - Administers Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth programs and Title III Wagner-Peyser program;
- *The State Education Department, Adult Career & Continuing Education Services (ACCES)* - Administers the Title II Adult Education and Literacy program through ACCES-Adult Education and Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation program through ACCES-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR); and
- *The Office of Child and Family Services, New York State Commission for the Blind* - Administers Title IV program for blind individuals.

In addition to these core program partners, there are several mandatory partner programs for which career services must be delivered under WIOA. These mandatory partner programs are:

- Trade Adjustment Assistance;
- Job Corps;
- YouthBuild;
- Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker;
- Senior Community Service Employment;
- Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education;
- Jobs for Veterans;
- Community Services Block Grant Employment and Training;
- Housing and Urban Development Employment and Training;
- Unemployment Compensation;
- Second Chance Act of 2007;
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); and
- Programs for Native Americans

Other entities carrying out workforce development programs may also be partners for the local area if approved by the local board and chief elected official.

New York State Comprehensive Career Centers must provide career services for these partners. NYS Comprehensive Career Centers are typically administered by NYSDOL and county or city partners, who may share responsibility for running the centers, allocating staff, and providing services to job seekers seeking assistance finding employment, training, and other services. In addition, these partners must enter into contractual relationships with the Career Centers to describe how this coordinated service access will be achieved and how each partner will support the administration of the system.

However, as of the release of this Plan, final WIOA regulations have not yet been completed. The draft regulations contain descriptions of the level of services for partner programs that would constitute “career services.” For supportive services (like TANF), career services are defined as “the provision of information relating to the availability of supportive services, and appropriate referrals to those services.” The New York State Career Center system will provide ongoing comprehensive core program and partner staff training to support an effective cross program referral system, and to assist the program partners in achieving this required level of integration, supporting the State’s vision of a seamless system for customers.

## ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH PROGRAMS AND WAGNER-PEYSER PROGRAM

The NYS Department of Labor is the grant recipient and administrator of WIOA funds in NYS, with oversight and monitoring responsibility for the 33 Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs). Within NYSDOL, the Division of Employment and Workforce Solutions (DEWS) oversees activities related to WIOA, the Wagner-Peyser (W-P) Act, the Trade Act (TAA), the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program, Veterans programs, and the Registered Apprenticeship Program. DEWS develops workforce policy, manages WIOA performance and customer service standards, provides fiscal and program oversight of the statewide workforce and Career Center system, and manages the One-Stop Operating (OSOS) and Reemployment Operating (REOS) case management systems.

DEWS is also responsible for the Veterans program, Dislocated Worker program, Rapid Response, Trade Act programs, Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notice (WARN), and UI Section 599 (UI claimants in training) programs. DEWS includes oversight of services to youth and career development activities, contract development and processing functions, tax credit programs, training and capacity-building for the workforce system, and fiscal and program technical assistance to local workforce areas. The Business Services unit within DEWS coordinates delivery of services to businesses through field staff across the state.

The Human Resource Development (HRD) unit is also housed within DEWS. HRD provides consulting, training, and capacity-building services to New York State’s workforce professionals in the Career Center system; supports DEWS’ efforts to increase the capacity and productivity of staff; coordinates annual conferences and events; and develops reports and briefings for executive staff. In addition, the HRD unit arranges for training of all DEWS staff through webinars, weekly conference calls, and meetings.

DEWS staff is staff to the State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) and the Commissioner of Labor is an ex officio member of the Board. The State Board’s role is to work to develop innovative workforce development strategies to improve and expand services delivered through New York’s WIOA funded Career Center system. Leading the Career Center system at the local level are 33 LWDBs that oversee their respective LWDAs and 96 Career Centers. DEWS staff, in partnership

with the local areas and other local agencies, provides services at the Career Centers throughout the state. In addition, DEWS established regional Business Service Teams with the LWDBs to coordinate services to individual businesses as well as targeted sectors in the regions.

DEWS is supported by NYSDOL's Administrative Finance Bureau (AFB) and Research and Statistics Division (R&S). The AFB is responsible for budgeting, management, accounting, and expenditure of all Department funds. R&S provides performance and data analysis, and is the primary source for labor market information in NYS. DEWS also works closely with the Unemployment Insurance Division (UID) and collaborates on ways to share data and improve processes that will ultimately benefit customers of the Career Center system.

## ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY CORE PROGRAM

WIOA Adult Education and Literacy Core Program (Title II) funds will continue to support one of the largest and most diverse state adult education programs in the country. During 2013-14, NYSED dedicated Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title II funds to support a comprehensive and coordinated literacy system that increased the skills of approximately 106,616 out-of-school youth and adults in adult basic education, adult secondary education and English as a second language (ESL).

- Approximately 25% are between the ages of 18 and 24 (22% in FY14).
- 75.3% of adult students enter literacy programs employed.
- 26,293 were unemployed upon entry in FY14.

o Of those, 8,131 were between the ages of 18 and 24.

In terms of the numbers and demographic profile of students served:

- 154 programs provided literacy education;
- 55% of students are ESL learners.
- 45% of students are preparing for the HSE.
- More than 12 million hours of instruction are recorded;
- 58.2% of learners moved one or more educational functioning levels; and
- ESL instruction for adults is the largest and fastest growing component of America's adult education system and the fastest growing program of any kind at many community colleges. Virtually all of our ESL students are immigrants. According to the U.S. Census, half the growth of the American workforce in the 1990s was due to immigration.

In 2013, a comprehensive multi-year Request for Proposals (RFP) for WIA and EL Civics was issued to fund program areas in: adult basic education and literacy services, English language/civics, corrections and institutionalized education programs, and literacy zones. The purpose of the funding is to: support adults becoming literate and obtaining the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency; to assist adults who are parents in obtaining the educational skills to become partners in the educational development of their children; and to assist adults in completing secondary school education and transitioning into postsecondary education or training. The eligible program participants lack sufficient mastery of basic educational skills to function effectively in society; have not attained a secondary school diploma or the recognized equivalent; or are unable to speak, read, or write the English language. This competitive funding was awarded to successful applicants from public school districts, Boards of Cooperative Educational Services

(BOCES), postsecondary institutions, unions, libraries, community and faith-based organizations, volunteer organizations, and public housing. The successful applicants for adult basic education competed for $20,264,737 in WIA Title II funding; $7,946,316 in English Language/Civics Education funding; and $2,607,193 in Corrections and Institutional Education funding. A total of 63 WIA adult basic education grants were awarded; 23 EL Civics grants; and 19 Corrections and Institutionalized education grants were awarded.

In addition, $5,043,000 in WIA Title II and state Welfare Education Program funds were used to establish 49 Literacy Zones. This RFP supports the programs for the five-year period 2013-2018. The current sub grantees were extended during the 2015-16 transition year and will receive implementation guidelines for new requirements of WIOA.

## LITERACY ZONES

As part of the Workforce Investment Act Title II competitive RFP noted above, 49 Literacy Zones were funded to support the continuation and expansion of Literacy Zones across New York. The funding develops adult education and literacy in distressed communities of concentrated poverty or limited English language proficiency with a focus on building pathways out of poverty.

Goals of the program include: stabilizing families through full access to federal and state benefits and tax credits (such as health insurance and Earned Income Tax credits); helping navigate complexities of the health care system; connecting with schools to support a child's literacy; and effectively navigating college entrance requirements and financial aid for Adult Secondary Education students. Each Literacy Zone is required to provide Family Welcome Centers, which connect families and students with a full range of programs and services including adult literacy instruction. Many of these services are accomplished through leveraging of community, state, and local resources and funding streams that supplement limited adult education funding. More information can be found at www.acces.nysed.gov/aepp and www.nys-education-literacy-zones.org. Literacy Zones will continue to receive information on using New York State's *e-Literacy NY;* a Web based learning management system. In 2016, e-literacy NY will develop a platform and host a variety of literacy curriculum all aligned with Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS). Literacy Zones were directed to focus on supporting students though intense case management. Through these efforts, the Literacy Zones will facilitate students' transition to HSE or to other literacy programs.

Beginning in 2011, six Literacy Zones in the Central/Southern region of New York State used the online learning system called Learner Web. This learning support system provides structure and resources for adults who want to accomplish specific learning objectives. Learners access the system through the internet and are guided to supportive services from existing local education programs, community based organizations, postsecondary institutions, and social service agencies. New York State is the only state using Learner WebforIncarcerated transition programs. In 2015-16, Learner Web expanded to include postsecondary college transition with the 49 Literacy zones and their respective community college partners. Learner Web will increase the use of digital literacy for novice users.

In 2016-17, a variety of professional development programs will continue to be delivered to Literacy Zones to assist in meeting their learners' academic and personal needs. Literacy Zone professional development will be provided in multiple ways including training for case managers so that they can be resources regarding assessments leading to a NYS HSE diploma, career ladders, one-stop referrals, core partner connections, and the Benefits Toolkit.

## POST-SECONDARY TRANSITION RESOURCES

To prepare for WIOA transition, NYSED partnered with NYSDOL to use incentive funding to identify effective postsecondary transition/career pathways curricula that included preparation for the new and more rigorous HSE assessment, the Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC).

The RFP was posted on the Contract Reporter and on the NYSDOL website: http://www.labor.ny.gov/businessservices/pdfs/tasc-transition-rfp.pdf.

Two curriculum frameworks were funded to prepare students for college and careers; the 2015 CUNY HSE Curriculum Framework and the Queens Library TASC transition curriculum. Both curriculum frameworks will be used in 2016-17 for professional development through the RAENs and to guide WIOA transition to support career pathways, integrated education and training, and postsecondary transition.

## INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

The Adult Education Programs Policy Office and the Vocational Rehabilitation Office are both organized under the Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES-VR). This structure supports and encourages coordination of services for individuals with disabilities and adult literacy. The two offices work together to develop policies and partnerships for those populations who require literacy and vocational rehabilitation services.

Adult and family literacy programs will continue to develop and refine practices for integrating Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements into their program. ADA compliance elements were included in the New York State Adult Education Program and Policy team's monitoring instrument and were incorporated into site reviews. This instrument is completed annually by local program staff as a self-review tool.

In 2016-17 New York State will continue to focus on the ways all funded adult literacy programs work with invividuals with disabilities. Many of the 49 Literacy Zones formed partnerships with the Independent Living Centers, which provide one-stop services to families with an individual with a disability. The New York State Education Department developed an electronic universal benefits manual that supports all programs including those that serve individuals with disabilities. This resource is updated annually and provides contemporary support to case managers providing services to individuals with disabilities.

All funded adult literacy programs are required to participate in Learning to Achieve trainings delivered by Literacy New York (LNY), a statewide network that provides technical assistance and workshops in reading and basic skills instruction for adult learners. Each year, Regional Adult Education Network (RAEN) Directors offer training for Literacy Zones in Disability Awareness offered by the Center for Independence of the Disabled in NYC. This training helps Literacy Zones attract and serve students with disabilities and is designed to help prepare Literacy Zones staff across the state to serve people with disabilities.

## STRENGTHS

- ACCES-AEPP has a strong, long-standing working relationship with agencies administering core programs, especially NYSDOL, and was directly involved in crafting the combined State Plan and implementation plans.
- NYS has one of the largest and most diverse adult education systems in the country (over 172 programs across school systems, BOCES, 14 CUNY colleges, not-for-profit community based organizations, unions, and library systems).
- New York's performance on the federal National Reporting System consistently ranks in the highest national quartile, and its report card and performance improvement system is consistently cited as very strong.
- New York has one of the largest state funding commitments with nearly $104 million, over two and a half times the federal WIOA funding received under Title II.
- Comprehensive professional development is provided to all funded programs by seven RAEN centers. Two State Technical Assistance Centers (STACs), rest-of-state and New York City, provide training and technical assistance to community based organizations, literacy volunteer agencies, colleges, and libraries funded under the NYS Adult Literacy Education (ALE) program.
- Mandated Title II representation on 33 LWDBs will provide an important resource for connecting all WIOA funded programs in each area with workforce policies and implementation.
- Co-location of adult education programs in numerous Career Centers across the state form a firm foundation in many workforce development areas.
- Forty-nine Literacy Zones with strong case management and family welcome centers are focused on pathways out of poverty and helping New Yorkers in high need communities connect with community workforce resources and navigate complex systems like postsecondary transition.
- New York has a strong, high performing literacy volunteer sector systemically integrated with adult education throughout the state.
- In July 2015, ACCES-adult education conducted a comprehensive workforce development survey of 172 funded WIOA Title II agencies to informally assess best practices, gaps, and opportunities for strengthening existing partners or developing new connections with the Career Centers in the 33 LWDAs. This data was used to develop proposed directions in this Combined State Plan and will enable ACCES-AEPP to work with programs, local workforce boards, one-stop operators, and agency and program partners in each area in targeted approaches as local workforce plans are developed by the local workforce areas. RAEN centers will play an important role in supporting these efforts.

## CHALLENGES

- Funding reaches only a fraction of the need. In New York City alone, more than 1.1 million city residents between 18 and 64—20 percent of working age New Yorkers—lack a high school diploma or its equivalent. Statewide, 2.851 million New Yorkers who are out-of-school youth or adults, age 16 or older, lack a high school diploma or the equivalent. Only 44,000 tested to obtain their High School Equivalency Diploma—1.6% of the target population (2012 Annual Statistical Report on the GED test). Currently, 115,000 out of school youth and adults are annually served in NYSED-funded adult education programs—4% of the target population.
- Flat appropriation levels at the federal level will challenge implementation of the broadened vision for Title II under WIOA, including an expanded focus on integrated education and

training, postsecondary transition, and integrated English language literacy. NYSED will need to pilot and evaluate a broad range of possible models and expand professional development to contextualize instruction, integrate transition and support services, and build career pathways.

- Currently, NYSED uses nearly 100% of state adult education funding as a match for federal Title II funding, far exceeding the 25% minimum match. This limits the ability to use state funds as a match for other federal funds such as Food Stamp Employment and Training dollars. To leverage additional federal funds, NYSED may need to reduce the percentage state match during the years of the Combined State Plan pending final federal guidance.

## BUILDING CRITICAL SYSTEM CHANGES IN 2016-17

Implementation of the combined state plan will build important foundations and steps for WIOA implementation aligned with the state strategy. This includes:

- Adapting the Title II performance accountability to meet new WIOA and National Reporting System (NRS) requirements based on final federal guidance.
- Creating strong workforce partnerships in every workforce development area, based on state directions and gaps identified through a comprehensive survey of 199 funded Title II programs.
- Establishing effective processes for sharing costs for one-stop infrastructure, and other shared costs, based on final federal guidance including program-specific guidance on shared services that each partner can contribute.
- Preparing for re-bidding of all Title II WIOA funds based on final federal guidance, the final approval of local workforce plans and one-stop delivery systems, and establishing a consistent process across all 33 LWDAs for SWIB review of all Title II local applications and input on how well plans align with the local plan. The new RFP will include new methodology for rating the “demonstrated effectiveness” of applicants and an approval process to raise local administrative cost limits and other budget changes needed to support one-stop infrastructure and other shared costs.
- Identifying and piloting career pathways and postsecondary transition program models based on participation in the national OCTAE initiative, Moving Pathways Forward; innovative development steps being funded through CUNY in 2016 to develop career pathway pilots and professional development resources; expansion of two dedicated adult education teacher websites to house career pathways instructional resources and supports; and re-purposing of seven RAEN center work plans.

MOVING PATHWAYS FORWARD provides targeted technical assistance services to assist all states in the development and implementation of their career pathways systems and facilitate local programs’ provision of career pathways services. States have access to resources and guidance to assist them in assessing their career pathways-related needs, identifying goals for their project activities, and determining planning steps to strengthen and expand key career pathways system components, including:

§ CROSS-AGENCY PARTNERSHIPS AND INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT;

§ STATE VISION OF A CAREER PATHWAYS SYSTEM AND COMMUNICATIONS ABOUT THIS VISION;

§ ALIGNMENT OF POLICIES AND PROGRAMS;

§ EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND SUPPORT SERVICES;

§ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE;

§ DATA SYSTEMS AND EVALUATION; AND

§ FUNDING AND SUSTAINABILITY.

- Focusing leadership funds on the key requirements of WIOA through approval of new annual workplans for the RAEN and NRS Accountability specialist and work charges of NYSED state ACCES-Adult Education staff.
- Continuing to implement a new High School Equivalency diploma for New York that serves as a gateway credential for employment, training, career pathways and postsecondary transition, and providing in-depth training of master teachers and turnkey training for 5,500 adult education teachers.
- Adapting state and WIOA-funded professional development to support career pathways, postsecondary transition, integrated education, and integrated English literacy and civics education.

## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CORE PROGRAM

The New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB), as part of the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), establishes cooperative agreements primarily with private non-profit vocational rehabilitation service providers for assessment and training services through three types of outcome-based contracts: comprehensive services; vocational evaluation/job placement services; and assistive technology services.

Comprehensive contract services are designed to assist consumers with a goal of employment to develop or improve the basic skills they need to successfully seek and maintain employment. Providers assess each consumer to determine his/her unique needs. The assessment is followed by services which may include comprehensive and integrated training in basic life skills for preparation for competitive or supported employment, along with pre-vocational (for transition-age youth) and vocational training services to prepare consumers to seek employment and enter the workforce.

New vocational evaluation/job placement contracts were implemented January 1, 2015. Thirty-four providers were approved statewide. These providers include private not-for-profit agencies, independent living centers, and independent private vendors. They actively provide a number of services, including but not limited to: job assessment; job seeking and development; diagnostic vocational evaluation; situational assessment; and job placement.

In recent years, NYSCB staff increased referrals to NYS Career Centers. Referrals for computer use and job searches were made, often in addition to other job placement and job development services. NYSCB staff met with the Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs) at the Career Centers to arrange for services and access to employment opportunities.

Assistive technology contract services provide consumers with computer and/or computer-related technical training. In Fall 2012, assistive technology center contracts were awarded through an RFP process in seven areas of the state: Buffalo, Rochester, Central New York, Capital District, Hudson Valley, New York City, and Hempstead. The contracts were awarded for the timeframe January

2013 through December 2017. Consumers referred for computer technology services participate in assessment and training to prepare them for postsecondary education, vocational training, and employment. Consumers have an opportunity to view a wide selection of appropriate hardware and adaptive software, and have input into the development of an equipment recommendation to meet their individual needs.

NYSCB reviewed the vocational training programs currently delivered through community rehabilitation partners and determined that two types of vocational skills training are needed; one to support consumers in increasing employability and a second to meet the demands of emerging labor markets. The first type of training is focused on those consumers planning to enter fields such as customer service, office administration, and other clerical occupations, and the potential need to acquire advanced skills levels in Braille, keyboarding, note taking, computer applications, and other office practices. The second type of vocational skills training is related to meeting the needs of a particular business or business sector. The training is developed in conjunction with a business or group of businesses representing a sector expected to have high demand for workers over the next 5 to 10 years. NYSCB will continue to develop and explore the need for new program and training opportunities.

Supported employment services are provided for consumers who meet the Federal definition of “most significantly disabled” (Section 7(21)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973) and who will need support after they obtain a job. NYSCB consumers receive supported employment services through contracts between the New York State Education Department’s (NYSED) ACCES-VR program and supported employment providers. With changes initiated by ACCES-VR in 2014, NYSCB is no longer limited to utilizing only supported employment providers approved to serve blind individuals. Any of the 197 supported employment providers may now provide services to NYSCB consumers. NYSCB anticipates the increase in available providers will lead to additional employment outcomes for NYSCB consumers.

## CONNECTION TO WORKFORCE NEEDS

During the past year, Lighthouse Guild, based in New York City, entered into discussions with NYSCB regarding the need for intensive Braille training for individuals expecting to use Braille in work settings. It became apparent that Braille proficiency must exceed the training offered through Vision Rehabilitation Therapy (VRT) for consumers planning to enter the workforce in administrative and professional settings. Lighthouse Guild is currently testing a pilot program that combines introduction of Braille skills during VRT and continued skill building through Vocational Training.

Two other providers, Visions Services for the Blind and Helen Keller Services for the Blind, received a 3-year grant from the Lavelle Foundation to identify emerging business sectors in the New York City metro area. Awardees of this grant will develop training programs for the identified sectors in partnership with businesses, and provide training for individuals who are blind, leading to employment. At the conclusion of the grant, it is expected that training programs initiated under the grant which result in successful employment for individuals who are blind, will be sponsored by NYSCB through its vocational training and placement programs. NYSCB continues to encourage its providers to develop new vocational training options utilizing a similar business-centered approach.

## COUNCIL OF STATE ADMINISTRATORS OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (CSAVR):

The Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation's (CSAVR) National Employment Team (NET) provides a coordinated approach to serving business customers through business development, business consulting, and corporate relations. By establishing partnerships with businesses, NYSCB can better match business staffing needs with the skills and interests of consumers seeking employment, as well as help businesses to retain employees who experience disability. The NET provides:

- Businesses with direct access to qualified applicants and support services from the public VR system;
- VR consumers with access to national employment opportunities and career development resources; and
- VR agencies with a national system for sharing employment resources, best practices, and business connections.

An exciting development with the NET is the launch of the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP) through which businesses can identify qualified job candidates with disabilities. The portal provides consumers and counselors the opportunity to create individualized job searches, post resumes, and communicate with businesses through the system. Counselors are able to track individual job seeker's efforts and success, and VR managers are able to see how the system assists with job placements. Businesses with national footprints including Key Bank, Walgreens, Pfizer, BJC Healthcare, ch2m, Raytheon, Quest Diagnostics, and Wells Fargo have signed on, using the TAP system to allocate employees for various positions. Priority is given to increasing the number of nationwide businesses participating in the use of the TAP to develop their workforce.

## ACCES-VR

Within NYS, there is a large gap between working age adults with and without disabilities on key factors such as educational attainment and employment. There are 1.05 million individuals 18-64 years of age with disabilities in NYS (8.5% prevalence rate) according to data gathered from Cornell University Online Resource for U.S. Disability Statistics (2013). Twenty-five percent of New Yorkers with disabilities have less than a high school diploma, compared to 11% without disabilities. Only 16.5% of working-age individuals with disabilities in NYS hold a Bachelor's degree, compared to 36.6% of individuals without disabilities. The NYS employment rate of working age individuals with disabilities (age 18 to 64) is 31.9%, compared to 72.1% for persons without disabilities, agap of 40.2%. The median household income of working age adults with disabilities in NYS is $37,600 and $66,400 for families without disabilities, a gap of $28,800. The percentage of New Yorkers ages 21-64 years with a disability living below the poverty line in 2011 was 30%, compared to 12.3% of adults without disabilities.

This data suggests that for New Yorkers with disabilities, more than twice the number do not have a high school diploma, and less than half have a Bachelor's degree when compared to those without disabilities. The percentage of individuals with disabilities who are employed is less than half of those without disabilities, and the median household income and poverty rate is more than double for New Yorkers with disabilities. More working age individuals with disabilities have a Bachelor's degree, higher median earnings, and higher household income compared to national data, but the poverty rate for New Yorkers with disabilities (30%) is higher than the national rate (27.8%).

ACCES-VR is working to close these gaps through services such as postsecondary education. Postsecondary training not only leads to higher earnings; it can provide the individuals the skills businesses need to fill middle-skills jobs. ACCES-VR also increased its funding levels for training across all postsecondary programs. To strengthen outcomes, ACCES-VR provides advocacy and support to individuals requiring these services when institutions of higher education do not have the level of supports in place needed by individuals with disabilities to succeed. Additionally, ACCES-VR works closely with the postsecondary education community to jointly identify and meet the needs of students with disabilities. Recently, the New York State Board of Regents convened an Advisory Council on Postsecondary Education for Students with Disabilities to further determine how to improve enrollment and success rates for individuals with disabilities on campuses across NYS.

ACCES-VR identified services to youth as a priority and changed how it defines youth. It increased the age of youth from under 22 to under 25 years of age and developed a transition unit staffed by one district manager and a senior counselor in each of the 15 district offices to increase outreach to the schools and improve services to youth. Services for transitioning youth, including paid work experiences, are in development as a strategy for career advancement. Challenges include disseminating information about vocational rehabilitation and building relationships with schools, students, and parents, and how we can work together to move transitioning youth to adult services.

ACCES-VR is a member of CSAVR's NET, as is NYSCB. The NET promotes partnerships with businesses that can help businesses meet their staffing needs and improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Additionally, ACCES-VR continues to develop local strategies to increase access to employment services for individuals with disabilities. There are 13 Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) Projects in the upstate NY LWDAs that focus on Employment Networks (ENs) and services related to assessment, benefits advisement, and placement. ACCES-VR liaisons meet periodically with DRCs to better understand and coordinate cross-systems services; to better meet the needs of individuals with disabilities; and to increase support in maintaining employment after a consumer's closure from VR services. The DRCs are responsible for providing and improving targeted services to individuals with disabilities, as well as improving the capacity of all workforce staff in their respective sites to provide the best possible services to the disability population. All 13 pilot sites are registered as ENs under the Ticket to Work program, with the intent to get individuals off SSA benefits and back to work.

New York State ACCES-VR jointly conducts a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) with its State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) every three years to determine the rehabilitation (and other) needs of residents with disabilities and to identify gaps in VR services. ACCES-VR uses this information to shape policy, procedures, training, operations, and practice. The next assessment will be conducted for the FY2017 State Plan.

## 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.

Analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce development activities are included as part of section (A) above.

## C. STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY

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

Analysis of the capacity of state entities to provide the workforce development activities are included as part of section (A) above.

## 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.

New York State (NYS) envisions a unified workforce development system that is regionally coordinated and programmatically seamless, delivering workforce training, business services, and statewide job linkages to all New Yorkers.

### 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

This vision is supported by three high level goals that address: Governance; Service Delivery; and

Accountability:

- **Governance** -Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs will be governed in a seamless system that is coordinated with regional sector-based workforce strategies that align with NYS Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) strategic planning.

It is a goal of this plan to build partnerships and strategic alliances to create a unified workforce vision that brings government, education, and business into an integrated force. Progress has been made towards integration; however it is important that this continues so that the workforce system can most effectively collaborate on the mission, vision, curriculum, and outcome.

The State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) will recommend policies to continuously improve the system; support REDC efforts across the State; develop channels to communicate best practices to better serve customers; and serve as a proactive and visionary entity to improve the statewide workforce development system.

- **Service Delivery** - Services will meet the needs of businesses through public-private sector partnerships such as education, government, and community, with priority given to removing barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities, veterans, formerly incarcerated persons, disconnected youth, individuals in economically distressed communities, adults with limited literacy or English language proficiency who lack a High School Equivalency (HSE), adults with limited literacy who have a HSE, New Americans including immigrants and refugees, and other special populations.

Services will include: job development, job posting, job match and referral, basic skills training, occupational training in career pathways, HSE preparation, and employment support services.

Services are easily accessible to provide all individuals with equal opportunity to work or obtain training, and frontline staff is able to seamlessly move individuals to applicable services.

- **Accountability** - Meaningful performance metrics will be reported to support evidence-based and data-driven workforce investments and decisions, and accountable and transparent programs. This includes alignment of technology, metrics, and data systems across programs.

The following provides specific strategies for accomplishing each goal:

Governance

a. Revise State guidelines and internal processes to expedite and empower REDC projects across State government, which serve as the main State strategy for job creation.

b. Make program decisions across the system based on data from current and projected job growth, and utilize partnerships with businesses and REDCs to supply this data.

c. Share labor market data across workforce partners to inform training decisions and encourage further dissemination of this information to uncover other areas where it might be useful.

d. Focus ongoing system integration plans beyond core program partners to encompass all available programs that serve the needs of businesses and job seekers.

e. Improve required collaboration with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program within the workforce system, and explore the ability of the system to expand program support beyond mandated TANF career services.

Service Delivery

a. Improve comprehensive referrals, program accessibility, and service connections in every workforce area to promote measurable outcome improvements for New Yorkers facing barriers to employment.

b. Further develop partnerships with State entities, including the higher education system, and secondary schools to align activities, training, and resources that lead to improved employment outcomes for all parts of the workforce, including individuals with disabilities.

c. Improve workforce partner outreach to business regarding hiring individuals with disabilities and adults who obtained their HSE diploma or other such credentials in order to meet their workforce needs.

d. Promote and incentivize the use of On-the-Job-Training (OJT) strategies across all programs in the system, and work with business to identify how such strategies could be modified to increase use, especially for individuals facing barriers to employment.

e. Identify and develop training programs that best align with the needs of business and bridge skill gaps of existing job seekers and low skilled workers.

f. Seek to identify new funding opportunities to support workforce investments and base workforce system investment decisions on data gathered from strong regional sector partnerships.

g. Incentivize businesses to make internal systems compatible with access technology, enabling individuals to overcome barriers to gainful employment.

h. Prioritize program funding and financial incentives to serve New Yorkers who are basic skills deficient and/or face barriers to employment, including those who need a HSE diploma for employment, training, or postsecondary transition.

i. Invest in ongoing development of program staff to provide efficient career services across the full spectrum of workforce programs, including all required partner programs.

j. Promote program accessibility as a guiding principle system-wide, leverage the experience and ability of programs with a proven record of serving individuals with barriers to employment, and provide financial support of such efforts across the system.

Accountability

a. Develop system improvement measures that reflect State priorities and goals, and can be reported on a regular basis.

b. Continue to integrate information technology across programs and pursue new technologies. Align performance and financial reporting systems to better allocate funding, improve accountability, and address systemic issues.

c. Develop effective mechanisms to communicate and share performance information to system stakeholders to be used for continuous improvement.

## 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.)

Performance

The Core Programs are required to regularly report to the Federal government and public on program performance to keep the system accountable and transparent in the pursuit of the State's workforce vision and goals. Although WIA also required performance reporting, WIOA seeks to improve accountability across all core programs by requiring that they report on a set of uniform measures. At the onset of WIOA implementation, setting of performance goals for programs without an institutional history of these measures or an established method for collecting needed data to report these measures will be a challenge. The Core Programs are working to share existing data collection and analysis methods to identify and establish good data sources and to work through necessary administrative clearances to meet new WIOA requirements. In particular, programs under Titles II and IV of WIOA are in the process of gathering the necessary information to establish valid and reliable data for the required performance measures. The preliminary performance goals that have already been established are included in Table 1 below.

Note for Draft Plan: The Core Programs are working closely together to identify and establish appropriate data sources and gaining the necessary administrative clearances to meet the WIOA requirements. Titles II and IV are in the process of gathering the necessary information to establish valid and reliable data for the required performance measures.

| Employment (Second Quarter after Exit) | Proposed/Expected PY 2016-2017 Level | Negotiated/Adjusted PY 2016-2017 Level | Proposed/Expected PY2017-2018 Level | Negotiated/Adjusted PY2017-2018 Level |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adults | 64.40% | 66.0% | 66.5% | 67.0% |
| Dislocated Workers | 60.20% | 60.2% | 65.5% | 65.5% |
| Youth* | 53.30% | 69.9% | 53.9% | 70.4% |
| Adult Education | Baseline | Baseline | | |
| Wagner-Peyser | 60.70% | 60.7% | 65.3% | 65.3% |
| Vocational Rehabilitation | Baseline | Baseline | | |
| Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit) | | | | |
| Adults | 64.00% | 64.0% | 66.0% | 66.00% |
| Dislocated Workers | 61.40% | 61.4% | 65.3% | 65.3% |
| Youth* | 59.10% | 59.1% | 61.0% | 61.0% |
| Adult Education | Baseline | Baseline | | |
| Wagner-Peyser | 62.20% | 62.2% | 64.8% | 64.8% |
| Vocational Rehabilitation | Baseline | Baseline | | |

| Employment (Second Quarter after Exit) | Proposed/Expected PY 2016-2017 Level | Negotiated/Adjusted PY 2016-2017 Level | Proposed/Expected PY2017-2018 Level | Negotiated/Adjusted PY2017-2018 Level |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit) | | | | |
| Adults | $4,418 | $4,418 | $4,850 | $4,850 |
| Dislocated Workers | $5,717 | $5,717 | $6,149 | $6,149 |
| Youth | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline |
| Adult Education | Baseline | Baseline | | |
| Wagner-Peyser | $4,840 | $4,840 | $5,126 | $5,126 |
| Vocational Rehabilitation | Baseline | Baseline | | |
| Credential Attainment Rate | | | | |
| Adults | 48.0% | 33.0% | 50.0% | 35.0% |
| Dislocated Workers | 48.0% | 36.0% | 50.0% | 38.0% |
| Youth | 15.0% | 63.5% | 17.0% | 66.5% |
| Adult Education | Baseline | Baseline | | |
| Wagner-Peyser | Not Applicable | Not Applicable | Not Applicable | Not Applicable |
| Vocational Rehabilitation | Baseline | Baseline | | |
| Measureable Skill Gains | | | | |
| Adults | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline |
| Dislocated Workers | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline |
| Youth | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline |
| Adult Education | 62.0% | 62.0% | | |
| Wagner-Peyser | Not Applicable | Not Applicable | Not Applicable | Not Applicable |
| Vocational Rehabilitation | Baseline | Baseline | | |
| Effectiveness in Serving Employers | | | | |
| Adults | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline |
| Dislocated Workers | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline |
| Youth | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline |
| Adult Education | Baseline | Baseline | | |
| Wagner-Peyser | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline |
| Vocational Rehabilitation | Baseline | Baseline | | |

## 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 Federal Government uses the primary indicators of performance as the main assessment of the effectiveness of the State workforce development system. In addition to these, NYS has developed intermediary performance indicators designed to support the primary indicators and system goals. The intermediary indicators are designed to improve communication between system partners, leverage new technologies NYS has developed, or influence the behavior of frontline staff in New York State Career Centers to improve services to participants as needed by the system. NYS has had success with intermediary indicators in the past, such as the Customer Service Indicators, which were designed to improve performance in the Common Measures under WIA.

With regard to Adult Education and Family Literacy, attached in Table 2 of Appendix 2 are the performance targets approved by the U. S. Education Department's Office of Career Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE) for 2014-15. Once final NRS and WIOA performance guidance is released, NYSED will continue to refine measurable skill gain targets for 2015-16, including definitions of measures and approved assessments for individuals with a barrier to employment "who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers."

In 2016-17, Adult Education and Family Literacy will work out procedures to comply with WIOA in a number of areas, pending final federal guidance. This includes gaining access to the Unemployment Insurance database at NYSDOL and adapting the NYSED reporting data system and reporting requirements with final mandates. Seven Regional Adult Education Network (RAEN) centers and the NRS accountability specialist, funded with WIOA leadership funds, are prepared to mount professional development and training with all WIOA funded program coordinators, teachers, case managers, and data staff. With regard to changes in the NRS system, including possible shortening of the deadline for federal reporting, ACCES-Adult Education Policies and Programs will take steps to comply with required deadlines and will develop the necessary state level policies and mandates as well as mount statewide training by the NRS accountability specialist, the RAENS, and NYC Literacy Assistance Center, which administers the ASISTS data reporting system. All training and performance reporting policies will be closely coordinated with partner programs to ensure a smooth transition.

## 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).

In an effort to maximize the benefit of strong collaboration between the public workforce system and the education community, a stronger emphasis at the state level will be placed on Career Pathways and Sector Partnerships. Career Pathways is a system-wide framework that aligns education and training with specific advancement opportunities for a broad range of job seekers. All core partners under WIOA overseeing workforce development programs will re-orient their services toward career progression instead of stopping at job placement. This effort will include sector-focused bridge programs, skills training, job-relevant curricula, and work-based learning opportunities. The Career Pathways framework can build upon existing efforts in the State such as the Career Pathways program operated by OTDA through 13 community based providers. These programs offer participants a clear course of action for building skills and obtaining industry recognized credentials to progress in their career. Individuals between 18 and 24 years of age are a priority population for the Career Pathway services.

Career Pathways connect education, training, credential attainment, and wraparound services to support new and incumbent workers as they advance to higher levels of employment. The core partners under WIOA will work with SUNY and NYSED, and other educational institutions to align education (including career and technical education programs), postsecondary education (including certificate, Associate, and Bachelor's degree programs), and credential training with specific career advancement opportunities as job seekers' needs evolve over time. To embark on such a statewide initiative of Career Pathways, the SWIB, in collaboration with the LWDBs, will need to customize an individual approach to Career Pathways for each of the 33 LWDBs in New York State.

The concept of career pathways is interwoven throughout much of the Plan, most prominently in the Adult Education sections, as they specialize in this area. Overall, the Plan does provide clear indication that sector strategy based approaches are at the heart of the State's workforce development, and are even listed as one of the primary responsibilities of the State Board. Developments of career pathways are integral to the sector strategy approach, and a focus on industry sectors is also assumed when using such strategies. Accordingly, these topics are a part of any discussion on sector strategy, even when not explicitly mentioned.

Sector Partnerships will be a statewide priority under WIOA and will necessitate a strong collaboration of various partners. Sector partnerships are partnerships of businesses from the same industry and in their natural labor market region, with education, workforce development, economic development, and community organizations that focus on a set of key priority issues identified by the target industry. It is recognized that sector partnerships must have an active convener, and for this

reason, the SWIB as the workforce development leader will take on the role of convener to implement state-level initiatives around sector partnerships. Similar to Career Pathways, the SWIB, in collaboration with the LWDBs, must customize an individual approach to Sector Partnerships for each of the 33 LWDBs in New York State.

In addition, as indicated by the prominence of sector strategy in the State's approach to workforce development, New York sees much value in the promotion of sector partnerships to further such strategies. The REDCs, SWIB, and the LWDBs provide a clear model for such partnerships, bringing together the stakeholders that can most effectively collaborate to fulfill the regional demands of businesses. By seeking to align workforce investment, economic development and educational institutions across identical regional boundaries, the State compels key workforce partners to plan in a coordinated fashion. Further, the State promotes programs, such as the REDC competition, that require strong partnerships for effective implementation. Last, the State strives to incentivize the creation and development of sector partnerships through new program offerings, such as the Sector Partnership National Emergency Grant (SP-NEG), in an effort to further promote the value of such strategies to all system stakeholders.

## 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).

Service Delivery

a. Improve comprehensive referrals, program accessibility, and service connections in every workforce area to promote measurable outcome improvements for New Yorkers facing barriers to employment.

b. Further develop partnerships with State entities, including the higher education system, and secondary schools to align activities, training, and resources that lead to improved employment outcomes for all parts of the workforce, including individuals with disabilities.

c. Improve workforce partner outreach to business regarding hiring individuals with disabilities and adults who obtained their HSE diploma or other such credentials in order to meet their workforce needs.

d. Promote and incentivize the use of On-the-Job-Training (OJT) strategies across all programs in the system, and work with business to identify how such strategies could be modified to increase use, especially for individuals facing barriers to employment.

e. Identify and develop training programs that best align with the needs of business and bridge skill gaps of existing job seekers and low skilled workers.

f. Seek to identify new funding opportunities to support workforce investments and base workforce system investment decisions on data gathered from strong regional sector partnerships.

g. Incentivize businesses to make internal systems compatible with access technology, enabling individuals to overcome barriers to gainful employment.

h. Prioritize program funding and financial incentives to serve New Yorkers who are basic skills deficient and/or face barriers to employment, including those who need a HSE diploma for employment, training, or postsecondary transition.

i. Invest in ongoing development of program staff to provide efficient career services across the full spectrum of workforce programs, including all required partner programs.

j. Promote program accessibility as a guiding principle system-wide, leverage the experience and ability of programs with a proven record of serving individuals with barriers to employment, and provide financial support of such efforts across the system.

# 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).

STATE BOARD

The State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) is the governance body for state workforce programs in New York. Appointed by Governor Cuomo, membership includes WIOA required partners of business, labor unions, local government, NYS Executive and Legislative branches, and other representatives with experience addressing the workforce needs of those with barriers to employment. Through careful examination and discussion of specific workforce challenges, the SWIB develops concrete strategies for broader system improvement. These strategies can then be advanced as recommendations for Board approval to advise the Governor, Board of Regents, and REDCs on workforce development policy.

The SWIB has been WIOA compliant since the legislation was signed into law, and the complete membership roster is provided in the State Operating Systems and Policies section of this Combined State Plan. NYSDOL staff serves as staff to the Board, assisting in managing its many responsibilities. Other partner agencies and entities also provide staff support to the multiple SWIB subcommittees and serve as subject matter experts as needed.

Key responsibilities of SWIB members include:

• Development and review of the Combined State Plan;

• Review of statewide policies and programs involving workforce development;

• Review of statewide policies and programs to develop recommendations;

• Development of strategies for aligning core and other programs;

• Improving access to the workforce development system;

• Supporting industry partnerships and career pathways;

• Disseminating best practices to the workforce development system; and

• Supporting the Career Center system and all core program delivery systems.

Governor Cuomo reconstituted the SWIB at the beginning of 2014 and directed it to work with the ten REDCs to develop recommendations for improving the state's workforce development system and to strengthen the importance of workforce development initiatives across the state. As the

preeminent partnership of business, labor, and workforce system providers involved with workforce policy, the SWIB is well positioned to provide a strong supporting role to the REDC economic development strategy.

In 2010, NYSDOL, Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC), and the New York State Education Department (NYSED) regions were aligned for purposes of collaborating on sector initiatives. In 2011, the 10 REDCs were created and tasked with developing long-term strategic plans for economic growth. The goal of the REDCs is to improve coordination and capacity of State and Regional workforce systems to fulfill businesses demand for skilled labor with qualified workers. Since their creation, REDCs changed the way NYS invests in jobs and economic growth through a community-based, bottom up approach.

The REDCs are public-private partnerships made up of local experts and stakeholders from business, academia, local government, and non-governmental organizations, and are a community driven, regional approach to economic development. Each of the ten REDCs was tasked with developing a five-year strategic plan to include a comprehensive vision for economic development in that region; regional strategies to achieve that vision; and specific priority projects that are significant, regionally supported, and capable of stimulating economic investment. These plans are updated each year.

In order to fulfill its responsibilities and support the REDCs, the SWIB uses a subcommittee structure organized around these responsibilities. These subcommittees meet as needed to discuss policy direction and craft recommendations. A SWIB SharePoint site was developed for all Board members to have the opportunity to review and comment on subcommittee activities, as well as policy guidance issued to NYS workforce development partners. During the May 2015 full SWIB meeting, members approved by-law amendments to govern their activities to align with WIOA. Materials from past SWIB meetings are available at: http://labor.ny.gov/workforce/swib/swibagenda.shtm.

## 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.

Core Program Activities

To implement New York's strategy, New York's Core programs will seek to achieve several goals for the Career Center system . These goals ensure that Titles I, II, III, and IV work together to align and coordinate services, providing job seekers and businesses seamless service delivery in a way that advances the implementation of the State's strategy by creating a unified workforce development system. These goals include:

- Aligning workforce development and economic development functions to create systems that align the needs of businesses with job seeking customers, including individuals with disabilities;
- Incentivizing robust business partnerships to best inform workforce decision making at all levels of the system;
- Recognizing the essential role of education and literacy as the foundation for a strong, versatile workforce and provide priority to serving New Yorkers who are basic skills deficient and have barriers to employment;
- Sharing labor market data across workforce partners to inform policy and service decisions;
- Developing training for front line program delivery staff to provide efficient and seamless services with other mandated programs and partners; and
- Continuing to integrate information technology to improve service delivery.

Under Titles I-IV, NYS will implement these goals over the next several years. The Title I Adult/Dislocated Worker/Youth and Title III Wagner-Peyser programs, overseen by NYSDOL, will continually communicate with Titles II and IV, overseen by NYSED and OCFS, to ensure customers are provided appropriate referrals for services they require; deliver training to staff from all core programs so that Title I and III staff in every Career Center are aware of the services available from Title II and IV staff; and utilize a common customer information system for simple cross-title service delivery leading to successful implementation of New York's strategy.

Services provided by the mandatory Career Center partners and other optional partners will be coordinated and aligned through the development of the local Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among all local partner agencies and providers participating in each comprehensive Career Center. The local MOU will define shared responsibilities as well as individual responsibilities, and will outline how services will be coordinated and the use of any common data collection and reporting process. The local MOU provides an overview of the local system including services to be offered; methods for referral of individuals between the one-stop operator and the one-stop partners for appropriate services and activities; sharing of applicable customer information (taking confidentiality requirements into account); and allocating of costs and sharing of resources to support the system. Career services, training services, and supportive services offered by the various mandatory and optional partner programs are coordinated through the development of the local MOU agreement. Further, the MOU will describe how customers will be connected with services; who will provide these services; how intake, enrollment, and assessment processes will be handled; and how referrals to partner programs for further services will take place.

One-stop operators are the entities that coordinate the service delivery of required Career Center partners and service providers. Local Boards may establish additional roles of one-stop operators, including, but not limited to: coordinating service providers within the center and across the one-stop system; being the primary provider of services within the center; providing some of the services within the center; or coordinating service delivery in a multi-center area. The competition for a one-stop operator must clearly articulate the role of the one-stop operator. The one-stop operator must be selected through a competitive process not less than every four years. The Local Board shall develop a competitive solicitation, generally a Request for Proposal, to ensure one-stop operator selection is conducted through a competitive process.

A priority for all partner programs in the system, and the system as a whole is to quickly respond to the needs of the local communities; its businesses and workforce; and to continually evolve to address those needs. The further alignment and consolidation of programs and activities, and the identification of areas where further sharing and coordination of efforts can occur will continue to be

a priority of the New York SWIB as well as the individual programs in the system. The SWIB's Aligning Workforce Programs subcommittee is tasked with examining ways to improve coordination of workforce programs to avoid unnecessary duplication and better align services. One-stop system operations will continue to be streamlined as common data systems, administrative procedures, and performance measures are further developed and utilized by the partners. Shared input and access to information by partners, cross training of staff, and coordinated program planning will further streamline and enhance the services and operations in the local one-stop systems.

Local partnerships, which form the foundation of the workforce delivery system, are especially effective in meeting the workforce needs of New York's diverse population. Local plans describe how these partnerships will be coordinated to enable all customers to receive the full range of employment and training programs and supportive services, especially those that lead to jobs in high-wage, high-growth occupations along career pathways. The needs of individuals with multiple barriers to employment are being addressed quickly and thoroughly due to the wide spectrum of service providers joined together under the local workforce system. The New York State Office for the Aging, NYSED (including ACCES-VR), the New York State Department of Health (DOH), OCFS (including NYSCB), the Office for Alcohol and Substance Abuse (OASAS), the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), the State University of New York (SUNY), NYSDOL, and local community based organizations apply knowledge gained through regular communication, partnership collaborations, and cross-training to develop comprehensive service strategies to address the varying needs of our common participants. With the functional alignment approach and common customer flow in the Career Centers, partners are more aware of each agency's involvement with the participant instead of working in a vacuum. This greatly helps reduce duplication of services to participants.

Operating under a holistic philosophy, NYS also successfully integrated several employment services systems into a single system, using the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant as a catalyst. This comprehensive employment system is called the New York Employment Services System (NYESS) and provides all New Yorkers, regardless of their (dis)ability, with a single point of access to all employment-related services and supports, including job matching with the approximately 125,000 jobs currently posted by businesses on the NYS Job Bank. NYESS includes the following state-level agencies: Office of Mental Health (OMH), NYSDOL, NYSED, OASAS, NYS Office of Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), NYS Office for the Aging, and the NYS Division of Veterans Affairs. Providers of employment-related supports and services licensed by, or contracting with, one of the participating state agencies are also able to sign up to utilize this system. NYESS creates the ability to centralize employment service/support information, greatly improving the ability to coordinate employment supports and services among multiple providers and across multiple systems.

## 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.

Alignment with Activities Outside the Plan

This plan is primarily focused on the goals and operations of the core programs; however the Career Center system involves a variety of partner programs (previously listed) to support the core. This section discusses relevant details for two notable non-core partners.

In order to best serve our system customers and reduce program redundancies, the State is committed to aligning partner programs with core services. Through capacity building exercises and ongoing training, the system's ability to integrate services at the delivery level will be enhanced, and the value of such collaboration will be reinforced. The core program partners are planning toward a common case management platform, and the ideal solution has been envisioned as a single system for all workforce development partners. At the governance level, continued solicitation of input beyond the core partner programs, through entities such as the Aligning Workforce Programs subcommittee of the SWIB, will reinforce the goal of continued cross system integration.

New York State also continues to expand its outreach efforts to make individuals on public assistance and other low income individuals aware of all of the career services, income supports, and other services available through various state and local agencies. Efforts to enhance coordination and awareness of program services and supports available to these priority target populations are ongoing. Close working relationships between the local social service planning districts and the one-stop partners will help assure that this critical population receives seamless workforce development services. Migrant and seasonal farm workers and individuals with multiple barriers to employment, including older workers, persons with limited English proficiency or literacy, those who are low-skilled, and individuals preparing to re-enter the workforce will be well served by the ongoing functional alignment in the Career Centers.

Registered Apprenticeship

NYSDOL continues to look at ways to strengthen the existing relationship between Registered Apprenticeship and the Career Center system. The NYSDOL CareerZone website was integrated with the Apprenticeship website to provide career information for each of the apprentice-able trades. CareerZone is targeted towards youth, who as a population face a tough economic climate. It allows individuals to explore careers related to their individual strengths, skills, and talent, including apprentice-able occupations. The alignment of the Registered Apprenticeship Program with other WIOA programs allows for the marketing of Apprenticeship opportunities to those receiving services within the Career Center system. Apprenticeship program sponsors connect to the Career Center system and unemployed and underemployed individuals by having their apprentice recruitment announcements posted on the NYSDOL Apprenticeship website and through the NYS Job Bank. Apprentice Training Representatives (ATRs) are located throughout the State and work with current and potential sponsors to develop new programs in new and emerging industries and to provide technical assistance. In addition, ATRs in some regions of NYS are stationed within the Career Centers, which facilitates direct communication amongst Apprenticeship and Career Center staff. This includes working with individuals responsible for Business Services and Veterans Programs. Additionally, NYSDOL expects to expand relationships between Registered Apprenticeship and the State's Education system by encouraging an increase in the amount of articulation agreements between Registered Apprenticeship programs and the Education system.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

In New York State, the TANF program is State supervised and locally operated by 58 social services districts (57 counties and the city of New York). TANF employment service delivery varies from county to county depending on local needs and resources. In some counties, social services staff is

co-located at Career Centers; others contract with local workforce providers for all or a portion of their employment services; and in other counties social services districts provide employment services directly and through contracts with community providers.

New York State is committed to the strong functional alignment of programs and with TANF as a mandatory WIOA partner, will seek to build upon existing partnerships to improve service delivery for State residents. The State will provide robust cross-program training for all partner staff on available economic supports and workforce services. The types of cross training, benefit access and referral mechanism support will include the following items.

• Career Centers will all have the MyBenefits (mybenefits.ny.gov) web site short cut icon on all resource room computers and partner staff will be trained on how to promote and use the site with customers. MyBenefits was developed to help increase access and awareness of various public benefit programs.

It takes between 8 and 10 minutes for an individual to enter the required information on this site, and it takes seconds for the system to conclude what services that individual might be qualified to receive. A number of program pre-screenings are supported through MyBenefits including: TANF, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Nutrition Education, Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), Women Infants, and Children (WIC), School Meals and the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) State Supplement Program, public health insurance options, and a range of tax credits including federal and State earned income tax credits.

Once an individual enters his/her information on the site, a summary sheet is generated. This sheet indicates the services for which that individual appears to be eligible. Each category of service will give him/her an idea of what he/she can expect from that specific program. Some programs provide hot links directly to the individual's on-line applications; some provide phone numbers for additional information and/ or directions on how to apply for benefits and what documentation is required.

At the conclusion of the individual's report, a self-sufficiency calculator is generated. This calculator gives the individual the opportunity to graph his/her earnings and potential supplemental earnings in chart format, giving the individual a clear picture of his/her financial situation and of the benefits gained by working.

• Social Services districts and Career Centers will be encouraged to establish agreements to clearly establish a point person(s) for each other on day to day client cross-system needs. For instance, Career Center partners can contact these individuals when specific TANF or other public benefit programs under their purview arise with customers that cannot be addressed through MyBenefits, etc. A Career Center liaison would be responsible for coordinating major workforce initiatives, recruitments and training programs with the district so a broader range of residents are able to benefit from these efforts and the various agencies involved can leverage resources.

• To support the WIOA priority to serve individuals in receipt of public assistance, New York State will expect each local workforce development area to establish specific procedures to consult with the social services commissioners on the provision of services to youth and the availability of job skills training and job readiness activities provided by Career Center partners. Areas will also be expected to establish streamlined procedures to enable districts to enroll public assistance recipients and other low-income individuals in these services.

• New York State agencies delivering workforce services will continue to collaborate on workforce policies, trainings and service delivery. This collaboration includes a review of labor market data by region, dissemination of labor market data to workforce providers, and collaboration on funding and policy decisions.

• The State will place specific emphasis on the coordination of youth services to allow youth served through the TANF agencies to also have access to specialized youth services delivered through WIOA. This partnership will improve the recruitment of out of school youth and improve the range and quality of services available to this population.

• As no additional federal funding was provided to meet the new WIOA mandates, and as the federal TANF block grant amount has not been increased for over 19 years, New York State will not impose unfunded mandates requiring local social services districts and the Career Centers to co-locate when local areas have mutually determined that co-location is not the best way to provide customer service, or for local social services districts to establish a physical on-site presence at the Career Centers. Instead, New York State will utilize technology-based solutions to meet the requirement in the preamble to the draft federal WIOA regulations to provide and accept applications for TANF funded assistance at the Center Centers. Such applications will be limited to TANF applicants who do not have immediate emergency needs. In the longer-term, technology solutions, such as state funded kiosks will be placed in each Career Center to enable customer access to Integrated Eligibility System (IES) functionality for on-line applications for non-crisis TANF funded assistance. The provision of the state-funded kiosk will be a contribution toward the infrastructure cost requirement, and in some instances, might fulfill the requirement based on the local partnership agreement and usage. In the interim period before IES is functional, WIOA-TANF partnership requirements will be met through the prescreening functionality of the MyBenefits and ACCESS NYC portals.

## 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.

Coordination, Alignment, and Provision of Services to Individuals

Expeditious Entry into the Workforce System

New York State agencies participating in NYESS have a shared case management system and WIOA combined enrollment process. This allows for streamlined services to customers; coordination of services; the ability to provide real time referrals; and delivery of comprehensive service to participants. Although all WIOA core and partner programs are not yet using the same case management system, an interagency workgroup was established to explore potential options.

Identification of Customer Needs

New York State workforce policy was established to enable job-seeking customers to receive an initial assessment as their first staff-assisted service to identify their employment and training needs, and determine whether they are in need of Job Search Ready Services (JSRS) or Career

Development Services (CDS). This determination is based on a one-to-one initial assessment interview with the customer, where the career advisor takes into consideration: the customer's occupational goals; existing skills, including literacy; English language proficiency and skill gaps; work search readiness and any potential barriers to employment; local labor market conditions; and desire for skills upgrading and/or training.

ACCES-VR has 15 district offices and 10 satellite offices located throughout NYS. In addition, counselors are available at Career Centers and schools. If an individual cannot visit a location, noted counselors can arrange for a home visit or schedule a visit at a location that is accessible to both, such as a library. Applicants have options for seeking service. It is encouraged that individuals attend a Group Orientation, which is an overview of the VR program. This can help determine if he/she wishes to seek service and can speed the process as eligibility requirements are clarified. However, those for whom a Group Orientation might not be appropriate are seen individually from the first intake session.

NYSCB provides services to individuals who are legally blind through seven district offices as well as several outstations located throughout NYS. Counselors will arrange to meet with an individual at a convenient location to discuss the array of services provided by NYSCB. If the individual is interested in participating in vocational rehabilitation services, the counselor will gather information from the individual to assist in determining their eligibility for services. Once a determination of eligibility is made, the counselor and the consumer will work together to identify a vocational goal and the services required to enable the consumer to meet that goal. The goal and planned services are documented on the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

Coordination of Services and Development of Individual Service Plans

A quality initial assessment results in information, similar to a résumé, being recorded in the customer's case file and submitted into NYSDOL's JobZone website, which utilizes the Skills Matching and Referral Technology (SMART) system. Job matching and referral takes place on multiple levels, from automated JobZone Job Scouts emailing job openings directly to the customer, to staff making referrals during seated interviews at the Career Center.

Career Center staff work with all job seekers to plan the services best suited to their individual needs. Those needing CDS or seeking training receive a written Individual Employment Plan (IEP) that helps guide the customer as he/she works toward his/her employment goals. Customers identified as having barriers to employment such as language proficiency, disability, skills gaps, and ex-offender status, are provided services directly at the Career Centers by workforce experts. They may also be referred to supportive services and other agencies to work through perceived barriers and provide coordinated services via a case management system.

Trade Act eligible individuals who access services via the Career Centers are co-enrolled in the WIOA Dislocated Worker Program and receive all applicable and available basic and individualized career services. Co-enrollment allows the process of needs and skills assessment to begin immediately, even before these workers may become eligible for TAA, giving individuals more time to consider all of the options available to them. Local career planners record the co-enrollment in OSOS, and NYSDOL's State level TAA Unit staff confirms that co-enrollment is documented in the record when approving training programs at the State level.

NYSCB provides services to eligible individuals in accordance with an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). VR counselors coordinate service provision and work with consumers to assess

progress in meeting their objectives and goal. NYSCB works with students, families, and school districts to facilitate the coordination of transition services for students who are legally blind and transitioning from school to the world of adult responsibilities and work. NYSCB recognizes these efforts are critical to enable students to achieve maximum success in employment, post-secondary education, independent living, and community participation, and is committed to being an active partner in the transition process.

NYSCB continues to maintain its relationship with other New York state agencies involved in workforce development, including the OPWDD, OMH, OASAS, and NYSDOL. Across the state, NYSCB staff conduct outreach in their respective territories to develop a network of local businesses, establishing working relationships to identify business needs and potential employees. District Offices developed a running list of business networks where communication is ongoing, counselors are contacted by local businesses in regards to matching individual skills with employment needs. Outreach was also accomplished through collaboration with partner agencies.

ACCES-VR developed a strong infrastructure and provides a wide range of services to eligible individuals. Counselors work directly with consumers to develop an IPE, which identifies the services and strategies necessary for achieving the plan goals. The IPE is the foundation of service for the consumer. The employment goal is established based upon consumer choice and labor market information. Often, achievement of the goal requires services obtained from postsecondary educational institutions or contracted providers.

In addition to contracts with service providers, ACCES-VR has several agreements in place with other entities, including sister state agencies, to guide cooperative work. Many of these agreements will be reviewed to ensure they are fully reflective of the new commitments WIOA established.

Initiatives and Infrastructure

NYSCB entered into a Partnership Plus Agreement, which enables consumers with a Social Security Ticket to Work to obtain VR services from NYSCB, as well as broad access to community providers to assist in the coordination of Social Security payments and other benefits and services.

Eleven non-profit organizations across NYS were approved as vendors to provide benefits advisement and support the development of economic self-sufficiency. The increased access to DRCs and other ENs increases support in maintaining employment after a consumer’s closure from VR services.

NYSCB uses funds to contract with two private agencies for individuals who are blind to provide pre-college programs for NYSCB consumers entering their senior year of high school. The program goal is to provide students the opportunity to refine their academic, social, and independent living skills before beginning college.

Work Experience Training services are provided to a wide range of VR services recipients. This service provides employment experiences and resume building for youth transitioning from school to employment and for adults with minimal work histories.

NYSCB continues to work closely with community rehabilitation providers to create new pre-vocational and vocational training programs for both adults and transitioning youth. In addition, NYSCB district offices engage new providers when specialized training is required for a consumer to reach his/her vocational goal. NYSCB reviews curriculum for all pre-vocational programs for

transition-age youth to evaluate the nature and quality of the program with the goal of providing quality programming preparing youth to enter the 21st century workforce.

NYSCB continues to encourage development of vocational training programs that meet the requirements of business and will work with providers to create and approve curricula, especially in fields with in-demand jobs where vocational training was not previously available.

NYSCB Children's Consultants and VR Counselors will continue to emphasize to school district personnel the importance of integrating the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) into standard academic instruction and routine daily tasks, and encourage school staff to work closely with itinerant vision teachers and staff from local private agencies for individuals who are blind to provide comprehensive services needed by students.

NYSCB also provides assistive technology services and devices to individuals during each stage of the rehabilitation process through assistive technology center (ATC) contracts and private vendors. The outcome-based services of ATC Readiness Evaluation, ATC Assessment, and ATC Training provide a comprehensive and rigorous array of assessments and training with the goal of preparing students for success in school and employment. ATC Centers and a network of more than 30 private assistive technology trainers provide on-site needs evaluation and training for those whose needs require intervention at their education or employment site.

In addition, NYSCB provides assistive technology devices and training to current managers and manager trainees in the Randolph-Sheppard Business Enterprise Program, enabling them to manage their newsstands and food service operations in accordance with industry standards.

ACCES-VR also has many initiatives in place that assist in opening opportunity for youth and adults with disabilities. For example, ACCES-VR is a partner in the Promoting the Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income (PROMISE) demonstration project. This project is aimed at improving education and career outcomes for low-income children with disabilities and will advance postsecondary education and employment outcomes for 14-16 year olds receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

ACCES-VR participates in the Partnerships in Employment Systems Change grant, which enhances collaboration among OPWDD; the New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (DDPC); NYSED's Office of Special Education (OSE); and New York State's three University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs). The grant will lead to policy and implementation changes to significantly increase the number of young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who are competitively employed in an integrated environment.

Recently, ACCES-VR contracted to provide Community Employment Specialists. These individuals will work with the ACCES-VR Transition Unit and provide information to school districts on vocational rehabilitation and post-school employment options for youth with disabilities.

Continuous Engagement

New York State strives to keep job-seeking customers engaged with all partners in the Career Center system until they are successful in achieving their employment goals. Continuous engagement strategies include participation in career services, individual counseling, assessments, provision of labor market information, job referrals, job clubs, workshops, virtual services, and business recruitment events.

Staff Development

New York values staff training and recognizes the importance of having a strong capacity building program to train workforce staff on serving customers, providing resources, and understanding and complying with policies and procedures to meet changing workforce needs. NYSDOL staff development opportunities are offered weekly and trainings are continuously developed to support Career Centers in providing high quality customer-centered services. Likewise, NYSCB continues to provide training for staff on the consumer's potential eligibility for the use of Blind Work Expenses (BWE) as well as other work incentives to support consumer financial independence.

## 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.

Coordination, Alignment, and Provision of Services to Businesses

Mission

The mission of New York Works Business Services is to provide business customers with a competitive advantage in the labor market. This mission is executed through a holistic business-centric understanding of the customer, rather than the compliance-centric employer view of a business (i.e., how can we help the business versus how can the employer help us).

Business Engagement Framework

The New York Works business engagement framework begins with referring to the customer as a "business" rather than "employer" and continues with understanding the business customer's needs relative to its health. Figure 1 illustrates New York State's business engagement framework, and how the "health" of the business determines service strategy and service type. Understanding where a business is on a "business health" spectrum allows targeted outreach with meaningful services.

For emerging, growing, and stable businesses, Business Services provides Job Development services such as customized recruitment assistance, hiring and training incentives, and/or other services in the Business Services toolkit. For businesses classified as retention, the Shared Work program reduces the need for layoffs by reducing staff work hours and supplementing wages with partial unemployment insurance benefits.

Rapid Response focuses on reemployment services for any workers impacted by layoffs.

Figure 1 - Business Engagement Framework

Strategy, Goals, and Implementation of the Business Engagement Framework

The Business Services strategy is to continuously increase exposure within the business community and the number of businesses receiving services to advance job development. This requires setting

goals that support far-reaching and sustainable engagement with the business community, deploying resources to achieve these goals, and setting metrics to measure success. These goals include:

• Increasing visibility within the business community;

• Increasing the number of businesses listing jobs with the NYS Job Bank/Jobs Express;

• Increasing the number of job seeker resumes available for search in NYtalent;

• Increasing the amount and efficacy of job matching; and

• Generating positive reciprocal messaging with the business community.

The operational strategy for business-centric service delivery is to build business relationships that will generate a conduit for future services, and ultimately produce job seeker placements.

The resources used to support this strategy include:

• Conducting an outreach campaign, targeting various business associations, that provides presentations on Business Services and Rapid Response services with a customized regional approach;

• Expanding existing lead generation methods through development of a business survey that gauges interest in services and utilizes lead generation tools such as business intelligence from business associates, Dun & Bradstreet data, and current events/media; and

• Expanding the Business Services staff role as account executives servicing business accounts, monitoring services received, and engaging with businesses to ensure job openings are matched to qualified candidates.

Cultivating relationships with businesses is a multi-stage process beginning with an initial contact to identify business needs and evolving to meet specific business needs. Three elements central to building and forging these connections are daily staff outreach goals, the Priority Jobs Initiative, and regional performance measures.

The New York State Department of Labor's Business Services unit continues to expand the network of businesses by requiring staff to engage five businesses each day with the goal of providing a quality service. Each day, staff reviews the new job openings on Jobs Express to identify which hiring business have not recently been serviced. This has proven to be an effective way for staff to foster positive relationships with businesses, and connect job seekers to employment opportunities. Staff connected over 54,000 times with more than 24,000 unique businesses in calendar years 2014 and 2015, resulting in an increase in the number of businesses receiving services.

The Priority Jobs Initiative is a concentrated effort by staff to build ongoing relationships with businesses to provide job seeking customers with a competitive advantage in obtaining employment.

Priority jobs are generally defined as:

• In-demand and quality jobs;

• Job openings that need to be filled immediately;

• Job openings that align with the Career Center talent pool; and/or

• Job openings from businesses with existing relationships.

Job orders that meet this definition are shared with a Career Center Match Team responsible for identifying candidates and securing resumes from those who are interested. Business Services then shares the resumes with the businesses for consideration.

The Priority Jobs model engages the Career Center staff to take a larger role in the front-end matching process of job order fulfillment. This shift enables Business Services staff to function as account executives focused on building relationships with businesses to provide more intensive services and capture placement data, and to follow-up at regular intervals to ensure customer satisfaction.

For PY2015, NYSDOL established a new Business Services Customer Service Indicator for the combined WIOA/W-P program. Specifically, the measure is to effect that 95% of businesses who receive referrals on staff entered job orders receive a follow up contact. The new measure is designed to ensure that the needs of business customers are met and to help build the State's business customer base. This replaces the PY2014 measure to increase the number of businesses posting jobs on the NYS Job Bank/Jobs Express.

Regional Sector Based Approaches

All regions developed successful, long-standing, informal relationships between NYSDOL and LWDA Business Services staff. NYS sought to build on these partnerships by creating Regional Business Service Teams (RBST) to align services with regional strategies across all levels of the workforce system. A number of the REDCs already have sectoral workforce strategies in place and New York State has embarked upon specific regional sector strategies for the health care workforce in NYC and Central regions. The State has also utilized sector strategies in advanced manufacturing in Southern Tier and Western regions. Regional strategies were also utilized when developing the Unemployment Strikeforce Initiative to meet the need for a coordinated inter-agency plan to link unemployed individuals to jobs, while piloting a sector-based approach.

The RBSTs convene regularly to develop regional strategies for Business Services; share business intelligence, labor market information, and information on new programs; and co-host career fairs and customized recruiting events. The RBSTs opened lines of communication that are important when navigating logistical issues due to new policy; collaborating to meet performance measures; and expanding and rolling out new initiatives, including OJT programs.

It is important to note that the Regional Business Services Team:

• Is not a policy-making body, but rather is intended to help align business services provided at the local level with regional sector initiatives/strategies and regional labor market information;

• Does not supersede existing partnerships and/or business relationships that are working effectively, but rather is intended to build upon them;

• Does not preclude an LWDA from partnering with entities in other regions to address specific workforce needs (e.g., Transformational Sector Strategy Projects under Grant 13N); and

• Does not provide direct services to business in the region, but rather is intended to identify and disseminate information regarding services that will benefit businesses.

Regional Business Services Team membership is as follows:

• In regions comprised of more than one LWDA, membership includes:

o The NYSDOL Business Services Associate Representative and Occupational Analyst assigned to the region; and

o One representative from each LWDA in the region designated by the area's LWDB. The LWDA representative can be LWDB or Career Center staff, and must have specific responsibility for providing services to businesses in the LWDA.

• In regions comprised of a single LWDA (New York City), membership includes:

o To be determined - Executive staff from NYSDOL and the New York City LWDA will meet to determine appropriate representation.

Other one-stop system partners are not formal members of the RBST, but may participate on team projects/tasks requiring their expertise and resources.

RBSTs are responsible for developing and implementing guidelines which, at minimum, must address:

• The team's purpose, goals, and key functions;

• Convening of regular meetings, including structured agendas and meeting notes;

• Facilitating consensus based decision-making among team members; and

• Communicating team activities with LWDBs and Career Center managers.

The Unemployment Strikeforce employs a sector-based model that relies on a network of partnerships among business intermediaries, government, educational institutions, training providers, economic developers, and labor and community organizations. This type of model requires active staff engagement in job development (business demand) and customer case management (worker supply) with intensive referral and job brokering.

The Strikeforce model implemented a 'gold standard' of intensive job placement services connecting the unemployed to jobs while providing those services in convenient community locations with the assistance of community partners. Career Centers and Business Services worked seamlessly as a team to ensure job seekers became employed by:

• Stationing Career Center staff in convenient community locations to provide case management of customers; ensure each had a quality resume able to be sent to businesses; receive multiple job leads and referrals; and supply interview preparation assistance and follow-up for further assistance; and

• Stationing Business Services staff at the Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation to engage local businesses to develop job openings; post and match the orders to the Strikeforce customers; and refer qualified candidates. Staff developed customized recruitments and career fair events to facilitate hiring; advocated on behalf of customers with the hiring business; and followed-up to ensure customer satisfaction.

Bronx County, NY was selected as an Unemployment Strikeforce pilot beginning on May 1, 2014. This was based on several years of the borough suffering with one of the highest unemployment rates in the state. In May 2014, the unemployment rate in the Bronx was 10.6% and the statewide rate was 6.2%. By May 2015, those unemployment rates were 8.0% and 5.3% respectively.

The initiative has since been rolled out to nine other counties in New York. The counties added (Jefferson, Lewis, Kings, St. Lawrence, Oswego, Orleans, Montgomery, Franklin and Steuben) had the highest unemployment rates in the State at the time of selection.

Competitive Advantage Assets

New York Works Business Services deploys a number of services and a network of partnerships to enable businesses to meet their needs. The nine key assets listed below are designed to provide a competitive advantage in the labor market to New York Works Career Center business customers, and are described in greater detail in the narrative that follows.

• Inter-Agency Collaboration

• NYS Job Bank and Jobs Express

• Customized Recruiting Assistance

• Focus Talent

• On-the-Job Training

• Tax Credits

• Virtual Career Fairs

• Ensuring Business Integrity

Business Services built a network of partnerships used to attract businesses, develop funding opportunities, and create talent pipelines for businesses. This includes collaboration with State agencies including NYSED ACCES-VR, ESDC, OTDA, and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA).

The mission of Business Services is aligned with the ESDC goal of encouraging job creation and economic opportunities. Accordingly, Business Services collaborates with ESDC to provide information and services to businesses considering developing new sites in NYS. This partnership was evident in the effort to attract United Natural Foods, Inc. to the Hudson Valley region. Local, regional, and state economic development and workforce development entities created a package of labor market and talent pool information, as well as available hiring and training incentives to encourage the development of a 525,000 square foot distribution center that will employ 400 individuals.

Business Services promotes and connects job seekers to the NYSERDA-funded Clean Energy OJT program. As of June 2014, 334 individuals were hired by 69 businesses under this program. NYSDOL and NYSERDA also partnered with OTDA for the Green Jobs/Green NY efforts. OTDA provided more than $1 million in funding and worked as a referral partner of candidates for green career opportunities in residential and commercial weatherization retrofits. Community based organizations (CBOs) were selected by a competitive procurement process to train candidates.

Business Services also partners with higher education on multiple levels, including utilizing colleges, universities, and training providers as strategic partners for regional growth; as referral sources for qualified job seekers; and as business customers when they need to fill job openings.

Business Services acted as an intermediary between the business community and community colleges in the Next Generation New York Job Linkage Program. This program provides incentives to SUNY and City University of New York (CUNY) community colleges for certificate or degree programs that prepare students for current and future in-demand employment opportunities.

Other community college partnerships have been sector or business specific. Hudson Valley Community College developed its TEC-SMART facility and corresponding curricula that seek to provide students with the skills for careers in the burgeoning semiconductor and clean and renewable energy industries in the Capital Region. Similarly, collaboration between Schenectady County Community College (SCCC) and General Electric (GE) developed a program that provides training to work in the renewable energy field as required by the GE Energy Transportation Energy Storage Technologies division that neighbors the SCCC campus. In recruiting for these businesses, Business Services promoted the training programs to applicants looking for training to make them marketable to these in-demand occupations.

Business Services also worked closely with the College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering (CNSE), as it is a major hub of technological growth in NYS. Business Services facilitated numerous recruiting events at CNSE's original location in Albany and at its developing sites in Rochester and Utica. In 2013 and 2014, Business Services events in these three locations hosted more than 2,800 jobseekers for 750 job openings. CNSE is a featured business at Capital Region career fairs and conducted hundreds of on-site interviews. With a potential for thousands of jobs in the next few years, this relationship is expected to grow as the CNSE footprint expands throughout NYS.

The NYS Job Bank provides a great value to business customers, allowing them the opportunity to post jobs at no cost and save thousands of dollars a year in fees from Internet job boards and print media.

Businesses have several options of how to post jobs:

• Send job listings directly to Business Services to be posted;

• Post jobs themselves manually; or

• “Index” jobs directly from their own corporate websites. By choosing to index jobs, all jobs that are posted on the business site are automatically uploaded to the NYS Job Bank. This method provides the convenience of entering the job only once, with any changes to the job order on the corporate site also reflected in the posting on the Job Bank.

There are currently more than 200,000 jobs from more than 8,000 businesses on the NYS Job Bank. There are approximately 15,000 unique page views by job seekers on a weekly basis.

Jobs Express is a subset of the NYS Job Bank that sorts all of the job openings in New York State by region and occupation in a user friendly website (www.jobs.ny.gov). There are approximately 125,000 jobs listed on the Jobs Express website each day on average (over the last three months). This enables businesses and job seekers the ability to search jobs based on zip code and travel distance, and also serves as a critical lead source for business service outreach.

Customized recruiting assistance is core to the Business Services strategy and is promoted to all businesses with current job openings. NYSDOL, partnering with WIOA staff, facilitates recruiting events, including providing space in Career Centers and providing staff to assist at the direction of the business. This service creates connections for job seekers while fostering relationships with business customers. It also helps Business Services staff better understand the needs of the business to make enhanced matches and referrals in the future. NYSDOL seeks to adopt promising practices to ensure continuity across regions and increase the number of quality outcomes (i.e. placements) from these events.

Business Services works with Career Center partners to create and expand the Talent Bank with a wide variety of qualified and capable workers to fit the needs of business customers. The Talent Bank is an online collection of customer resumes made available for business search. It is currently hosted through the Job Bank, and customers are encouraged to post their resume online to be viewed by businesses and notified when new openings become available.

Business Services is currently rolling out Focus Talent, a new tool that will allow businesses to search the Talent Bank for qualified candidates. It also improves the self-service tools for businesses, assisting them to develop quality job postings for the Job Bank. There are future enhancements planned to allow businesses to directly connect with job seekers.

OJT has become one of the principal tools to make connections between businesses and job seekers. The value of these training incentives is demonstrated by the large percentage of businesses that hired job seekers using OJT, and used the program for multiple hires. Local WIA OJT was utilized effectively throughout the state, with particular success in the Mohawk Valley, Southern Tier, and Western regions. These three regions were responsible for more than 50% of the total statewide local OJT hires.

National Emergency Grants (NEGs) with an OJT focus have also proved successful in providing training to dislocated workers and the long-term unemployed. The OJT-NEG produced a significant number of hires, all of whom are dislocated workers who experienced prolonged unemployment. The Dislocated Worker Training NEG was available to businesses to provide occupational training to dislocated workers, with an emphasis on long-term unemployed. The Jobs Driven OJT-NEG is available to businesses looking to expand their workforce and can be used for On-the-Job, Apprenticeship, or Customized training, depending on the individual needs of the employer, and the

NYSERDA Clean Energy OJT program trains workers to perform energy efficiency and residential and commercial renewable energy retrofits; and energy efficiency, renewable energy, or advanced technology installations.

While the programs are administered at the local level, NYSDOL and LWDA staff promotes these programs interchangeably. All staff is active in business and participant identification, development of training plans, and monitoring of contracts.

Business Services staff promotes tax credits to all businesses to incentivize hiring certain eligible populations. This includes the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), the Hire-a-Veteran Tax Credit, and the Urban Youth Jobs (UYJP) Program.

When promoting hiring and training incentives, WOTC has traditionally been a key tool in the Business Services toolkit. Although WOTC was not reauthorized for 2015, Business Services continues to promote awareness of the program to ensure businesses are positioned to take advantage of the credit, should it become available in the future. The Hire-a-Veteran Tax Credit encourages businesses to hire Post-9/11 Veterans who have not been employed in full-time (35+ hours/week) employment for at least 180 days. A business can receive up to $5,000 by hiring and retaining an eligible veteran or $15,000 if the veteran is disabled. This program became active on January 1, 2014. The UYJP program (formally New York Youth Works) is currently active and widely promoted to encourage businesses to hire unemployed, disadvantaged youth, 16 to 24 years of age, who reside in 13 specific targeted areas in eight regions of the state. Businesses utilizing this program can earn up to $5,000 in tax credits. The UYJP has helped 1,541 New York businesses place youth participants in 27,133 jobs across targeted urban communities with high youth unemployment.

Business Services consistently looks for ways to incorporate technology to serve business customers. Through funds from an Unemployment Insurance-Employment Services (UI-ES) Connectivity Grant, Business Services procured a virtual career fair tool from Expos2. Expos2 provides a versatile virtual career fair product that enables business customers to recruit talent through technology and avoid the travel costs and lost time associated with physically attending career fairs and recruitments.

Virtual career fairs work just like in-person events, but from the convenience of a computer. Businesses can post positions, chat with job seekers in real-time, and even showcase a video presentation about their company. With the Expos2 product, businesses can create a virtual business card to exchange at a virtual hiring event, set up at specific time to privately chat with customers they believe are good matches for their positions, and design the virtual booth to suit their needs.

Staff promote the services and provide all necessary technical assistance to businesses, including building the virtual booths; uploading logos, flyers, pamphlets, videos; and links to websites.

Business Services employs multiple methods to capture placement data. These include leveraging relationships that provide a flow-through of placement information from business customers as well as accessing data from New Hire Reports.

The initiatives previously mentioned (e.g. Business Outreach, Priority Jobs, Customized Recruitment) were designed to build the type of solid and trustworthy relationships with businesses that naturally lead to the sharing of placement data. Through these initiatives, staff provides the

quality service that becomes the foundation of strong relationships and open dialogue, which are then leveraged to glean hire information.

Business Services works closely with NYSDOL's R&S Division to retrieve data from New Hire Reports, identifying candidates from OSOS that attained employment with business customers. This enables staff to capture supplemental placement data outside of the direct relationships with businesses.

Ultimately, it is only at the point of placement where the business customer and job seeker come together to validate the vision of Business Services and its execution. Together these methods provide a means to assess the number of placements occurring as a result of Business Services efforts and an understanding of which strategies produce the greatest successes.

Last, monitoring staff activities plays a large role in the success of Business Services operations by ensuring staff provides quality services and document their activities. Outreach to businesses is tracked on a weekly basis to capture data and report on the daily outreach activities, services, and number of businesses served by Business Services staff across the state. This is done through multiple reports, and sent to supervisors and staff so individuals are held to standards for outreach goals and the quality of their work. Data is compiled and analyzed by staff; region; industry sector; type of outreach; and services offered.

Like NYSDOL, NYSCB and ACCES-VR offer workforce development services to businesses, monitor the activities of business outreach staff, and provide linkages between businesses and job seekers.

NYSCB monitors contract compliance with comprehensive services contracts, vocational evaluation/job placement services contracts, and assistive technology services contracts through a centralized Quality Assurance process. Each contractor is evaluated at least once during the contract period through an internal review of randomly selected consumer cases. The review evaluates the contractor's adherence to contract guidelines and the quality of services delivered. The review team includes staff from NYSCB home office and district offices. A final report is submitted to the contractor, and additional follow-up monitoring is conducted if corrective actions are needed.

In addition, on-going monitoring of eligibility, plan development, services provision, and case closure takes place through checks built into the NYSCB consumer caseload management system and through supervisory review of consumer cases.

ACCES-VR has a workforce development and business relations team, including a statewide coordinator, who develops relationships with businesses to ensure a statewide presence; five regional business coordinators who develop relationships with regional companies based on labor market demand; and 15 local workforce development and business relations staff, who develop local business relations and work with the regional and statewide coordinators and other core partners to implement activities on a broader scale.

The whole team works directly with businesses to understand their employment needs and to find candidates who are appropriate matches. Team members also work closely with job seekers, discovering their skills and placing them in on-the-job training and work tryouts. ACCES-VR reimburses 100% of an employee's wages for up to 480 hours for on-the-job training and work tryouts. Recently, the team met with the Workforce Development Committee of the ACCES-VR State

Rehabilitation Council and partnered with a member to roll-out Champions of Change events. These events were designed to link businesses to information about hiring individuals with disabilities.

The ACCES-VR team also provides job coaches, who work with the business and the employee to understand the needs of both. Team members offer assistance on accommodations, tax credits, accessibility, and diversity training. They provide publications about hiring people with disabilities, and celebrate National Disability Awareness month by giving awards to businesses that are committed to hiring people with disabilities in their communities. Staff attends business-related events, including job fairs, to provide information about ACCES-VR services to business and to link specific job applicants to business needs.

The ACCES workforce development and business relations team is aligned with the CSAVR national employment team.

## 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).

Partner Engagement with Educational Institutions

The SWIB, working in collaboration with all 33 LWDBs, is responsible for implementing a statewide vision designed to increase partner engagement with educational institutions. The Education and Credentials subcommittee of the SWIB will lead the charge for the State by designing strategies to engage the State's education and training providers, including community colleges and area career and technical education schools, as partners in the workforce development system to create a job-driven education and training system.

To better understand the fundamentals attached to a strategic vision designed to increase partner engagement with educational institutions, it is important to highlight what New York State is currently doing in the area of education as it relates to the public workforce system. This includes public-private partnerships with community colleges and universities, and creating career pathways.

The Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) partnership continues to chart new territory in the reform of secondary and postsecondary education in the United States by providing high school students with a private sector business mentor and an Associate degree at no cost, putting them first in line for jobs at partnering businesses when they graduate. The state budget for 2015-16 includes $3 million to add additional schools to the NYS P-TECH initiative. Seven new P-TECH partnerships were awarded in 2015, bringing the total number to 33 schools. The public workforce system in various local areas makes a good partner in this initiative.

The state budget for 2015-16 also includes $2.5 million to allow five community colleges to participate in a community schools initiative. This program will bring healthcare services to campuses; assist students with transportation; provide additional resources for child/elder care; and augment existing academic and career development supports. Community colleges serve some of the state's most disadvantaged students and communities, and are more likely than four-year institutions to attract part-time and nontraditional students who are trying to balance work, family, and other obligations with their education. Through the community schools initiative, students will have the tools and supports they need, both in and out of the classroom, to persist and graduate.

SUNY will create regional planning councils ensuring that the 29 community colleges outside New York City cooperate with the other colleges within the regions of the state, and that the colleges in a region, along with stakeholders from other State agencies (including the public workforce system), local government, and business and industry work together. Under this structure, multiple colleges in one region will come together under a regionally assembled council. These councils will set program development, enrollment, and transfer goals on a regional basis. This initiative will limit competition by colleges for students within a region; better align education and training program offerings to regional economic development goals and activities; and improve student outcomes.

To promote student success and institutional excellence, NYS began the process of shifting support from an enrollment-driven formula to one that bases a portion of state aid on performance. The state budget for 2015-16 includes $30 million in new investment and performance funds allocated to SUNY and CUNY campuses that develop performance improvement plans. These plans will include goals to improve access, completion rates, academic and post-graduation success, research potential, and community engagement, including the involvement of the public workforce system.

Building upon the initiatives already in place to better align the public workforce system and educational entities, an increased emphasis will be placed on managing and enhancing the Eligible Training Providers List (ETPL). The ETPL was established in compliance with WIA and amended by WIOA to provide customer-focused employment training resources for adults and dislocated workers. Training providers who are eligible to receive Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) through WIOA Title I-B funds are listed on the ETPL. New York State will work diligently to ensure the ETPL provides prospective training participants with reliable and objective information regarding program successes and affordability, useful for making training and career decisions that lead to employment in the state's workforce.

In an effort to maximize the benefit of strong collaboration between the public workforce system and the education community, a stronger emphasis at the state level will be placed on Career Pathways and Sector Partnerships. Career Pathways is a system-wide framework that aligns education and training with specific advancement opportunities for a broad range of job seekers. All core partners under WIOA overseeing workforce development programs will re-orient their services toward career progression instead of stopping at job placement. This effort will include sector-focused bridge programs, skills training, job-relevant curricula, and work-based learning opportunities.

Career Pathways connect education, training, credential attainment, and wraparound services to support new and incumbent workers as they advance to higher levels of employment. The core partners under WIOA will work with SUNY and NYSED, and other educational institutions to align education (including career and technical education programs), postsecondary education (including certificate, Associate, and Bachelor's degree programs), and credential training with specific career advancement opportunities as job seekers' needs evolve over time. To embark on such a statewide initiative of Career Pathways, the SWIB, in collaboration with the LWDBs, will need to customize an individual approach to Career Pathways for each of the 33 LWDBs in New York State.

Lastly, Sector Partnerships will be a statewide priority under WIOA and will necessitate a strong collaboration of various partners. Sector partnerships are partnerships of businesses from the same industry and in their natural labor market region, with education, workforce development, economic development, and community organizations that focus on a set of key priority issues identified by the target industry. It is recognized that sector partnerships must have an active convener, and for this reason, the SWIB as the workforce development leader will take on the role of convener to implement state-level initiatives around sector partnerships. Similar to Career Pathways, the SWIB,

in collaboration with the LWDBs, must customize an individual approach to Sector Partnerships for each of the 33 LWDBs in New York State.

## 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.

State strategy engagement with other education and training providers including those on the ETPL are included in (E) above.

## 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).

Leveraging Resources to Increase Educational Access

New York State recognizes that the realities of today's global economy makes it imperative that the public workforce investment system be demand-driven, fully integrated, and focused on talent development in support of regional economic growth. This involves providing services that prepare workers to take advantage of new and increasing job opportunities in high-growth/high-demand and economically vital industries and sectors of the American economy. It is imperative that NYS leverages the hundreds of millions of dollars it receives annually from the federal government to support the pubic workforce system in such a way to meet critical workforce challenges to create a competitive global workforce, including an increase to educational access.

NYS plans to strategically invest and leverage the resources of the multiple federally funded-programs delivered through Career Centers by adopting a shared vision and collaboration of all partners in the state and local system, including the Governor and Local Elected Officials, the State and Local Workforce Development Boards, and the Career Centers. By aligning resources at all levels, the workforce system serves as a leader and catalyst for talent development strategies.

More defined strategies for leveraging resources will include:

• A formal commitment to leveraging resources by all required One-Stop System Partners via the MOU process;

• Utilizing a portion of WIOA statewide activities funds for educational and training purposes;

• Collaborating with the REDCs throughout NYS to prioritize and allocate funding opportunities for educational and training purposes;

• Applying for all educational and training funding opportunities announced at the federal level; and

• Developing effective Career Pathways and Sector Partnership strategies that encourage all partners (e.g., businesses, workforce system, educational entities, etc.) to commit to a certain level of resources, including an allocation for education and/or training for active participants.

## 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.

Improving Access to Postsecondary Credentials

Postsecondary and Industry-Recognized Credentials

Access to and attainment of postsecondary and industry-recognized credentials is an integral step in helping job seeking customers obtain middle-skill employment that pays family sustaining wages. The skilled workforce this creates will meet the needs of business customers and help NYS attract and retain businesses. The state is implementing a demand-driven sector partnership strategy to align the goals of the workforce, business, and education communities to ensure the correct mix of training and credential programs are available to meet the needs of business and job seekers alike.

The state is supplementing these efforts with Sector Partnership (SP) NEG funding. This will reinforce and expand existing efforts, as well as provide startup capital for new initiatives that will be sustained when the grant period ends. The SP-NEG seeks to streamline the assessment and referral of job seekers to training opportunities that match their career goals and the needs of the regional labor market.

The state's strategic vision for improving access to credentials is exemplified by the REDCs' identification and creation of demand industry lists. These regional lists become the foundation for determining which credential training programs to offer, the establishment of statewide demand industries, and creation of industry partnerships. The work of the REDCs is supported by the SWIB and its subcommittees. The SWIB Education and Credentials subcommittee is actively engaged in career pathway development within the demand industries. This work will include a comprehensive mapping of occupational demands to available credentials and a skills gap analysis between the supply of job seekers and the current and projected worker requirements of business. These mappings and gap analyses will facilitate the effective delivery of services in the state's Career Centers and appropriate referral to credential training.

Actionable labor market information is the core of any effective sector partnership strategy. Combining the resources of the key economic development, workforce development, and education entities in New York State ensures that the goals of our essential partners are aligned and that appropriate credential training programs are made available (or developed to meet projected need) to job seekers.

Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship is a time-honored approach to training skilled workers through a combination of on-the-job training and classroom instruction, and is used to develop tomorrow's competitive workforce.

Apprentices earn wages and produce high-quality work while learning skills that enhance their employability. An apprentice operates under the close supervision of an accomplished worker (journey-worker) on the job and takes related classroom instruction often at night or on weekends. A graduated pay scale assures that salary reflects the degree of skill achieved.

New York State's Registered Apprenticeship program is aligned with WIOA and W-P within NYSDOL's DEWS office. The alignment of these programs ensures that dislocated workers and unemployed individuals are exposed to current apprentice opportunities, educated on the increasing role of apprentices in the workforce, and are encouraged to apply for apprenticeship opportunities through job fairs and Career Centers. Apprenticeship staff located throughout NYS work closely with Career Centers to also promote Registered Apprenticeship to businesses as a proven vehicle for preparation of a skilled workforce. Many Registered Apprenticeship program sponsors recruit publicly through their local Career Centers for new apprentices. In addition, businesses that elect to conduct area-wide recruitments are required to submit their recruitment information to the NYSDOL. A press release is developed for each of these area-wide recruitments, and is distributed to local media and posted on NYSDOL's webpage, in addition to listing the positions on the NYS Job Bank.

At the successful completion of each Registered Apprenticeship program, the NYSDOL awards the apprentice with a Certificate of Completion. Each certificate is a nationally recognized portable credential. A new trend in Registered Apprenticeship is for sponsors to partner with education so that apprentices also earn an educational degree. This builds on the current required related classroom instruction. Some Registered Apprenticeship program sponsors do this by combining the standard on-the-job skill component of training with expanded classroom instruction in a particular field. This classroom training is offered at the community college level. As a result, apprentices will earn both a Certificate of Completion from the NYSDOL and an Associate degree from a community college.

The focus of apprenticeship activities is to strengthen efforts with existing programs and deepen apprenticeship through expansion into new and emerging industries, including through industries included in REDC initiatives. As part of this effort, NYSDOL approved the Electronics Technician (Manufacturing) trade to be used in an advanced manufacturing facility. This new trade monitors, adjusts, and troubleshoots advanced manufacturing equipment. Electronics Technicians utilize knowledge of Numerical Control programming, Computer-Aided Design, and Programmable Logic Controller programming while performing their duties. In addition, during the past year, three new trades; Instrument Mechanic, Chemical Laboratory Technician, and Diesel Engine Mechanic were approved. Instrument Mechanics work with various types of instruments crucial to manufacturing processes and may be used in many different manufacturing capacities. Chemical Laboratory Technicians collect, analyze, and report pertinent industry data. Chemical Laboratory Technicians may be utilized in multiple industries including food, biological, and pharmaceutical. The Diesel Engine Mechanic trade addresses an industry that is in dire need of qualified workers.

Additionally, NYSDOL has its first competency-based program for the Direct Support Professional trade. Traditionally, apprenticeship programs were only approved as time-based programs where apprentices had to complete a specific number of hours in each on-the-job task but did not have to demonstrate competency. Competency-based programs require apprentices to demonstrate competency in completing each work process task and related instruction topic in order to successfully complete the program. Approval of competency-based programs allows sponsors and apprentices additional flexibility in the length of time needed to complete a program and will help NYSDOL to move Apprenticeship into new occupations created through technological advancement, demographic changes, and globalization.

## 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.

Coordination with Economic Development Strategies

Regional Economic Development Councils

In order to empower each region to chart its own course, Governor Cuomo created ten REDCs to encourage an approach to economic development driven by the people and businesses from within each region. Membership reflects the myriad of interests in each community, including major industries, small businesses, higher education, community organizations, and labor. The Regional Councils turned around Albany's top-down approach to economic development, shifting to a community-based, performance-driven model that empowers localities to develop and invest in their own economic future. Each REDC developed a strategic regional plan to capitalize on the established strengths and unique resources of each of the ten regions of NYS.

In their various plans, the REDCs listed priority areas specific to their region. Based on information in the plans, the Green and Renewable Resources, Healthcare, and Advanced Manufacturing sectors continue to be priorities for most of the state's regions. Other priorities in at least three REDC plans include: Energy; Financial and Professional Services; Tourism (including Hospitality, Food, and Beverage); and Software/Telecommunications/Information Technology.

A majority of the REDC plans identified both the K-12 educational pipeline and post-secondary education (undergraduate and higher) as priority areas. In terms of sources of non-academic training, those that were cited in several REDC strategic plans as priority areas include:

• Apprenticeships and On-the-Job training;

• Customized training; and

• Worker skills upgrading/incumbent worker training.

In addition, a majority of the REDC strategic plans cite the pressing need to align worker supply with worker demand. Other workforce issues mentioned by the REDCs in their regional plans include: addressing workforce shortages, concerns about skill gaps, and a need for extensive training.

In addition, the State University of New York and the accompanying Community College system has begun to recognize this established regional structure for economic development and the synergy that organizing around this geography can produce. Accordingly, colleges have begun to collaborate on a regional basis to address sectoral training needs identified through data and prioritized by the REDCs.

Five-Year Regional Economic Development Strategic Plans

In 2011, each council was required to develop a five-year strategic plan to compete for regional economic development resources. Over the past five years, as part of a process that has awarded over $1.5 billion for job creation and community development, the REDCs produced innovative plans

and implementation agendas that truly reflect the distinct characteristics of each of the ten regions of NYS. The momentum continued in 2013 with $220 million to implement regional strategies and priorities. In addition, State agencies provide additional resources to support regional growth strategies. These funds are made available through a Consolidated Funding Application (CFA). The CFA was created to streamline and expedite the grant application process for stakeholders within each region.

NYSDOL aligned its Business Services goals with the goals of the REDC in each region, including focusing on serving businesses in priority sectors identified by each Council and promoting the yearly CFA to businesses. The CFA streamlines the way businesses apply for economic development funds by bringing together resources from 12 State agencies including ESDC, NYSERDA, New York Power Authority, Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Department of State (DOS), and NYSDOL. Business Services assists with contract development for NYSDOL programs and provides ongoing technical assistance to award recipients.

State Agency Coordination

The Governor charged State agencies with providing support to Regional Councils in four main ways:

• Identify existing funding and resources to support the implementation of Strategic Plans;

• Conduct a due diligence review of the CFA submissions for relevant legal issues and potential disqualifying concerns;

• Work with REDCs to address obstacles to long-term economic growth statewide; and

• Revise State guidelines and internal processes to expedite REDC projects across State government.

REDC strategic plans are to be comprehensive and address needs in a holistic fashion. Accordingly, ESDC, the State's economic development agency, reached out to approximately 20 other NYS agencies to identify resources and strategic support for the Regional Councils. As guided by ESDC research, each agency provided data and other information that summarized some aspect of the ten regional economies. For example, business climate was captured in part through state and local tax data and traditional regional economic data was provided by NYSDOL. ESDC research staff formatted and restructured the data as needed to fit the REDCs' objectives creating a "regional snapshot" presentation for each region and a "data warehouse" of databases and other information to support the snapshots. This groundbreaking innovation was recognized as an example of outstanding achievement in economic development research by The Council for Community and Economic Research (C2ER) in June 2012.

Regional Workforce Planning

To further inform and enhance regional progress reporting, NYSDOL requires LWDBs in each region to review the goals and strategies laid out by their respective REDCs, and collaborate on a regional work plan that identifies resources, partnerships, and initiatives that address one or more of their REDC's specific goals and strategies. This process helps to highlight the inter-relationship between workforce development and economic development efforts in each region and showcases the powerful contributions the LWDBs make to regional economies. These include:

• Partnerships;

• Informing training providers of business needs;

• Aligning training resources;

• Pursuing grants and other funding opportunities;

• Focusing on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM);

• Advancing entrepreneurship;

• Targeting training resources on low-income populations;

• Supporting the REDC's Opportunity Agenda;

• Promoting youth career development and employment;

• Expanding Apprenticeship; and

• Developing a regional portal for job and training opportunities.

A brief description of each of these notable actions is presented below:

• Partnerships - Partnerships among businesses, training providers, educational institutions, and government entities are used to identify the skills gaps in the sector, establish new training opportunities, and host business forums to identify industry sector needs. They can also help businesses solve production problems, improve products and manufacturing processes, create new businesses, support research into new materials and nanostructures, and attract additional research funding.

• Informing training providers of business needs - Regions provide information related to regional demand occupations and the needs of in-demand industries to training providers. Providers then align training programs with the skill needs, bringing consistency and efficiency to training provided in a region. In addition, community colleges were asked to create Business Advisory Committees, to help shape curriculum, recruitment, placement, and evaluation of vocational and training programs. These practices engage training providers and community colleges in responsive planning and curriculum development to meet the needs of in-demand industries, keeping programs up to date as they evolve with businesses needs.

• Aligning training resources - Regional LWDBs pool and earmark training resources provided ITAs to focus on REDC target sectors and in-demand occupations.

• Pursuing grants and other funding opportunities - Grants and other funding opportunities offer the chance for additional sources of funding to the regular WIOA funding available. Collaboration with other partners, particularly to implement training programs, helps increase the likelihood of award.

• Promoting Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) - Many REDCs identified STEM occupations as a priority. Promotion of STEM related trainings; working with businesses to

assess their STEM hiring needs; and applying for relevant grants through activities such as assessments for STEM preparedness, computer literacy, math and reading, and mechanical reasoning, aligns Regional LWDBs with this REDC priority.

• Advancing Entrepreneurship - Regional LWDBs advance entrepreneurship by encouraging Career Center customers to utilize the Self-Employment Assistance Program (SEAP) and look to capitalize on grant opportunities to assist startup companies and companies looking to expand.

• Targeting training resources to low-income populations - Targeting training resources for low-income populations is necessary to serve the hardest to serve populations in a region. A number of grants to provide Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients and low-income workers with training and employment opportunities are active in NYS.

• Supporting REDC Opportunity Agendas - Involvement in the Opportunity Agenda, an REDC initiative, can help overcome the challenges that prevent poor communities from fully participating in the state's economic revitalization. By concentrating on one particular community, regions can identify strategies to address specific challenges and be able to competitively seek funding through a streamlined process.

• Promoting youth career development and employment - Promoting youth career development and employment helps prevent youth from leaving the region due to lack of employment opportunities. This can be done by facilitating the process of commercializing academic ideas or inventions and building companies around them. This can also be done by working with college partners to address needs of out-of-school youth by focusing on increasing regional college and high school internships.

• Expanding Apprenticeship - Expanding apprenticeship models in organizational settings can have a positive impact on regional economies. Developing an overview of apprenticeships operated throughout the state can provide insight into best practices. This information can then be shared with local businesses operating in the same sectors/industries to help them establish their own apprenticeship programs.

• Developing a Regional Portal for Job and Training Opportunities - Developing a regional portal for job and training opportunities for customers can help simplify the job search process. This can be accomplished by surveying Career Center customers to develop a regionalized list of relevant customer resources.

## 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.).

Operating under a holistic philosophy, NYS also successfully integrated several employment services systems into a single system, using the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant as a catalyst. This comprehensive employment system is called the New York Employment Services System (NYESS) and provides all New Yorkers, regardless of their (dis)ability, with a single point of access to all employment-related services and supports, including job matching with the approximately 125,000 jobs currently posted by businesses on the NYS Job Bank. NYESS includes the following state-level agencies: Office of Mental Health (OMH), NYSDOL, NYSED, OASAS, NYS Office of Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), NYS Office for the Aging, and the NYS Division of Veterans Affairs. Providers of employment-related supports and services licensed by, or contracting with, one of the participating state agencies are also able to sign up to utilize this system. NYESS creates the ability to centralize employment service/support information, greatly improving the ability to coordinate employment supports and services among multiple providers and across multiple systems.

New York State agencies participating in NYESS have a shared case management system and WIOA combined enrollment process. This allows for streamlined services to customers; coordination of services; the ability to provide real time referrals; and delivery of comprehensive service to participants. Although all WIOA core and partner programs are not yet using the same case management system, an interagency workgroup was established to explore potential options.

Over the next three years, NYESS and NYS DDPC will develop an integrated web-based platform called DB101. This system will be integrated with NYESS, CareerZone, and JobZone to provide accurate, up-to-date information and benefits calculators so participants can better assess how going to work will impact their access to publicly funded healthcare and income support like Supplemental Security Income, Social Security Disability Insurance, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, housing assistance, and other public benefits.

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

The Core Programs are working closely together to identify and establish appropriate data sources and gaining the necessary administrative clearances to meet the WIOA requirements. Titles II and IV

are in the process of gathering the necessary information to establish valid and reliable data for the required performance measures.

Also, please refer to Section (A) above for the data collection and reporting system overview.

* 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.

The State directs the Career Center system through ongoing technical assistance on State policy and the release of workforce development system technical advisories. As these policies are initially developed, stakeholders across the system are consistently engaged to provide valuable input and commentary. Through a variety of methods, including webinars, teleconferences, in-person meetings, and written documents; Local boards, chief local elected officials, and local one-stop partners are engaged as necessary to reinforce a working knowledge of established and newly-developed State workforce policies. In addition, most policies will require a more formal release to serve as a point of reference for the State workforce system. These releases are developed in collaboration with the State Board, core program partners, and local workforce system stakeholders. The list of topics covered by these written technical advisories is significant so they cannot all be commented on in the Plan, but some key topics include:

- Universal Accessibility of Career Center Services
- WIOA Local and Regional Workforce Planning
- Functional Alignment of Program Services
- Veterans' Priority of Service
- Individual Training Account Approval Policy
- MOUs and other Agreements
- Governance Issues and Guidelines

A comprehensive list of current NYSDOL technical advisories and their text may be found at the following link: https://labor.ny.gov/workforcenypartners/tas.shtm.

In regards to Career Center partner program contributions to the Centers as required by WIOA, the State is still in the process of developing final technical assistance in this area and has been working in close collaboration with program partners, the Local Boards, and the State Board. The core program partners have been working to improve the State approval process for MOUs, and staff has been officially assigned to focus on this process and work to streamline partner negotiations.

NYSDOL has already issued general assistance on establishment of cost allocation methodologies in the form of a webpage (http://www.labor.ny.gov/workforcenypartners/bull1-99cap.shtm) that contains information about General Cost Allocation principles set forth be the Office of Management and Budget, development of cost allocation plans, the types of data that can be used as a basis for cost allocation, as well as a concrete example of cost allocation plan development.

## 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

Within the NYS workforce delivery system, the Governor oversees NYSDOL and OCFS, including NYSCB, while the Board of Regents is responsible for NYSED, including ACCES-VR and Adult Education and Literacy. NYSED, OCFS, and NYSDOL are linked through the SWIB, with each agency being an ex-officio member of the board. Both ACCES-VR and NYSCB include a State Rehabilitation Council, responsible for providing advice and support to both programs in the delivery of services to individuals with disabilities.

NYSED oversees Title II-Adult Education and Literacy and Title IV-Vocational Rehabilitation. Under program delivery, Adult Education and Literacy oversees seven RAEN centers and additional Adult Education providers, while ACCES-VR utilizes its District Offices to provide services to participants. NYSCB also oversees Title IV-Vocational Rehabilitation, and like ACCES-VR, utilizes its District Offices for program delivery to participants. NYSDOL oversees Title I-Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs and Title III-Wagner-Peyser, and utilizes the State's 96 Career Centers and partner programs for service delivery.

All three agencies refer participants to one another to provide the best service possible to all. In addition, the workforce development system includes additional partners who are also represented on the SWIB. These partners include ESDC, OTDA, SUNY, and CUNY.

The WIOA Organizational Chart may be found at the following link:
www.labor.ny.gov/workforce/swib/docs/wioa-organizational-chart.pdf.

### B. STATE BOARD

Provide a description of the State Board, including—

State Board

For detailed information on the State Workforce Investment Board, please see the State Board Functions section under Operational Planning Elements in Section III (a)(1). The membership roster and each member's affiliation for the SWIB are presented in the following Sections.

## 1. MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

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

Name Organization Affiliation

Gov. Andrew Cuomo Chamber Governor

Baird, Tony Tony Baird Electronics Business

Carro, Noreen LMN Printing Co. Business

Cozzolino, Vincent FALA Technologies Business

Dattola, Rick Tupper Lake Supply Business

Diodati, Richard Charles T. Sitrin Health Care Center Business

Esteban, Sergio LaBella Associates PC Business

Fancher, Michael College of Nanoscale Science & Engineering Business

Fitzgerald, Carol Life Medical Technologies, Inc. Business

Fuest, Norbert Morton Salt Business

Hill, Beth L. Fort Ticonderoga Business

Johnson, Jessica Johnson Security Bureau Inc. Business

Kondra-DeFuria, Suzanne Potter Heating & Air Conditioning Business

Madison, Allison Madison Approach Staffing, Inc. Business

Maier, Peter INFICON Business

McNally, Michael United Health Services Business

Miner, Kathleen Univ. of Rochester Medical Center & Strong Memorial Hospital Business

Papale, Shawna Candella's Produce LLC/ Mohawk Valley Edge Business

Sansone, Chris Keller Technology Corp. Business

Schneider, Shelby Shmaltz Brewing Co. Business

Shybunko-Moore, Anne GSE Dynamics Business

Townsend, Kimberly Loretto Business

Weber, Nancy Mexican Pride Farm Business

Commissioner NYS Education Department Core Program/Executive

Commissioner NYS Department of Labor Core Program/Executive

Commissioner NYS Office of Children and Family Services Core Program/Executive

Commissioner Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance/Summer Youth Employment Executive

President & CEO Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC) Executive

Chancellor SUNY Executive

Titus, Michele NYS Assembly Legislative - Assembly

Savino, Diane NYS Senate Legislative - Senate

Ossenfort, Matthew Montgomery County Local Elected Official (County Executive)

Quill, Michael Mayor, City of Auburn Local Elected Official (City)

Catalano, Albert Int'l. Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers Apprenticeship Representative/Organized Labor

Costello, Patrick IBEW Local 43 Organized Labor

King, Deborah 1199 SEIU Training & Employment Funds Organized Labor

Ayala, Plinio Per Scholas Youth

Mathis, David Oneida County Workforce Development Youth

McDermott, Joseph Consortium for Worker Education Workforce

Miliken, James CUNY Workforce

Murphy, Ed AFL-CIO, Workforce Development Institute Veteran

Cole, Paul American Labor Studies Center Mature Workforce

According to SWIB bylaws adopted May 2015, nominations to business and labor representative positions are solicited from appropriate State-level business/labor organizations, consistent with WIOA. As New York State had a WIOA-compliant State Board prior to WIOA implementation and there were no subsequent membership changes prior to Combined State Plan submission, it has not yet been necessary to exercise the business/labor nomination process.

## 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

The SWIB created subcommittees that focus on specific goals that align with the goals and strategies of WIOA and the REDCs. Each subcommittee chair is a member of the Executive Committee and led by SWIB Chairman Vincent Cozzolino.

In October 2014, SWIB Chairman Cozzolino announced the establishment of five standing subcommittees with all members participating on at least one subcommittee. The subcommittees are:

• Communications & Improving Regional Planning (chaired by Nancy Weber) - coordinates SWIB efforts with those of other workforce entities, such as REDCs and LWDBs, to incorporate regional feedback to statewide initiatives and/or foster new ideas. Within this subcommittee, there is an emphasis on SWIB members attending local board meetings to solicit local level feedback to build stronger partnerships that foster system responsiveness and improvement.

• Education & Credentials (chaired by Tony Baird) - identifies and promotes ways to increase employment and meet business needs through education and training opportunities or reforms. The subcommittee is studying career pathways development within in-demand industries. This work will include a comprehensive mapping of occupational demands to available credentials and a skills gap analysis between the supply of job seekers and the current and projected worker requirements of business. The mapping and gap analyses will facilitate the effective delivery of services in the state's Career Centers and appropriate referral to credential training.

• Significant Industries (chaired by Shelby Schneider) - identifies and addresses concerns such as skills gaps and needs of significant and emerging industries in NYS to promote employment and growth. Members reviewed each of the regions' priority sectors and are currently reviewing labor market information; identifying existing business intermediaries in each region for priority sectors; and determining if there is a need to assist in building this linchpin to further sector strategies. This subcommittee is building upon the REDC planning process and helping to further a "demand driven system" by focusing on meeting the needs of businesses to align our talent (job seekers).

• Aligning Workforce Programs (chaired by Sergio Esteban) - coordinates with workforce programs to ensure compliance with federal goals (WIOA) to avoid unnecessary duplication of services and ensure better alignment. The subcommittee examines how various workforce programs contribute to NYS economic development and can better serve individuals in a streamlined manner. Local board directors representing the diverse areas of the state (cities, and rural and suburban areas) will be invited to participate for local input on better alignment and service delivery. A workgroup of core program staff was formed under this subcommittee at the beginning of 2015 to begin discussions on the WIOA Combined State Plan and continue to meet to find ways to progress on WIOA goals of better system integration and alignment.

• Outcomes & Metrics (chaired by Chris Sansone) - evaluates current performance measures and makes recommendations on new ones that should be established to study results of workforce

programs for inefficiencies. This subcommittee will make recommendations for improvement and promote best practices.

Each subcommittee chair discusses long and short-term goals with Executive Committee members and communicates action items to the entire board at the full membership quarterly SWIB meetings. As topics or issues needing specific attention are identified, workgroups are formed with appropriate subject matter experts assisting in discussion facilitation and research with the goal to produce a deliverable. Subcommittees may refer issues or concerns to another subcommittee for further consideration if it aligns more with the objective and function of that subcommittee. For example, if the Significant Industries subcommittee identifies a training skills gap within a specific business sector, it may be referred to the Education & Credentials subcommittee for further study in order to develop a recommendation to address the problem.

## 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.

Core Program and One-Stop Partner Assessments

In addition to the WIOA performance standards, NYSDOL also tracks several Customer Service Indicators (CSIs). CSIs are designed to move the Career Center System in NYS toward specific goals that NYSDOL deems important to the good of the state, and/or to assist Local Areas in meeting their WIA/WIOA Common Measure goals. First instituted during PY07, NYSDOL used a number of different CSIs that have evolved over time. For PY15, CSIs cover the following topics:

• Ensuring the provision of Initial Assessment as the first staff-assisted service;

• Ensuring customers have a complete customer record (termed “Employability Profile”) in OSOS;

• Ensuring customers identified as needing Job Search Ready Services (JSRS) receive a referral within 5 days of the Initial Assessment;

• Increasing the number of JSRS customers performing resume based searches in JobZone, which populates the NYTalent Bank;

• Ensuring Youth participants complete a CareerZone Portfolio;

• Ensuring Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) are done in occupations identified as regional priorities by LWDBs in a region; and

• Ensuring follow-up with business customers who have referrals on their job orders.

As discussed previously, NYSDOL, in partnership with NYS OMH, developed and implemented NYESS. NYESS is made up of various computer applications and data sets. Employment related data collection is accomplished by all NYESS partners using the existing NYSDOL case management system, OSOS. Legacy data sets from the partners and current data sets, which include but are not limited to, OSOS; vocational rehabilitation agencies; DOH; Social Security Administration (SSA); and others are pulled together in a data warehouse. A web-based reporting portal designed and maintained by OMH will provide cross-agency report card like information to the general public (aggregate data) and to the individual agencies and their contracted partner staff.

Anticipated 1st year metrics include, but may not be limited to:

• Number of shared customers across various agencies.

• Standardized “Report Card” like public reports (aggregate level) available on new web portal (in development): Statewide/Regional/Local; Agency/Provider; and Cross Agency.

Over the next three years, NYESS and NYS DDPC will develop an integrated web-based platform called DB101. This system will be integrated with NYESS, CareerZone, and JobZone to provide accurate, up-to-date information and benefits calculators so participants can better assess how going to work will impact their access to publicly funded healthcare and income support like Supplemental Security Income, Social Security Disability Insurance, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, housing assistance, and other public benefits.

The Adult Education and Literacy Programs Adult Student Information System and Technical Support (ASISTS) is a NYSED-funded, custom built management information system. This system has been used by funded programs in NYS since PY2007-08. In addition to serving as the database for all program data related to adult literacy, it also provides reports designed to check for data quality and compliance with NRS. To ensure consistent and continual availability of training support, ASISTS produced a number of training videos, focusing on daily required action with program data. Round table discussions are scheduled quarterly to promote data quality.

Leadership will continue to support a contract for technical assistance, training, and troubleshooting to improve data quality and monitor program performance in every program. The NRS accountability specialist funded by this NYSED contract works directly with NYSED staff. Duties include focusing on the largest providers with significant enrollments and programs who need intensive technical assistance to achieve improvement. In 2016-17, under the Combined State Plan, three programs from each region (for a total of 21) will be selected for inclusion in the Individual Technical Assistance Program (ITAP). The Big5 city school district programs (NYC, Yonkers, Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo) consistently receive support from ITAP, given their large size. All ITAP programs will be desk monitored, accompanied by monthly conference calls and an annual scheduled site visit. All communication and quarterly data analysis will be collected electronically and stored on the NYS accountability website in a secure portal for each program. The portal is accessible by the NRS specialist, the NYSED Regional Liaison, the RAEN Director, and the program manager. Each fiscal year, report card data is reviewed by NYSED, and any program’s performance that places that program in Quartile 1 and missed one or more of the state benchmarks, is placed under Corrective Action. The program will be required to correspond electronically on the accountability website. Quarterly data reviews will be conducted by the NRS Accountability Specialist and subsequent conference calls will be scheduled with those programs exhibiting poor performance or inconsistent data patterns. The NRS Accountability Specialist will assist in identifying problems and trends on a statewide and regional level.

Professional development in the areas of data collection, recording, and reporting continues to be a priority. Added to that is the constant need for NRS training at all levels. The Accountability Specialist will provide a minimum of two training events in each of the seven geographic regions annually. Topics include NRS Foundations, NRS for Teachers, and NYS Report Card Training.

Beginning in 2007, all funded agencies continued to receive NYS issued report cards. This will continue in 2016-17. The report cards evaluate programs under two distinct methodologies. The first is a standard benchmark measurement. NYS benchmarks for performance in Educational Gain, Post Test Rate, and Follow up Outcomes are set each year by NYSED based on the averages derived from the prior year's state data. When programs meet all three benchmarks, they are scored as "proficient."

The second method of evaluation is based on a quartile ranking among all programs in the state. In the case of Educational Gain, the program's scores are weighted based on the educational functioning levels indicating the strongest proponent for gain. The weighting of each EFL is determined by the aggregate data analysis of the prior year's data. The quartiles are determined using the following rubric:

• 50% of the score is from the weighted educational gain;

• 20% of the score is from the post-test rate;

• 20% of the score is based on the four follow-up measures, i.e., total students with a follow-up goal who achieved the goal upon exiting divided by the total exiters with one of the identified goals; and

• 10% of the score will be based on achieving both a 50% and 70% response rate on the survey of all students who exited the program with a follow-up goal.

Local program data will be entered quarterly into ASISTS according to the following dates:

• Quarter I (7/01-9/30) data entered and reviewed by 11/30;

• Quarter II (10/01-12/31) data entered and reviewed by 2/28;

• Quarter III (1/01-3/31) data entered and reviewed by 4/30; and

• Quarter IV (4/01-6/30) data entered and reviewed by 8/31. Note that the program has until 10/31 each year to finalize the annual data submitted over the previous four quarters. It is the responsibility of the program to have data entry up to date for each quarter. This timeline is being reconsidered for FY15/16 and may result in an abbreviated version.

ITAP continues in 2015-16. ITAPs identify agencies in need of intense technical assistance. The contracted Accountability Specialist, New York State regional staff, and RAEN directors work closely with these programs to identify gaps in quality and performance, and implement an effective program improvement plan. Effective use of webinars and conference calls provide a consistent line of communication with these programs as they implement change to improve their performance. As programs improve their performance, they are removed from ITAP status and others are then identified.

Beginning in November 2014 and continuing through 2015-2016, NYSED issues a Program Evaluation Report for each funded program. The annual Program Evaluation Report will identify whether the agency met the NYS benchmarks for Educational Gain, Post Test Rate, and Follow up Outcomes. These are aggregate benchmarks set annually by NYSED based upon NRS targets negotiated with the U.S. Education Department and previous year performance data from programs funded by NYSED. Programs that do not meet these NYS annual benchmarks will be required to undertake a formal Corrective Action Planning process. The program must submit and receive NYSED approval for a comprehensive CAP plan that identifies specific steps for meeting NYS annual benchmarks by June 30, 2017. For programs identified for corrective action in November of 2015 or 2016, they must meet their annual benchmarks by June 30, 2017 and June 30, 2018, respectively.

After the Corrective Action Plan (CAP) process is initiated, NYSED staff will conduct virtual calls/webinars to include the local program staff identified by the adult education director, the NRS Accountability Specialist under contract with NYSED and the program's RAEN director to track progress toward meeting the NYS annual benchmarks. For a program placed in CAP in 2015-2016, the program will have two years to raise performance to meet or exceed the New York State annual benchmarks. All communication is documented on the accountability website. Program data and related data reports are stored in secure, user-protected, individual program accounts accessible only to NYSED staff, the RAEN director, and the NRS Accountability Specialist. The website and all secure documents are maintained through the office of the NRS Accountability Specialist, funded under contract with NYSED.

As part of the comprehensive CAP, there is a Continuous Evaluation Process (CEP) under which programs and NYSED must identify quarterly progress milestones on key indicators such as educational gain that lead to meeting NYS annual benchmarks within two years. NYSED staff, the RAEN director, and the NRS Accountability Specialist will conduct a quarterly review to determine whether approved quarterly milestones were met for each agency on corrective action. Failure to meet the quarterly progress milestones for any three consecutive quarters could result in the termination of the grant at the end of that program year. This means that a grant could be terminated as early as June 30, 2016.

Both the CAP and CEP processes will be reported and tracked through the accountability website at: http://www.adult-education-accountability.org for each program funded through this RFP.

Under the federal NRS for adult literacy programs, NYS, and ultimately local service providers, will be evaluated based on performance indicators. Successful applicants must submit data based on the federal requirements of the NRS. Information on the NRS may be found on the web page www.nrsweb.org.

Tracking data in ASISTS follows a four category process. These categories are sequential and allow for the diversity among New York's adult literacy programming. The categories are as follows:

Category I - Setup.

Programs enter the following categories of data to set up their data account in ASISTS:

• Funding sources - Programs can track services funded by multiple sources.

• Sites - Providers enter data pertaining to each of their sites and connect it to services so they can run reports separately by site.

• Outcomes - In addition to tracking required outcomes, programs may also track outcomes that are specific to their own specialized programming, such as training or career pathways.

• Personnel - Providers add teacher information including name, experience, certification information, and longevity.

• Classes/Services - Providers create their roster of classes adding the schedule, teacher, and type/level of classes.

Category II - Registration.

All state funded programs must use a standard registration form, the Individual Student Record Form (ISRF).

• Student information - This includes name; DOB; contact information; and demographic information such as gender, ethnicity, employment status, educational background, and public assistance status. ASISTS also allows providers to note whether a person is a parent or disabled.

• Initial Assessment - All providers use one of two standardized assessments (the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) for Adult Basic Education (ABE) students or BEST Plus for English Language Learner (ELL) students) with registrants at intake or within 12 hours of instruction. This assessment is used to place students in literacy classes.

• Enrollment - Once registration is complete, registrants are assigned to classes based on their assessments and availability.

Category III - Services.

• Hours - Adult Education providers use ASISTS to track attendance hours on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis.

• Test scores - Post-tests are given by providers at regular intervals to demonstrate learning gains. ASISTS calculates the educational gain based on their standardized assessment scores.

Category IV - Outcomes.

Adult Education providers track student outcomes regularly, both during and after their participation in a program.

• Educational Gain - NRS guidelines define a student as demonstrating educational gain when his or her test score places him or her in an NRS level (one of six predefined educational functioning levels) that is higher than the one determined by that student’s initial or pre-test.

• Primary follow-up outcomes - Providers focus on the following three key NRS outcomes:

o Employment and Retention of Employment;

o Attaining the NYS High School Equivalency Diploma; and

o Entering postsecondary education or training.

• Other Outcomes - ASISTS also facilitates the tracking of a wide variety of outcomes that are customized per program.

Review - Reports and Downloads.

ASISTS includes the following reports to review the data and use it for reporting and management purposes.

• Funding reports - Reports that present data critical to reporting following state funding guidelines. The most critical report is the Program Evaluation report indicating on one page the most critical performance statistics NYSED uses to evaluate programs. Employment Preparation Education (EPE) claim forms are also generated from ASISTS.

• Data management reports primarily meant for tracking and internal program management purposes.

• Data checks that are specifically designed to help providers detect and correct issues relating to data quality and completeness.

All of these resources will serve as the basis of core program alignment to support WIOA success.

## 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.

Please refer to Section (A) for a description of how other one-stop delivery system partner program services and Combined State Plan partner programs will be assessed.

## 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.

Please refer to Section (A) for a description of assessments.

## 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.

Please refer to Section (A) for information on evaluation assessments.

## 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),

Distribution of WIOA funding by the federal government to New York State for each of the four Titles is determined by formula. In general the formulas are based on factors related to programmatic need across the States. State level discretion in use of this funding for each of the four WIOA Titles is provided in the following descriptions.

Title I

For Title I Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Worker Programs the majority of funding is provided directly by formula to 33 LWDAs for administration of program services as directed by the Governor certified LWDBs. The remaining funding is set aside for state level programs as directed under the discretion of the Governor with the assistance of the SWIB.

The Local area formula funding is distributed according to factors indicating local area need. For the Adult and Youth programs, funds are:

• Number of unemployed persons in areas with an unemployment rate of 6.5 percent or more;

• Number of unemployed in excess of 4.5 percent of the civilian labor force; and

• Number of Adults/Youth whose income, or whose family income, was below poverty or below 70% of the lower living standard income level.

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

The Local area formula funding is distributed according to factors indicating local area need. For the Adult and Youth programs, funds are:

• Number of unemployed persons in areas with an unemployment rate of 6.5 percent or more;

• Number of unemployed in excess of 4.5 percent of the civilian labor force; and

• Number of Adults/Youth whose income, or whose family income, was below poverty or below 70% of the lower living standard income level.

In addition, NYSDOL oversees WIOA Title III (Wagner-Peyser). W-P funds are utilized by NYS to support employment services for unemployed job seekers and business customers in the New York Career Center System. The Career Center System physically embodies the required coordination of core and local partner program services, as all programs are present at these locations across the state, and is operated under the concept of universal accessibility. Title III funds support State staff, facilities, and information technology needed for partner program delivery at Career Centers and for improving the overall capacity of the workforce system to match labor demand with labor supply. New York State directs these funds as necessary to best support the system and to most efficiently fulfill Federal mandates. PY2015 funding for NYS is $38,363,357, representing a $141,071 reduction from PY2014.

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

For the Title I Dislocated Worker Program, funds are distributed according to:

• Total number of UI beneficiaries and long term unemployed;

• Number of unemployed persons in areas with an unemployment rate of 6.5 percent or more;

• Number of unemployed under the Mass Layoff Statistics program;

• Change in employment in industries with job losses in past five years; and

• Number of farms with net losses.

Greater detail on these Title I formula fund distribution factors, and the actual funding allocations for the local areas can be found at:

http://www.labor.ny.gov/workforcenypartners/alloc/wia-adult-youth-dlw-formula.pdf

http://labor.ny.gov/workforcenypartners/alloc/PY15-WIA-to-WIOA-funding-Narrative.pdf

http://labor.ny.gov/workforcenypartners/alloc/Adult-Youth-DW-2015-Allocations.pdf

## 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.

During grant year 2016-17, NYSED ACCES will implement a new competitive application process for all federal WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) local funding that will determine the eligible providers that will be awarded funds. The comprehensive RFP will bundle separate competitions for:

o Section 225 Corrections Education and other institutionalized individuals

o Section 211 funding Grants and Contracts for Eligible Providers; and

o Section 243 Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education.

The purpose of the RFP is to provide adult education and literacy services to assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency and assist adults in the completion of a High School Equivalency diploma and transition to postsecondary study.

All applicants for all funds must meet broad WIOA eligibility requirements, with the exception of NYS WEP funds which are only open to schools and BOCES. The estimated funds available are $33,379,138 in federal WIOA Title II funds and $1,843,000 in NYS WEP funding.

There are four types of competition: Part 1. Adult Basic Education and Literacy Services, including integrated education and training (Section 211 funding); Part 2. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IEL/CE) (Section 243 funding) Part 3. Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Education Programs (Section 225 funding); and Part 4. Literacy Zones. Literacy zones integrate WIOA Title II funds and NYS WEP funds.

All program area must include a program of instruction that:

- Include curriculum, lesson plans, and instructional materials aligned with NYSED/ OCTAE college and career readiness standards;
- Offer educational and career counseling service that assist an eligible individual to transition to postsecondary education or employment;
- Be part of a career pathway.

Part 1 funds are distributed by formula to distribute funds to 33 local workforce areas using updated American Community Survey census data for 1. Adults without HS diploma; 2. English Language learners who speak less than well; 3. Adults in poverty. Competition is for funding within each Workforce Development Board area, based upon the funds allocated to that area.

Funding in Parts 2, 3 and 4 is distributed based upon a separate statewide competition. Each Part has its own criteria for evaluation using requirements for the appropriate Section of WIOA. Literacy zones (www.nys-education-literacy-zones.org) support case management and interagency coordination in family welcome centers in high poverty communities and communities with high concentrations of limited English speaking adults and connect eligible individuals with community resources, including instruction funded under Parts 1, 2 and 3 of the RFP and programs and services in Career Centers and WIOA partners.

A separate application must be submitted for each of the four Parts

Every applicant receiving funds in each of the four sections of the RFP will receive multi-year awards for three years, with the option of two one-year extensions that will apply to all programs. Competition for NYS Welfare Education Program funds will be integrated into this WIOA Title II-WEP RFP. WEP grants will follow the same 3-year award timeframe and the possibility of two one-year extensions under WIOA.

Consistent with state procurement procedures and WIOA, NYSED will make the application available to the public and all eligible WIOA applicants by: posting the WIOA Title II-NYS Welfare Education Program comprehensive RFP in the State Contract Reporter and broadly notifying, through email blasts, members of associations and organizations of eligible WIOA providers, including but not limited to, the New York Association for Continuing and Community Education, NYS Corrections Education Association, NYC Coalition for Adult Literacy, SUNY and CUNY community colleges, NYS District Superintendents, current awardees, and past applicants. The RFP is also posted on the NYSED ACCES website under funding opportunities and on seven RAEN websites which provide regional information to adult education providers and potential applicants in each region of the state.

To determine if an applicant is an organization of "demonstrated effectiveness," all applicants will be required to provide data demonstrating their ability to improve skills of low-literate and English language proficient out-of-school youth and adults in the content area related to the RFP using the required academic standards as outlined in the National Reporting System (NRS) guidelines and requirements. All adult education programs currently receiving NYSED funding from WIOA Title II, NYS Adult Literacy Education (ALE), NYS Employment Preparation Education (EPE) state aid, or NYS Welfare Education Program (WEP) operate under one performance and accountability system using the NRS requirements and NYS negotiated performance targets. Performance is based upon the NRS Educational Functioning Level descriptors. For currently funded applicants, each receives a NYSED performance report card that ranks its performance into four quartiles based upon NRS approved targets for NYS. Each applicant that is currently funded will be required to submit the latest negotiated performance measures for all student levels, as well as for English Language Learners. New organizations will be required to fill out a "Demonstrated Effectiveness Chart" that provides evidence of demonstrated effectiveness based upon equivalent performance under NRS using the NRS Educational Functioning Level Descriptors. An applicant will also be required to demonstrate its record of improving the knowledge and skills needed to transition successfully to postsecondary education, skills training, or employment. Each application will be reviewed to determine whether it meets the standard of demonstrated effectiveness.

All awardees will be required to sub-contract 1.5% of the federal funds to their local workforce development board to support one-stop infrastructure. Using the special rule in Section 233 (b), the local administrative cost limits for eligible providers receiving awards will be raised to enable this support. Programs awarded WIOA Title II funds will be required to sub-contract these funds to LWDBs.

A process for LWDB review will be established for all WIOA applicants.

The WIOA Title II-NYS WEP comprehensive RFP will distribute WIOA Title II Section 211 funds to 33 LWDAs to ensure statewide coverage. Funding will be allocated by formula and will take into consideration the literacy and English limited proficiency levels in counties comprising each LWDB, based on data from the American Community Survey. The formula will be adapted from that used in the 2013-14 WIA rebid; specifically, allocations to LWDBs were based on the area's percentage of the State's adult population who are under-educated and lack a high school diploma or equivalency

and the area's percentage of the State's adult population who speak English "less than very well" according to the U.S. Census' 2006-2010 American Community Survey.

Awards will be capped based upon the funding available. In the 2013-14 WIA competitive bid, which will be the template for WIOA, the following cap was provided: "In the New York City Local Workforce Investment Area (LWIA), there is a $500,000 cap on each award **or** as a citywide applicant, an agency who is able to serve at least four of the five boroughs and a minimum of 1,000 students in each borough, may request up to 25 percent of the total LWIA for New York City or $3,315,822 (e.g. minimum of 4,000 students in total)." A similar approach will be used for WIOA. This cap will be reviewed and further adapted for the 2016-17 rebid. For 2016-17, there will be a $250,000 award cap for Corrections Education. Award caps for integrated English Literacy and Civics Education will be set based on a national and state survey of integrated education and training programs.

Adult education and literacy eligible providers approved under WIA's five year multi-year awards that began in 2013-14 will continue to receive funding through June 30,2017 or until the bid is completed, as long as they adhere to State and federal grant expectations, as measured through NRS program performance reports, achievement of enrollment targets, and financial compliance.

Proposed Timeline: The following steps will be taken in conducting the WIOA Title II AEFLA competition, given the full and timely cooperation of partner state agencies such as the State Division of the Budget and State Comptroller:

o November 2016: RFP submitted to the NYS Division of the Budget for approval with priorities and requirements from the New York State Combined Plan.

o January 2017: NYSED issues the comprehensive RFP approved by the State Division of the Budget.

o January 2017: NYSED holds a bidders conference webinar and receives questions from potential applicants, and issues and posts answers clarifying the questions on the NYSED website identified in the RFP.

o February 2017: Teams of reviewers assigned and trained.

o March 2017: Local Workforce Development Boards rate and return AEFLA applications to applicants; due date for AEFLA applications (over 400 are expected).

o March-April 2017: Review and final award recommendations by NYSED ACCES.

o April 2017: Award recommendations submitted to State Comptroller for approval.

o June 2017: NYSED ACCES announces AEFLA grant and contract awards.

o July 1, 2017: AEFLA grant and contract providers being grant cycle, programming and funding.

## 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.

The WIOA Title II-WEP RFP to award funds under WIOA sections 225 (Corrections Education), 231 (Grants and Contracts for Eligible providers), and 243 (Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education) will adhere to direct and equitable provisions for awarding WIOA Title II funds.

NYSED directly conducts the WIOA Title II competition and awards Section 231, 225 and 243 WIOA grants and contracts. NYSED does not fund a sub-State entity to conduct the WIOA competition.

The same announcement, application, and process are used for all WIOA Title II-WEP Comprehensive RFP applicants. All applications are treated in the same manner in terms of review and evaluation. Applications received for each competitive program of the RFP are independently reviewed by teams of two raters who are provided with the evaluation rubric and scoring criteria. Prior to rating, training is also provided to all reviewers on the evaluation rubric and scoring criteria. If there is a major discrepancy in scores for a given application, a third reviewer will rate the application.

## 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.

The determination of how funds are distributed between the two vocational rehabilitation agencies in New York State has historically been made by governing state officials. The process and factors used to make this fiscal determination continue to be acceptable by both ACCES-VR and NYSCB.

# 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.

Alignment of Data

NYS recognizes that aligning and integrating workforce and education data is important in order to fulfill the goals of WIOA. However, this is a difficult task that will take many resources and time to achieve. To begin the process, NYS established a Performance Workgroup as a sub-workgroup to the Aligning Workforce Programs Subcommittee of the SWIB. The workgroup meets regularly and identified the primary steps to take to work towards alignment and integration. The Title I, Title III, Trade Act, and Unemployment Insurance program data is already integrated in OSOS; therefore, NYS will focus on how to align and integrate with the Title II and Title IV programs.

NYS provided demonstrations of each agency's case management systems to the core programs. This is a precursor to performing an "As Is" inventory and gap analysis of the current case management systems and data and reporting systems. NYS will compare the USDOL-WIASRD file and the USDOE-RSA 911 file to the USDOL-WISPR file, based on the anticipation that any new reporting file structure will be similar to the USDOL-WISPR file as the draft regulations (NPRM) suggested. The demonstrations will also help identify data fields that are already collected by each system, even though they may not be fields that are included in reporting. NYS is awaiting further guidance from Federal departments to improve our assessment of what changes can or will be made to its systems.

NYS began identifying some of the obstacles to overcome in the move towards alignment and integration. These include, but are not limited to, awaiting guidance from the federal Departments regarding the level of integration; the specific data required; common enrollments and common exits; developing data sharing agreements and other legal hurdles; fiscal data integration; confidentiality of customer information; meeting NYS requirements and integration with other systems such as the Statewide Financial System (SFS) and NYESS; funding for alignment and integration, and funding for future maintenance and system modernization costs; the different stages of each agency's systems (for example, one agency is in the process of issuing an RFP for a new case management system); and whether the alignment and integration would be only the data on the backend or would include the front end systems.

NYS used quarterly UI wage records for performance accountability for Title I, Title III, and Trade Act programs under WIA, and will continue to do so under WIOA. NYS will also set up UI wage data sharing agreements with Title II and Title IV programs to align with Federal requirements. The state follows confidentiality requirements for wage and education records as required by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), as amended, WIOA, and applicable Departmental regulations.

NYS believes the best way to ensure post-program success of participants is to provide a high quality of services during the program. To achieve this, NYS set additional performance indicators, the CSIs. These indicators focus on the timely Initial Assessment of the participants' needs; the completion of the participants' Employability Profile; and the usage of the JobZone and CareerZone systems developed by NYS to assist in job search and career planning. Performance in these indicators will drive performance in the outcome indicators detailed in WIOA.

Going forward, NYS will continue to take advantage of grant funding made available for system alignment and integration, as well as opportunities for technical assistance from the Federal Departments.

### 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.

Please refer to Section 1 above for plans to integrate data systems to facilitate streamlined intake and service delivery.

### 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.

Please refer to Section 1 above for how the State Board will assist the Governor in aligning technology and data systems.

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

Please refer to Section 1 above for the State's plans to develop and produce the reports required under Section 116.

*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.

NYS believes the best way to ensure post-program success of participants is to provide a high quality of services during the program. To achieve this, NYS set additional performance indicators, the Customer Service Indicators (CSIs). In PY15, there were four CSIs primarily used to gauge program quality. The first covers program intake by ensuring that participants receive an Initial Assessment during their first appointment to determine the additional services needed. As the

economy is improving, the next indicators are focused on getting job search ready participants back into the workforce as quickly as possible. These include the completion of the participants' Employability Profile; the timely referral of participants to relevant job postings; and the usage of the JobZone and CareerZone systems developed by NYS to assist in job search and career planning. Performance in these indicators will drive performance in the outcome indicators detailed in WIOA.

Going forward, NYS will continue to take advantage of grant funding made available for system alignment and integration, as well as opportunities for technical assistance from the Federal Departments.

### 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.)

NYS used quarterly UI wage records for performance accountability for Title I, Title III, and Trade Act programs under WIA, and will continue to do so under WIOA. NYS will also set up UI wage data sharing agreements with Title II and Title IV programs to align with Federal requirements.

### 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.

The state follows confidentiality requirements for wage and education records as required by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), as amended, WIOA, and applicable Departmental regulations.

## 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.

NYSDOL has established a Veterans priority of service policy for the use of self-service resources and staff assisted services. Career Center staff is trained to ask about Veteran status at intake. If an individual self-identifies as a Veteran or eligible spouse at the Career Center, that individual is scheduled with the next available staff person and provided immediate priority in the delivery of employment and training services.

When a Veteran or eligible spouse undergoes eligibility determination for enrollment (e.g. in WIOA Adult programs), staff initiate verification of Veteran or eligible spouse status. At the point of eligibility determination and enrollment, if a Veteran or eligible spouse does not have documentation verifying

their eligibility for priority of service, they are afforded access on a priority basis to all services provided by program staff, including intensive services, while awaiting verification.

In order for priority of service to be implemented successfully, NYSDOL recognizes that proper signage plays a pivotal role. As such, NYS designed, published, and distributed appropriate signage to all local Career Centers and affiliate service sites throughout the state.

Signage is placed prominently at or near the entrance to the Career Center. The placement of additional signage is required; however, the location of this additional signage is at the discretion of the Career Center. Centers are strongly advised to place the additional signage in strategic locations and high traffic areas throughout the center, such as resource rooms and common waiting areas.

In addition to NYSDOL's website, all local workforce areas are advised to ensure that their websites include language advising visitors of the Veterans' priority of service policy. Language alerting users to Veterans' priority of service is also included in any self-registration processes.

All LWDAs must include the priority of service provision in their contract template, RFP, and sub-agreement language.

NYSDOL performs on-site visits to Career Centers and reviews Quarterly Manager's Report on Services to Veterans to monitor priority of service. NYSDOL policy was established to ensure Career Center professional staff is proficient in accurately recording Veteran status in the OSOS case management system. If a Veteran customer enters through a partner organization serving Veterans, that organization can utilize OSOS to support priority of service to their Veteran customer base.

Veteran customers collecting UI benefits, who are not work search exempt, are scheduled to attend individual appointments for reemployment services at the Career Center. In Career Centers that have Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist coverage, and when characteristic information is available in OSOS indicating the Veteran customer is 18-24 years of age and/or has a disability or offender status, the Veteran customer is scheduled first from the UI weekly download to meet with the DVOP specialist to receive services.

Regardless of the service delivery program the Veteran customer is served under, Career Center staff complete the Military Service Questionnaire (MSQ) with every customer who identifies his/herself as a Veteran or eligible spouse. Customers are informed that the information is being requested on a voluntary basis; that it will be kept confidential; that refusal to provide it will not subject them to any adverse treatment; and that it will be used only in accordance with law. The MSQ is used to determine if the Veteran customer has a significant barrier to employment (SBE) and is eligible to meet with a DVOP specialist.

The Secretary of Labor, through the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training, has identified certain categories of veterans most in need of intensive services to mitigate their barriers to employment. Veterans with SBE and veterans between 18-24 years of age remain the highest priority. Within these categories, certain populations of veterans must be targeted for service:

- Special disabled or disabled veterans;
- Homeless;
- A recently-separated service member who at any point in the previous 12 months has been unemployed for 27 or more consecutive weeks;
- An offender who has been released from incarceration within the last 12 months;

- Lacking a high school diploma or high school equivalent certificate; and
- Low-income.

NYSDOL will provide immediate services to veterans who attest to belonging to one of the six criteria listed above and/or those veterans who are 18-24 years of age. Career Centers will have a self-attestation checklist for veteran customers to complete, identifying those with SBE and veterans between 18-24 years of age. Veterans who are recognized as having SBE and/or those veterans who are 18-24 years of age will be referred to DVOP Specialists (when available) or another Career Center staff member for intensive case management services, including an initial assessment, comprehensive assessment and individual employment plan.

Workforce Development System Technical Advisory *Effective Use of Initial Assessment in the Career Center System* requires that all Career Center customers, including veterans with SBE, be provided with an Initial Assessment. The Initial Assessment process first identifies any individual barriers to employment. If barriers exist, the customer is determined to be in need of Career Development Services. If no barriers exist, the customer's employment goal is evaluated. If the knowledge, skills, and abilities are deficient to meet the customer's employment goal or if the employment goal does not suit the local labor market, the customer is identified as being in need of Career Development Services,

The comprehensive assessment can include an in-depth, formal, structured interview with the veteran. Tools such as Job Zone's Interest Inventory, Ability Profiler or Skills Profiler may also be used to help the veteran determine employment goals. Once the local labor market has been reviewed and an employment goal is determined, an individual employment plan will be developed. The plan will include a long-term goal, a short-term goal (if appropriate) and steps to meet the goals. Referral to supportive services (including needs related payments) may be necessary to assist the veteran in overcoming barriers or to utilize veteran benefits to further their education/careers. If a DVOP Specialist is not available, other Career Center staff members will provide priority of service to these veterans.

For additional details on priority of service to veterans, view the New York State Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) State Plan, available at https://www.labor.ny.gov/workforce/swib/docs/jobs_for_veterans_state_plan.pdf.

## 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.

Employment First

Through the Employment First policy, the State seeks to build on important economic development investments to ensure that individuals with disabilities equally benefit from the improving economy

and have sustained opportunities to engage in the competitive labor market. Specifically, the State aims to increase the employment rate of individuals with disabilities by 5%; decrease the poverty rate of individuals with disabilities by a comparable 5%; and engage 100 businesses in adopting policies and practices that support the integrated employment of individuals with disabilities. The driving force behind this initiative is the principle that everyone has the right to work.

The Employment First policy commission has made the following recommendations:

1. Cultural Modeling: New York State agencies can model the integrated employment of individuals with disabilities. Whether through enhancements to the governor's programs to hire persons/veterans with disabilities (sections 55-b and -c of New York State Civil Service Law), or through community-based organizations directly hiring individuals, a strong culture of employment first must be established.

2. Energizing the "Demand-Side" of the Equation: Redesign and reinvigorate the New York Business Leadership Network to pursue the aggressive goal of engaging 100 business partners. A business first platform can be established through promoting existing tax credits, supporting businesses to pursue federal contracts, and harnessing the power of New York's regional economic development efforts.

3. New York Employment Services System (NYESS): The NYESS system has already distinguished New York as the leader in moving individuals with disabilities into the world of employment as the largest Social Security Administration Ticket to Work (TTW) network in the nation. Ensuring the full adoption of the system across community providers and state agencies will utilize the power of New York's integrated employment case management system to comprehensively monitor and support employment outcomes in New York State.

4. Benefits Advisement: Benefits systems are complex and only limited resources are available to help individuals accurately understand eligibility requirements and the impact of employment on benefits. New York State can utilize emerging tools like Disability Benefits 101 (DB101) and a network of "life coaches" to expand benefits advisement.

5. Medicaid Buy-In for Working People with Disabilities (MBI-WPD): New York can integrate the MBI-WPD program into the online New York State of Health application portal, automating and standardizing eligibility determinations and referring applicants who require additional assistance.

6. Transportation: Transportation to work is a key element for employment success. A cross-agency taskforce can examine barriers to integrated transportation; identify potential solutions, such as a rural transportation tax credit; and build on initiatives like the proposed mobility transportation project.

7. Education: New York State will continue to support schools in embracing approaches that increase the integration of students in their communities. The Promoting the Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income (PROMISE) grant will guide ongoing policy and practice around early employment supports for individuals with disabilities and offer coaching for their families. Options for local school districts include implementation of a "school of choice" for students, and revisiting the array of available credentials/diplomas. Local schools districts should be supported with best practices that give them the ability to place a greater emphasis on career planning and counseling for all students, resulting in better long-term outcomes.

8. Creating an Employment First Service Culture: Training is recommended for direct support professionals, with an emphasis on the skills needed to deliver employment support services focused on achieving individualized goals.

9. Self-Employment and Entrepreneurship: Expanding upon the New York State Education Department's Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) model of engaging New York State entrepreneurial assistance programs and/or small business development centers will facilitate the development of small businesses operated by individuals with disabilities.

10. Expanded Access to Assistive Technology: Increasing access to assistive technologies through a strategic partnership with the Office for Children and Family Services (OTDA), ACCES-VR, and the Justice Center administered Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities (TRAID), the inventory of employment-related devices can be expanded and training increased on the use of such devices.

11. Outcome Measures: Progress toward these goals can be measured using NYESS to compare Medicaid data to New York wage data, enabling the detection of changes in the employment and poverty rates. Timeframes associated with attainment of these rigorous goals should be established in conjunction with a strategy for implementation. An independent academic body should be engaged to review the ongoing progress toward attainment of the projected goals.

While New York State has made significant progress in developing an Employment First framework, through a variety of collaborations across federal, state, private, and public partners, New York State's full potential has yet to be realized. The Employment First Commission believes that New York State can accomplish the goals of Employment First by engaging in a statewide comprehensive, cross-disability, cross-sector approach to removing employment barriers and by establishing clear policies to promote the hiring of individuals with disabilities. The commission believes that the recommendations, when adopted, will prove to be the catalyst for realizing the Employment First vision in New York State.

Special Populations

Individuals in special populations are those who have barriers to employment. WIOA defines individuals with barriers to employment as a member of one or more of the following populations: displaced homemakers, low income individuals, Native Americans, individuals with disabilities, older individuals, ex-offenders, homeless individuals or homeless youth, 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, individuals facing substantial cultural barriers, migrant and seasonal farmworkers (MSFWs), individuals within two years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (TANF), and single parents (including single pregnant women).

New York State supports the implementation of universal access to programs and activities to all individuals, including those with barriers to employment, through reasonable recruitment targeting, outreach efforts, assessments, services delivery, partnership development, and numeric goals.

Specially trained staff are stationed at various Career Center locations to serve individuals who identify as having a barrier to employment. For example, DVOP specialists and Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) are trained to assist Veterans; DRCs are trained to assist individuals with disabilities; and Offender Workforce Specialists are trained to assist ex-offenders. In

addition, central office staff provides periodic webinars and/or technical assistance conference calls to engage all Career Center staff on topics around serving customers with barriers to employment.

Case management of customers with barriers to employment is further enhanced by the availability of NYESS. NYESS (implemented in December 2011) currently provides system access to the following seven state agencies and their network of service providers: OMH; NYSDOL; OPWDD; ACCES-VR; NYSCB; OASAS; and NYS Office for the Aging.

New York State continues to be at the forefront in the area of serving individuals with disabilities with the implementation of NYESS and the opportunities the system allows. For example, in February 2012, the federal Social Security Administration announced that NYESS (www.nyess.ny.gov) was designated as the first statewide Employment Network in the United States. ENs are designated by the SSA to assist individuals with disabilities to find competitive jobs. The statewide EN designation allows SSA the ability to collaborate directly with New York to document employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities holding a Ticket-To-Work, and demonstrate the effectiveness of the Ticket-To-Work program. As a statewide EN, NYESS creates a network of providers working with multiple state agencies using a single, real-time employment data/case management system. This statewide effort generates thousands of dollars in incentive payments to be reinvested in expanded job supports for individuals with disabilities.

Accessibility

Accessibility is an important component within the public workforce system. New York State assures that all partners in the workforce development system described in this plan recognize the importance of the physical, programmatic, and communications accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities and English language learners in the Career Centers.

Under WIA, NYSDOL's Methods of Administration outlined the policies, procedures, and systems NYS designed and put in place in order to provide a reasonable guarantee that NYS and its recipients of Title I WIA funds complied with the Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity requirements of WIA Section 188 and its implementing regulations. It is still available online at http://www.labor.ny.gov/agencyinfo/moa/moa.shtm and will be revised in the coming months to reflect the new WIOA regulations.

Additionally, NYSDOL will revise a Technical Advisory (TA) on the topic of "Accessibility of One-Stop Systems to Individuals with Disabilities." The TA on this topic, released under WIA on May 16, 2000, will be revised to reflect new accessibility regulations under WIOA.

In 2011, Governor Cuomo issued Executive Order 26, requiring all state agencies to provide language assistance services to individuals with Limited English Proficiency, including interpretation and translation. Agency staff is required to complete language access training each year, and posters are featured in each Career Center to notify customers of the availability of language assistance services. The TA on this topic may be found here: http://labor.ny.gov/workforcenypartners/ta/ta-10-01-1.pdf, with additional language access resources available here: http://labor.ny.gov/immigrants/language-access.shtm .

For customers utilizing online resources at the NYSDOL's website, all accessibility-related issues are addressed at the following link: https://www.labor.ny.gov/agencyinfo/accessibility.shtm.

## 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.

Accessibility is an important component within the public workforce system. New York State assures that all partners in the workforce development system described in this plan recognize the importance of the physical, programmatic, and communications accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities and English language learners in the Career Centers.

In 2011, Governor Cuomo issued Executive Order 26, requiring all state agencies to provide language assistance services to individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), including interpretation and translation. Agency staff is required to complete language access training each year, and posters are featured in each Career Center to notify customers of the availability of language assistance services.

Technical Advisory 10-01-1, found at http://labor.ny.gov/workforcenypartners/ta/ta-10-01-1.pdf, was issued to the Career Center system, and requires certain actions to be taken to ensure LEP individuals receive the language assistance necessary to afford them meaningful access to all programs, services, and information within the Career Center system free of charge. Career Centers receive instructions on how to access and utilize the vendors to provide interpreting services when needed. The following services are available to Career Center customers:

- Over the phone interpreters;
- Consecutive Interpreters (in-person oral interpretation and/or written translation); and
- Sign language interpreters.

Career Center staff can also utilize available bilingual staff and “language banks” of volunteers who are fluent and able to interpret/translate in other languages.

A Language Access Plan was also developed by NYSDOL and a Language Access Coordinator was identified to oversee the plan. Based on U.S. Census data, NYSDOL chose to translate all vital documents into the six most common non-English languages spoken in NYS. These languages are Spanish, Traditional Chinese, Russian, Haitian-Creole, Korean, and Italian. Based on experience or other federal requirements, the agency may choose to translate vital documents into other languages as well. Determination of what documents are considered vital is based on the Language Assistance Guide issued by the U.S. Department of Justice. Vital written documents include, but are not limited to, consent and complaint forms; intake and application forms with the potential for important consequences; written notices of rights; notices of denials, losses, or decreases in benefits or services; notices of disciplinary action; signs; and notices advising LEP individuals of free language assistance services.

Additional language access resources are available here: http://labor.ny.gov/immigrants/language-access.shtm.

For customers utilizing online resources at the NYSDOL's website, all accessibility-related issues are addressed at the following link: https://www.labor.ny.gov/agencyinfo/accessibility.shtm.

# 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.

TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE (TAA)

The primary goal of the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program is to assist trade-affected workers in locating and preparing for suitable re-employment as rapidly and effectively as possible. In NYS, this is accomplished through:

• Timely provision of Rapid Response services;

• Effective case management through the provision of various basic and individualized career services in the Career Center as a co-enrolled participant under the WIOA Dislocated Worker Program; and

• Focus on re-training workers determined to need further skills to obtain employment in emerging and in-demand occupations.

TAA coordination with WIOA and Wagner-Peyser

It is the goal of NYS to ensure that dislocated workers, including Trade-certified workers, receive services available through the Career Center service delivery system to ensure rapid reattachment to the workforce through attainment of suitable employment. Further, NYS determined that individuals eligible for services under TAA programs are best served through Career Center offices operating in LWDAs. New York State previously adopted policy (Technical Advisory 04-6.5 and subsequent amendments) to ensure all TAA customers are co-enrolled as dislocated workers and are provided the same set of basic and individualized career services available to all customers in the system. This co-enrollment allows trade affected customers to take advantage of the same reemployment, assessment, labor market information, career advisement, case management, and follow-up services available through the local Career Center system. In NYS, WIOA and Wagner-Peyser funded staff and services are functionally aligned within each of our local Career Center offices. This allows services to be provided to TAA customers in a seamless and efficient manner. Trade funded services can be layered on top of WIOA and W-P funded services already provided through the Career Center. NYSDOL allocated sufficient resources to each LWDA to support outreach (including Rapid Response services), orientation, case management, job development, and follow-up services for dislocated workers eligible for TAA benefits.

TAA and Rapid Response

The DEWS Rapid Response Program involves planning and delivery of reemployment services for affected workers prior to a mass layoff or business closure. Rapid Response services are initiated when separations meet the NYS WARN Act thresholds, and/or when a Trade petition has been submitted to the USDOL.

In NYS, ten regional Rapid Response Teams impact the TAA program. When a WARN notice is filed, the Regional Rapid Response Coordinator (RRRC) contacts the business within one day of

receipt of the WARN. If the business is not TAA certified, the RRRC will assist the business with filing the TAA petition, or will file directly on behalf of the affected workers. For businesses that are already TAA certified, the Rapid Response team provides workers with an introduction to the benefits and services available under TAA and guides them to the local career planner for help with accessing benefits. Also, when NYS receives notice from the USDOL that a new Trade Act petition is filed, the State TAA Coordinator sends an alert to the Career Center system, activating Rapid Response services.

The Rapid Response Team conducts onsite and offsite customized service orientations for workers, covering reemployment services, UI, state public healthcare enrollment options, credit counseling resources, and if applicable, an overview of TAA benefits and the TAA individual eligibility process. All attendees of the Rapid Response orientation are registered in OSOS immediately following the orientation session. Both the business and attached affected workers are coded with a Rapid Response Event Number for intensive reemployment services and service tracking purposes.

The RRRC keeps the State TAA Coordinator, along with the State Dislocated Worker Unit and key local NYSDOL and workforce development system partners, apprised of the status of layoffs. Working with the business, the Rapid Response team develops a service plan.

When the specific trade affected workers are known, the RRRC advises the business to email the following information directly to the UID Benefits Section, to begin the process of determining individual worker eligibility:

• Name of trade affected worker;

• Social Security Number;

• Worker’s Address;

• Division of the company where the worker was assigned;

• Employment start date;

• Separation date; and

• Reason for separation.

Coordination - Rapid Response, Unemployment Insurance Division, Career Center Network

The UID mails each worker, after layoff, an application for TAA. Applications are evaluated by the UID and result in an individual determination of eligibility. The UID uses worker contact information collected by Rapid Response Teams and from the trade affected company to mail TAA applications to affected workers. The UID advises the State TAA Coordinator on a weekly basis of any applications that were mailed.

The State TAA Coordinator in turn advises key local NYSDOL and workforce development system partners, including 33 local TAA Coordinators. The local TAA Coordinators reach out to the workers to promote the program and urge workers to return their individual eligibility applications to the UID for review, and to visit the Career Center for case management services.

## Case Management

Case management begins with a preliminary assessment of knowledge, skills, interests, and abilities. This initial assessment helps identify dislocated workers (including Trade-certified workers) who possess marketable skills needed by local employers. It may also identify dislocated workers (including Trade-certified workers) who need additional services at a more intensive service level. An on-going comprehensive assessment, in light of the labor market, includes:

• Testing of skill levels such as math, reading, and writing to determine grade-level equivalencies;

• Evaluating aptitudes, abilities, and work values;

• Identifying transferable skills such as computer, problem solving, time management, and organization;

• Assessing English language proficiency (command of the English language);

• Identifying knowledge of foreign languages that may help an employer;

• Assessing supportive service needs such as child care or transportation; and

• Evaluating the need for referral to community resources.

Assessment results help determine if the affected worker can return to suitable employment or if training is the appropriate path to reemployment. Career planners, in conjunction with the affected worker, determine one of the following steps:

• Active job search to return to the labor market, or

• Referral to training; either classroom, OJT, or a combination of the two.

## Training

Career planners, working with the trade affected worker, determine when training is appropriate for the worker given his/her capabilities, background, experience, and conditions within the current labor market. In considering training options, the guiding principle is to return the trade affected worker to suitable employment as quickly and as economically as possible. Before submitting a request for training approval to the DEWS State level TAA Program Unit, local career planners ensure that the required six criteria for approval of training are met. These criteria are:

• No suitable employment is available to the worker;

• The worker will benefit from the training;

• There is reasonable expectation of reemployment following the completion of training;

• The worker is qualified to undertake and complete the training;

• Training is reasonably available; and

• Training is appropriate and available at a reasonable cost.

Career planners call upon NYSDOL's network of local labor market analysts; access employment projections on the NYSDOL website; and utilize their own knowledge of the local labor market to assist workers in developing occupational goals. A training program may be approved for an eligible trade affected worker at any time regardless of their eligibility for UI/TRA. In the event the trade affected worker exhausts UI and is not eligible for TRA, careful consideration is paid to the person's ability, based on financial resources, to complete the training program.

Training may not be approved when, all costs being considered, training substantially similar in quality, content, and results can be obtained from another provider at a lower cost within a similar timeframe. The total cost of a training program, in determining reasonableness, includes tuition and related expenses (books, tools, and academic fees), travel or transportation expenses, and subsistence. Training at facilities outside the trade-affected worker's commuting area that involves transportation or subsistence costs that add substantially to the total costs, are not approved if similar training is available locally. Training cannot be approved when the cost is unreasonably high compared to the cost of training workers in similar occupations.

Career planners assist workers in finding training programs of a suitable duration to achieve the desired skill level in the shortest possible time. DEWS informs the UID of approved training plans through the use of a shared database which tracks dates of training and the associated TRA payments.

Program Process Responsibilities

The Trade Act program in NYS is co-managed by two NYSDOL Divisions: the UID Benefits Section, which is responsible for interfacing with the trade certified businesses and determining individual eligibility, and the DEWS TAA Program Unit, which provides program oversight to the Career Centers. UID mails TAA application packets to laid off workers and Threatened Status letters to those identified pre-layoff who are named as trade affected by the businesses. UID communicates the list of laid off and threatened workers to DEWS, which in turn communicates with LWDAs. Local areas provide outreach to facilitate the application and entitlement processes. Career Centers begin case management while workers await their determination of eligibility.

The following details program responsibility by NYSDOL Division:

• Receive petition to trigger rapid response; DEWS

• Provide a legal notice of certification through publication in a local newspaper (outreach); UID/NYSDOL Communications Office

• Provide notification to local boards of filed Trade petitions; DEWS

• Notify trade affected workers of approved Trade certifications, Reemployment Trade Adjustment Assistance, and Health Coverage Tax Credit eligibility; UID

• Determine individual eligibility to TAA; UID

• Pay weekly TRA benefits; UID

• Provide orientation to TAA benefits/services; DEWS via Career Centers

• Approve/deny and revoke waivers from training; DEWS

• Approve/deny requests for training; DEWS

• Approve/deny requests for job search and relocation allowances; DEWS

• Provide regular updates to local boards on federal Trade funds, WIOA NEG funds, and additional assistance funds that may be available to support training for trade affected workers; DEWS

• Process hearings and appeals related to determinations and decisions concerning Trade Act funded benefits and other services, including the following: TRAs; job relocation allowances; job search allowances; subsistence allowances while in training, including certain costs associated with an approved training plan at a provider outside the commuting area, as defined by applicable unemployment insurance law or regulation; and training programs as approved courses of study; UID

• Approve the use of a reimbursement method to ensure the adequate oversight and integrity of federal funds made available for Trade-approved training; DEWS

• Provide required reports to USDOL and others as required by law or regulation; UID, DEWS, Division of Research and Statistics

• Ensure the integrity of data for reports provided to federal agencies as required by law or regulation; UID, DEWS, Division of Research and Statistics

Role of Local Boards

Local workforce development boards ensure that their strategic planning process includes an analysis of the local labor market to:

• Determine business needs;

• Determine emerging, targeted, and demand occupations;

• Identify employment opportunities, which include those with a potential for career advancement; and

• Identify employer-based training opportunities.

Boards set local policies for a Trade Act service strategy that coordinate various service delivery approaches to:

• Assist dislocated workers eligible for Trade benefits in obtaining suitable employment as an alternative to referral to training;

• Promote the use of WIOA basic and individualized services to support the rapid reattachment to the workforce;

• Refer individuals to prevocational and vocational training in demand and targeted occupations; and

• Assist in job retention and career advancement.

Local boards ensure that dislocated workers eligible for Trade benefits, who are unable to find suitable employment through WIOA Title I core services, are co-enrolled in WIOA Title I dislocated worker services for referral to WIOA-funded career and Trade-funded training services.

Managed Resources

TAA resources are utilized to help support common systems utilized by NYSDOL and the Career Center system to provide integrated intake, case management, and reporting for our co-enrolled Trade-impacted customers. This includes OSOS, a tab-and-button driven case management system, used to record data related to W-P (Labor Exchange or LEX), WIOA, and TAA programs. For the immediate future, OSOS will continue to be used to record services provided to our TAA customers.

PeopleSoft is fiscal accounting software that allows DEWS to track allocations and spending of all programs managed by DEWS, including TAA and WIOA programs. It also allows NYSDOL to generate timely and accurate reports of fiscal activity at both the state and local levels.

The NYSDOL Website (www.labor.ny.gov) features a Workforce Professionals section serving as a repository for program information used by Career Center professionals. The TAA section of this site houses all TAA program administration forms used by Career Center professionals, in addition to resources such as the TAA Desk Guide, TAA OSOS Desk Guide, TAA FAQ, and other staff capacity building material. Additionally, career planners access employment projections in the Research & Statistics section. In addition, the TAA program maintains a customer-facing presence on the website with TAA FAQ, Fact Sheets, and contact information to assist customers with contacting local TAA coordinators and career planners.

Additional Information

Trade Adjustment Assistance Reauthorization Act

The Trade Adjustment Assistance Reauthorization Act of 2015 (TAARA) went into effect on June 29, 2015. This Act restores the group eligibility requirements and benefits available under the 2011 Amendments, re-opening eligibility to service sector workers and worker groups whose jobs are adversely affected by trade with countries that are not parties to Free Trade Agreements with the United States, including China and India. The changes continue a seamless system of services for WIOA dislocated and trade affected workers that further enhance the positive outcomes anticipated by the amendments. NYSDOL is currently in the process of communicating the provisions of the TAARA to the Career Center system in accordance with the Operating Instructions provided by USDOL in Training and Guidance Letter No. 7-13.

Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training Grant Awards

Entities in NYS were awarded $17.63 million in Round II of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training Grant Program (TAACCCT); $7,034,061 in Round III; and $2,499,477 in Round IV. The NYSDOL collaborates with our awardees focusing on high-quality, high-wage jobs within the advanced manufacturing industry, and the healthcare and food service

sectors. These efforts are in addition to the work already begun by a previous (Round I) award of $19.86 million to provide academic and English language skills instruction “contextualized” to five industry sectors with the goal of engaging adult learners and helping them bypass traditional developmental education.

In Round II, DEWS worked hand in hand with SUNY in 2015 to educate career planners on opportunities for TAA eligible Career Center customers within the advanced manufacturing sector as part of an awareness campaign regarding the Training and Education in Advanced Manufacturing (TEAM) Educational Pathways Project. SUNY TEAM will enable members of the SUNY Statewide Community College Collaborative to provide New York’s TAA-eligible workers and unemployed Veterans with the training and education required to find high quality, high-wage jobs within the advanced manufacturing industry sector. With access to educational pathways aligned with advanced manufacturing industrial career pathways and third-party certifications, the TEAM Educational Pathways Project supports credential and degree attainment for participants in two years or less.

During Round III, DEWS assisted award grantee and Northeast Resiliency Consortium member Kingsborough Community College (KCC) to further the work of the consortium by strengthening the college’s outreach efforts to TAA-eligible and unemployed residents of greater New York City. On a quarterly basis DEWS assists KCC with targeted outreach and promoting occupational training in food service and Community Health Worker programs, and brings awareness to individuals who may benefit from the supportive services KCC provides the continuing education courses in EMT, Certified Nursing Assistant, Certified Medical Assistant, and Credential Alcohol and Substance Abuse Counselor programs.

## Going Forward

### Program Staff Capacity Building

New York State continues to develop an initiative to provide Trade Act specific training to workforce professionals via videos designed for independent viewing by Career Center personnel.

The cutting edge training program uses the Adobe Captivate software to deliver engaging interactive presentations on all aspects of the Trade Act program, including the petition and entitlement processes; criteria for approval of benefits and the associated request processes and deadlines; and case management data entry instruction and detail regarding the agent/liable state relationship.

Training will address varying knowledge gaps associated with the on again/off again activity level of the Trade Act program by allowing staff to review the program details on demand at their workstations.

### Participant Data Analysis

Joining forces with our Business Services units, Career Center staff in NYS continues to examine opportunities to re-engage our Trade Act customers who have not shown an interest in training in the past and explore ways to augment training already underway. Key emphases include promoting OJT; offering customized job placement; testing new methods of outreach to inform customers of un-accessed benefits; and streamlining the assessment-to-approval process.

## 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 administrating 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.

Regions and Local Areas

New York State's 33 local areas were designated during the transition from the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) to WIA in accordance with the parameters outlined in the statute. These original local area designations remain intact under WIOA and are provided below within the ten New York State Regions. Designation of the local areas took into account consistency with labor market areas and regional economic areas in NYS, and the availability of Federal and non-Federal resources necessary to administer workforce development activities, including appropriate education and training providers.

Capital Region:

• Albany/Schenectady/Rensselaer

• Columbia/Greene

• Saratoga/Warren/Washington

Central Region:

• Cayuga/Cortland

• Onondaga

• Oswego

Finger Lakes Region:

• Genesee/Livingston/Orleans/Wyoming

• Monroe

• Ontario/Seneca/Wayne/Yates

Long Island Region:

• Hempstead/Long Beach

• Oyster Bay/North Hempstead/Glen Cove

• Suffolk

Mid-Hudson Region:

• Dutchess

• Orange

• Rockland

• Sullivan

• Ulster

• Westchester/Putnam

• Yonkers

Mohawk Valley Region:

• Fulton/Montgomery/Schoharie

• Herkimer/Madison/Oneida

New York City Region:

• New York City

North Country Region:

• Clinton/Essex/Franklin/Hamilton

• Jefferson/Lewis

• St. Lawrence

Southern Tier Region:

• Broome/Tioga

• Chemung/Schuyler/Steuben

• Chenango/Delaware/Otsego

• Tompkins

Western Region:

• Allegany/Cattaraugus

• Chautauqua

• Erie

• Niagara

## 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 Area Designation

On April 14, 2014, a Technical Advisory was released to notify local areas that WIOA requires LWDAs to be designated by the Governor in order to receive federal funding allotments. On behalf of the Governor, NYSDOL will accept requests from current LWDB Directors for LWDA initial designation for local areas that meet three criteria: Successful Performance; Sustained Fiscal Integrity; and local Chief Elected Officials(s) (CEOs) Agreement executed for WIOA. CEOs were contacted, and a standardized agreement, "Sample Multi-Jurisdictional CEO Agreement or Template for use by single CEO local areas" was sent to them with instructions on completion. Requests included information on the following: Counties/cities included in the proposed Local Area; CEOs; Designation of Grant Recipient and Local Governmental Grant Subrecipient/Incorporated Fiscal Agent; Composition of and Designation of Workforce Development Board; Designation of One-Stop Services; and other responsibilities.

Local designation requests were reviewed, verified, and organized by NYSDOL staff and approved on behalf of the Governor.

As outlined in New York's WIA State Plan, appeals from units not designated would have been directed to the SWIB for review, in conjunction with the Governor. An appeal of a negative determination on a request for designation as an LWDA could be accepted from any, or all, of the Chief Local Elected Officials who had requested the designation. The appeal was required to be:

• Postmarked within 30 days of the issuance of the notice of disapproval;

• Submitted to the Director of DEWS; and

• Provided concurrently to any other Chief Local Elected Officials affected but not parties to the appeal.

The appeal would need to clearly address the question of how the decision being appealed is contrary to the best interest(s) of the businesses and residents of the local area, and should provide documentation to address the following:

• Geographic areas served by local educational agencies and intermediate educational agencies;

• Geographic areas served by postsecondary educational institutions and area vocational education schools;

• The extent to which the proposed local area is consistent with the labor market area;

• The distance individuals would need to travel to receive services provided in the proposed local area; and

• The resources of the local area available to effectively administer the activities carried out under Title I, Subtitle B, of WIOA.

The State would respond to the appeal after consultation with the Chair of the SWIB, and if appropriate, all SWIB members. If a response was not possible within 30 days, NYS would notify the appellant (and any other Chief Local Elected Officials) of the reason for the delay and a reasonable date by which a decision would be issued.

New York State received no appeals of the original local area designations, and has received no requests for re-designations.

New York State recognizes that the costs of infrastructure used with respect to a Career Center means non-personnel costs necessary for the general operation of the center including: the rental costs of the facilities; the costs of utilities and maintenance; equipment (including assessment-related products and assistive technology for individuals with disabilities); and technology to facilitate access to the center, including the center's planning and outreach activities. The State also recognizes and encourages the best scenario for funding infrastructure costs is for the Local Board, Chief Local Elected Official(s), and the one-stop partners to universally agree to a funding methodology and include this methodology in the respective MOU(s).

The WIA and NPRM advised that beginning July 1, 2016, the start date of federal PY2016 for WIOA, in those instances where a local area fails to reach consensus agreement on an infrastructure funding methodology for PY2016 funds, the State infrastructure funding mechanism will be applicable to such local area for that program year and for each subsequent program year for which those entities and individuals fail to reach such an agreement. The State will allocate the infrastructure funds from contributions of administration funds in an amount up to the percentage funding caps outlined in Section 121(h)(2)(D)(ii) to local areas in accordance with the formula established for purposes of assisting in paying the costs of infrastructure of centers. The formula established will be based on factors such as: the number of one-stop centers in a local area; the population served by such centers; the services provided by such centers; and other factors relating to the performance of such centers that the SWIB determines are appropriate. However, the WIA Frequently Asked Questions updated on January 28, 2016 advise that the specific WIOA requirements for local agreements for funding the one-stop infrastructure costs will not apply until PY

2017, that States and local areas may continue to negotiate local funding agreements as they have been doing under WIA for purposes of PY 2016, and the State funding mechanism for infrastructure costs will not be implemented until PY 2017.

One important aspect of the formula that requires clarification is whether or not the infrastructure costs of the Career Centers are paid for in an on-going fashion by one or more partners even without the agreement of all partners in respective MOU(s). For example, the local WIOA partner pays the rent and the local Employment Services partner pays for photocopying equipment and supplies. Since both partners are already contributing, it would likely be unfair to apply an across-the-board "mechanism" contribution to WIOA and Employment Services for this center. As such, the mechanism must include a method to credit partners for their existing contributions prior to determining the "mechanism" contribution. A second issue to consider is that it is quite possible that the capped "mechanism" partner contributions will be insufficient to cover the benefit received by each partner, and further when pooled, may also be insufficient to cover all center infrastructure costs, particularly in downstate New York where center lease costs are very high.

Prior to July 1, 2016, the State will seek to release policy to the workforce development system to define the formula to be used in the development of a state infrastructure funding mechanism as well as a defined process for required one-stop partners to follow when appealing a determination by the State regarding the portion of funds provided for infrastructure costs. In drafting such policy, the State will seek guidance from USDOL, consult with other states and related national organizations including the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) and the National Governor's Association, and analyze the final WIOA regulations upon release in 2016. In drafting the policy, the State will include language that advises any one-stop partner of the right to appeal a determination by the State on the basis that such determination is inconsistent with the State infrastructure funding requirements. The policy will also emphasize that the appeal process will be structured to arrive at a prompt resolution of the appeal in order to ensure the funds are distributed in a timely manner.

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

As outlined in New York's WIA State Plan, appeals from units not designated would have been directed to the SWIB for review, in conjunction with the Governor. An appeal of a negative determination on a request for designation as an LWDA could be accepted from any, or all, of the Chief Local Elected Officials who had requested the designation. The appeal was required to be:

• Postmarked within 30 days of the issuance of the notice of disapproval;

• Submitted to the Director of DEWS; and

• Provided concurrently to any other Chief Local Elected Officials affected but not parties to the appeal.

The appeal would need to clearly address the question of how the decision being appealed is contrary to the best interest(s) of the businesses and residents of the local area, and should provide documentation to address the following:

• Geographic areas served by local educational agencies and intermediate educational agencies;

• Geographic areas served by postsecondary educational institutions and area vocational education schools;

• The extent to which the proposed local area is consistent with the labor market area;

• The distance individuals would need to travel to receive services provided in the proposed local area; and

• The resources of the local area available to effectively administer the activities carried out under Title I, Subtitle B, of WIOA.

The State would respond to the appeal after consultation with the Chair of the SWIB, and if appropriate, all SWIB members. If a response was not possible within 30 days, NYS would notify the appellant (and any other Chief Local Elected Officials) of the reason for the delay and a reasonable date by which a decision would be issued.

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

Prior to July 1, 2016, the State will seek to release policy to the workforce development system to define the formula to be used in the development of a state infrastructure funding mechanism as well as a defined process for required one-stop partners to follow when appealing a determination by the State regarding the portion of funds provided for infrastructure costs. In drafting such policy, the State will seek guidance from USDOL, consult with other states and related national organizations including the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) and the National Governor's Association, and analyze the final WIOA regulations upon release in 2016. In drafting the policy, the State will include language that advises any one-stop partner of the right to appeal a determination by the State on the basis that such determination is inconsistent with the State infrastructure funding requirements. The policy will also emphasize that the appeal process will be structured to arrive at a prompt resolution of the appeal in order to ensure the funds are distributed in a timely manner.

## 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.

For Title I Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Worker Programs the majority of funding is provided directly by formula to 33 LWDAs for administration of program services as directed by the Governor certified LWDBs. As authorized by WIOA and the annual federal budget appropriation, the remaining funding, up to 15% of each Title I Program for Statewide Activities, plus an additional up to 25% of the Dislocated Worker Program for Rapid Response Activities, is set aside for required and allowable state-level activities including administration, policy and program development, rapid response services, business services, fiscal and programmatic oversight and monitoring, and state-level employment and training programs as directed under the discretion of the Governor with the assistance of the SWIB. To further clarify and expand, New York's use of State level WIOA funds for workforce investment activities is in compliance with the law's required and allowable activities for these funds. The Governor's 10 REDCs help guide the use of these funds by establishing priority

projects including sector based workforce strategies in their regions, and the LWDBs are also consulted for feedback on uses of these funds that will provide local benefit. Each year from 2011-2014 Congress appropriated no Statewide Activities programmatic funds, or significantly reduced these funds. During this time New York State used Rapid Response funds to provide employment and training programs to dislocated workers, especially the long term unemployed. The restoration of the 15% Statewide Activities funding in 2015 provides an opportunity for state level programs to expand services to disadvantaged adults, incumbent workers, and youth as well as continue to serve dislocated workers. Current and upcoming programs include incumbent worker skills upgrading training, unemployed worker training, on-the-job training, customized training, middle skills training, occupational training for the incarcerated or formerly incarcerated, pre-apprenticeship training, and youth employment and training programs.

## 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

Rapid Response

In NYS, Rapid Response has a team presence throughout the ten regions. The Rapid Response Team conducts onsite and offsite customized service orientations for workers, covering reemployment services, UI, state public healthcare enrollment options, credit counseling resources, and an overview of Trade Act benefits (when appropriate) and the TAA individual eligibility process. When registered in OSOS, both the business and attached affected workers are coded with a Rapid Response or Expeditious Response Event Number for intensive reemployment services and progress tracking purposes.

The Regional Rapid Response Coordinator (RRRC) keeps the State TAA Coordinator, State Dislocated Worker Unit, and key local NYSDOL management and WIOA partners, apprised of account status updates. Working with the business, the Rapid Response Team develops an action plan for service.

Customized service plans involving individual assistance, workshops, and dedicated job fairs are developed for onsite follow through by the team. Rapid Response teams (including supervisory staff) maintain and case-manage job seeker caseloads, and five meaningful service contacts are conducted daily. In addition, each staff person makes three meaningful calls daily to businesses for job seeker advocacy; layoff aversion (selling Shared Work); and uncovering Business Services needs. In addition, Rapid Response aggressively pursues media Red Flags for generating Expeditious Response leads or even anticipating service before a Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) notice is submitted. Note that the TAA section later in this document for additional information on the coordination between the Rapid Response and TAA programs.

## 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.

Natural Disaster Preparedness

The New York State Department of Labor can deliver the following to assist with Natural Disaster Preparedness:

• Disaster National Emergency Grant (NEG).

• Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA).

• Mobile Disaster Worker Response Team.

Disaster NEG:

Designated Disaster Areas:

• The FEMA Disaster Declaration for New York State includes the availability of public assistance funding for the affected counties.

Use of Funds:

• The NEG creates temporary employment to perform demolition, cleaning, repair, renovation, and reconstruction of damaged and destroyed public structures, facilities, and lands located within the designated disaster area. Work on private property may only be performed if workers from units of local government are also authorized to conduct, and currently perform, such work.

• The duration of temporary employment must be established and is limited to public and private non-profit agencies. The maximum level of wages paid to a participant is established, excluding the cost of fringe benefits.

Eligible Individuals:

• Workers temporarily or permanently dislocated (unemployed) as a result of the disaster (dislocated workers as defined by WIOA as those who are unemployed and do not receive UI compensation or any other type of income support); and

• Individuals who are long-term unemployed.

Actions:

• DEWS develops and submits a Disaster NEG application to NYSDOL's Administrative Finance Bureau. The application includes a fully documented work plan and budget based on:

o Identification of the temporary jobs and worksites which were or will be created;

o Timeframes for project activities; and

o NYSDOL monitoring and oversight of the grant.

• NYSDOL field staff working with Local Boards of the affected counties develop aspects of the plan.

• After the Disaster NEG is awarded, the State must provide a fully documented work plan for the assistance within 60 days.

Disaster Unemployment Assistance:

• DUA provides UI benefits to individuals who are dislocated (unemployed) due to natural disaster.

• The FEMA Disaster Declaration for NYS will support justification for implementing DUA.

• NYSDOL's Telephone Claims Center (TCC) staff are refreshed on DUA procedures so that they may assist customers calling the center who have questions related to filing for benefits.

• Given the seven (7) day waiting period for original claim filing, the availability of DUA aligns with claims currently filed as a result of the disaster.

Mobile Disaster Worker Response Team:

• Career Center, Business Services staff, and Rapid Response staff form Mobile Disaster Worker Response Teams.

• The Mobile Disaster Worker Response Teams visit community locations in significantly impacted areas (i.e., shelters, libraries, schools, etc.) to assist businesses and impacted individuals, and to provide on-the-ground information and support regarding state-level efforts.

• Staff does the following for impacted businesses and individuals:

o Register them in OSOS to facilitate eligibility for program services;

o Connect impacted workers with appropriate employment opportunities through the Disaster NEG;

o Assist impacted workers to apply for DUA benefits; and

o Post links and emergency phone numbers where businesses and workers can contact NYSDOL for services (this includes using the TCC as the point of contact for all incoming telephone calls).

## 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.

TAA and Rapid Response

The DEWS Rapid Response Program involves planning and delivery of reemployment services for affected workers prior to a mass layoff or business closure. Rapid Response services are initiated when separations meet the NYS WARN Act thresholds, and/or when a Trade petition has been submitted to the USDOL.

In NYS, ten regional Rapid Response Teams impact the TAA program. When a WARN notice is filed, the Regional Rapid Response Coordinator (RRRC) contacts the business within one day of receipt of the WARN. If the business is not TAA certified, the RRRC will assist the business with filing the TAA petition, or will file directly on behalf of the affected workers. For businesses that are already TAA certified, the Rapid Response team provides workers with an introduction to the benefits and services available under TAA and guides them to the local career planner for help with accessing benefits. Also, when NYS receives notice from the USDOL that a new Trade Act petition is filed, the State TAA Coordinator sends an alert to the Career Center system, activating Rapid Response services.

The Rapid Response Team conducts onsite and offsite customized service orientations for workers, covering reemployment services, UI, state public healthcare enrollment options, credit counseling resources, and if applicable, an overview of TAA benefits and the TAA individual eligibility process. All attendees of the Rapid Response orientation are registered in OSOS immediately following the orientation session. Both the business and attached affected workers are coded with a Rapid Response Event Number for intensive reemployment services and service tracking purposes.

The RRRC keeps the State TAA Coordinator, along with the State Dislocated Worker Unit and key local NYSDOL and workforce development system partners, apprised of the status of layoffs. Working with the business, the Rapid Response team develops a service plan.

When the specific trade affected workers are known, the RRRC advises the business to email the following information directly to the UID Benefits Section, to begin the process of determining individual worker eligibility:

• Name of trade affected worker;

• Social Security Number;

• Worker's Address;

• Division of the company where the worker was assigned;

• Employment start date;

• Separation date; and

• Reason for separation.

## 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.

H-1B Technical Skills Training Grant

In November 2011, NYS was awarded a $5 million USDOL Employment and Training Administration, H-1B Technical Skills Training Grant intended to raise the technical skill levels of American workers so they can obtain or upgrade employment in high growth industries and occupations. Over time, these education and training programs will help businesses reduce their use of skilled foreign professionals permitted to work in the U.S. on a temporary basis under the H1-B visa program. NYSDOL requested and was granted an extension of the grant program through June 30, 2016. The extension adds two full semesters to the grant, allowing for both more participants and time for participants to gain positive outcomes.

The project has the following two components:

1. Advanced Manufacturing in the Finger Lakes:

o $3 million will fund state-level project management and regional initiatives which focus on developing a talent pipeline for the existing and emerging advanced manufacturing industries in the region. Machinery manufacturing (NAICS 333) and computer and electronic product manufacturing (NAICS 334) are established significant industries in the Finger Lakes, providing a relatively large number (22,400) of high-paying jobs.

o Ensuring a talent pipeline for engineering occupations will be critical to sustaining advanced manufacturing industries in this region. Mechanical, Industrial, and Electrical Engineers are needed on an on-going basis. This project will concentrate on middle-skill occupations at the technician level which support these engineering positions.

2. New York State's Registered Nurse Upgrade Project:

o $2 million funded a state-level education, training, and upgrading skills grant for existing nurse professionals, which leads to career growth and increased wages. NYSDOL, in partnership with the Healthcare Association of New York State and the State University of New York, developed and released a Request for Proposals for the Registered Nurse Upgrade Project in 2012.

o This initiative targets, on a statewide basis, incumbent workers who are at least 18 years of age, currently practicing as a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) or an Associate Degree (or diploma) Nurse (RN), and who are interested in pursuing a higher degree of training and education in nursing. Eligible education and training pathways include: LPN to RN and Associate or diploma RN to Baccalaureate RN (BSN).

National Emergency Grants:

Dislocated Worker Training National Emergency Grant (DWT-NEG):

On June 26, 2013, USDOL announced that NYSDOL was awarded over $1.4 million under the Dislocated Worker Training (DWT) NEG. USDOL determined that widespread layoffs combined with the high numbers of long-term unemployed had a significant impact on the workforce development system's ability to provide crucial training services to improve laid-off workers' employment prospects. These conditions were formally recognized as a significant dislocation event for the purpose of making NEG funding available.

NYSDOL used DWT-NEG funds to solicit applications supporting training and credential attainment to help dislocated workers become reemployed, thereby promoting the state's economic recovery and continuing efforts to make the state's workforce the most competitive in the world. NYSDOL issued a Request for Applications (RFA) that supported approaches such as OJT, customized training, Registered Apprenticeships, remedial training, and classroom training. The funds were initially targeted to serve dislocated workers in Jefferson and Lewis counties, due to their high unemployment rates, and then were made available statewide.

Priority was given to those dislocated workers who were long-term (27 weeks or more) unemployed and those profiled as likely to exhaust UI benefits. The RFA was issued on July 21, 2014 and was available until June 30, 2015. NYSDOL applied for and received a one-year extension on the funding from USDOL and will issue a competitive RFP in Fall 2015 to award the remaining balance of the funds.

Job Driven National Emergency Grant (JD-NEG):

On June 26, 2014, NYS was awarded a $6.175 million Job Driven NEG from USDOL. NYSDOL is using the majority of the awarded funding to administer a statewide program via an RFA to serve dislocated workers, with a particular focus on the long-term unemployed, unemployment beneficiaries likely to exhaust benefits, Veterans, and foreign-trained immigrant worker populations. Funding supports work-based training in the form of OJT, apprenticeships, and trainings customized to the specific needs of businesses in high-demand sectors. The funds were initially targeted to serve dislocated workers in the ten Unemployment Strikeforce Initiative counties (Bronx, Jefferson, Lewis, Kings, St. Lawrence, Oswego, Orleans, Montgomery, Franklin, and Steuben) for the period February 6, 2015 through June 1, 2015, and then were made available statewide. To date, 13 awards totaling approximately $1 million have been made to train 263 dislocated workers.

In addition to the work-based training initiative, up to 5% of funding awarded is utilized to upgrade employment tools. These tools include NYTalent, to assist businesses to find the most qualified candidates for their job openings and its sister tool, SMART, to assist job seekers with resume building and job order matching. These upgrades increase the speed and accuracy of job matching services provided directly to workforce system program participants. The funding is also used to further develop the Workforce Integrated Profile Page (WIPP), part of the UI-ES Connectivity Project. Additionally, funding will be used to incorporate the Your Employability Score (YES) application with the WIPP. NY built YES, an Employability Score Application, within JobZone based on the June 2014 White House Data Jam where NY's Employability Score concept was chosen as a project to be developed within 90 days. The YES collects data related to employment prospects and weighs this data based on which factors contribute more heavily to employment. Much like a credit score, the YES can be improved through a series of targeted adjustments, investments, and changes. The higher the customer's YES, the greater the customer's competitive advantage in the labor market.

Sector Partnerships National Emergency Grant (SP-NEG):

On June 25, 2015, NYS was awarded a $7 million Sector Partnerships NEG (SP-NEG) by USDOL. NYSDOL plans to use the majority of the awarded funds to administer enhanced career services and work-based training programs serving the long-term unemployed. Funding will support work-based training in the form of OJT, Incumbent Worker Training, transitional employment opportunities, and trainings customized to the specific needs of businesses in high-demand sectors.

Up to $500,000 of funding awarded will be utilized on regional planning initiatives that develop new, or strengthen existing, sector partnerships. Information provided by the REDCs identified Advanced Manufacturing as a significant industry in all regions. As such, funds will be allocated to support a state level partnership development in Advanced Manufacturing. Funds will also be available for partnership development activities in regionally significant industry sectors.

NYSDOL uses a number of online employment tools to support better skills measurement and job matching. These tools are made available to the customer through the JobZone self-service interface of OSOS. The integrated suite of tools will be upgraded to improve their availability and accuracy for use with SP-NEG participants. Upgrades will include refinement of the YES tool. Funds will also support the upgrade and enhanced integration of the Burning Glass Focus Suite (BGFS) of skills based match and referral tools into the JobZone/OSOS system.

Future Initiatives:

HOME2 Request for Proposals (RFP)

The Help Obtaining Meaningful Employment and Education (HOME2) RFP was released on July 17, 2015. In September 2015, HOME2 will award up to $500,000 in WIOA funding to a service provider based in New York City that assists homeless, primarily Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning or Queer (LGBTQ), transitioning-aged young adults (between 18-24 years of age) who are out of school and unemployed, with gaining meaningful employment that leads to a self-sufficient and independent lifestyle. NYSDOL may renew the contract on an annual basis for an amount up to the year-one award, and for up to four (4) additional years depending on contractor performance, the availability of funds, and the approval of the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC).

Governor Cuomo's Initiative for Re-Entry of Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

In September 2015, 12 recommendations made by the Council on Community Re-entry and Reintegration were approved by Governor Cuomo to remove barriers faced by formerly incarcerated New Yorkers in regards to employment, housing, and healthcare.

Regarding employment, NYS will adopt “fair chance hiring.” This will remove the requirement that applicants for competitive positions with State agencies disclose information on prior convictions until and unless the agency interviews the candidate and is interested in hiring him/her. A new kiosk-based system designed by Apploi Corp. will also be utilized to allow job seekers with past criminal convictions to market themselves to businesses through video. Going forward, the Council will continue its work by promoting a range of educational opportunities to improve employment for this target population.

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

Apprenticeship staff attends and provides information at job fairs that target both youth and adults. Dislocated workers and unemployed individuals, including adults and youth, are encouraged to apply for apprenticeship opportunities through various job fairs and Career Centers. Many Registered Apprenticeship program sponsors recruit publicly through their local Career Centers for new apprentices. Sponsors that elect to conduct area-wide recruitments are required to submit their recruitment information to NYSDOL, which is then distributed to local media, posted on the Department’s webpage, and listed in the NYS Job Bank.

Apprenticeship staff also meet with school guidance counselors to provide information on Registered Apprenticeship. Throughout NYS, Construction Career Day events are held annually which introduce high school students to Apprenticeship in the building and construction trades. Students have the opportunity to try various pieces of equipment and connect directly with Registered Apprenticeship sponsors. NYSDOL staff also attend these events to provide information on all Registered Apprenticeship program opportunities. The NYSDOL CareerZone website is integrated with the Apprenticeship website to provide career information for each of the apprentice-able trades. CareerZone is targeted towards youth who as a population face a tough economic climate. It allows individuals to explore careers related to their individual strengths, skills, and talent, including apprentice-able occupations.

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

### TRAINING PROVIDER ELIGIBILITY

Potential providers access an online application via the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) website (https://applications.labor.ny.gov/ETPL/). Providers fill out an in-depth electronic application and submit it. The application collects the following information on the provider: name, training school name (if different), Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN), address, website, and administrative and admissions contact information. If the provider is licensed, the provider will need to upload a copy of their license. For each training course, the provider will need to provide course information including the course title and skill level, course description, and course curriculum. The provider must also provide the tuition cost, and any other required or additional costs (i.e., books, lab

fees, uniforms, tools, etc.). The completed application is forwarded to the appropriate LWDB, based on location, for review and approval. For approval, the LWDBs review against cost, performance (based on performance measures identified in WIOA) and legal matters, (i.e. is the provider licensed to operate in NYS, etc.). All of this information is captured on the ETPL during the application process. Note that while the State maintains the ETPL, it is the LWDBs who actually populate it through approvals of training providers and courses in their LWDA. LWDBs also determine if the training is eligible for funding.

For continued eligibility, the ETPL has a functionality built in to ask providers for updated information on a yearly basis. Once submitted, the LWDBs will be asked to review the new data and reapprove. If nothing is submitted, the providers are automatically removed from the list.

## 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 for Special Populations

The core program partners will work together to implement and monitor priority of service for individuals with barriers to employment, public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient. Technical assistance is being developed around this topic and disseminated to the Career Center System.

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

Local Transfer of Funds between Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs

New York State's criteria regarding local transfer of funds between Adult and DW programs is shared with the local areas annually in a NYSDOL Technical Advisory entitled "Workforce Innovations and Opportunities Act (WIOA) Title 1B Adult and Dislocated Worker Transfer Requests and Administration to Program Funds Transfer Requests." No funds may be transferred to or from the Youth Program.

Current guidelines for transferring funds are as follows:

1. All transfer requests must be received by NYSDOL no later than June 30 of the program year of the allocation of local funds.

2. Funds retain their year of appropriation identity and must be tracked, accounted for and reported as follows:

• Transfers between Adult and Dislocated Worker funds will be reported on the Monthly Accrued Expenditure Report separately in a section identified expressly for expenditures associated with the transfer.

• Administration funds transferred to the originating program funds will be reported as part of the originating program.

• When transferring funds from administration back to the originating program funds, no more than the original ten percent (10%) designated as Administration can be returned to a program. For example, if $100,000 were awarded as Adult funds and this allocation was split on the NOA between Adult ($90,000) and Administration ($10,000), the maximum transfer that could be made between Administration and Adult funds would be $10,000.

## 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 Programs

NYSDOL's Program Development Office is responsible for oversight and coordination of the WIOA youth programs and serves as a single point of contact on youth issues and for other youth serving State agencies (i.e., NYSED, OCFS, and OTDA), as well as the core partner programs, in support of youth initiatives statewide. Through the dual lens of career and youth development, the Program Development Office seeks to provide policy guidance; offer professional development opportunities; develop curriculum and tools; and identify best practices from the state, nation, and the globe. The ultimate goal is to help position youth for a successful transition to adulthood and to help them make decisions regarding career/college/training opportunities.

Local Workforce Development Areas develop comprehensive strategic plans for youth services for those activities required under WIOA. Local areas provide year round comprehensive youth programs to eligible youth that include the provision of the youth program design framework activities as well as the 14 required program elements. These services are provided to both in-school and out-of-school youth.

The Program Development Office co-ordinates and supports youth activities across the state through a number of strategies including technical assistance; local area data monitoring; monthly conference calls and webinars; and outreach.

Technical assistance is shared with local areas, state agencies, and those community based organizations serving youth with a special emphasis on building the literacy and work-readiness skills to compete in the global economy. This assistance is intended to ensure that all WIOA required program elements are made available to in- and out-of-school youth across the State and that they are effectively implemented.

Local area data is monitored and customized technical assistance is offered as needed. New Youth Management Reports were developed for local areas to access information more easily from OSOS; assist them in monitoring performance of local youth contractors; and provide assistance to support programming to help youth succeed.

Monthly youth calls and webinars are offered to the system and will continue to be offered to assist practitioners in the topic areas below:

• Supporting Youth with Disabilities

• Engaging Youth through Positive Social Behaviors

• The Credential Connection: Creating a Competitive Workforce for Effective Delivery of the National Work Readiness Credential

• More Summer Experiences for Life Success

• The New, New York State Career Guide

• Youth Data Tools to Manage Your WIOA Program

• Moving from the GED to the new NYS High School Equivalency

• Incorporating Activities to Build Youth Resiliency and Self-Efficacy

• Critical Elements of a WIOA Youth Program - a Guide for Local Success

• Resources to Support Youth in Transition

• The NYS Dept. of Labor Youth Portal: Resources for Professionals

In addition to engaging partners in the 33 LWDAs, NYSDOL seeks to engage the NYS Job Corps centers in LWDB activities and coordinating career planning strategies for youth involved in Job Corps and WIOA programs. Where local workforce areas have a Job Corps presence, they invite Job Corps representation on their boards.

In the coming year the Program Development Office will increase outreach to Job Corps staff and ensure that Job Corps information is shared in monthly youth calls and technical assistance webinars. Job Corps staff will have the opportunity to join a LinkedIn youth practitioners group currently under development.

These tools will prepare youth for high-skill, high-wage, and high-demand occupations of the 21st century and meet the demands of business, especially in high-growth industries of the knowledge economy. This includes:

• The continued support and development of CareerZone, a NYSDOL career exploration and planning tool made freely available to local areas to help youth assess their interests, work values, and skills, and match these to potential careers. Training and college information is linked to each career area and tools such as a state career plan model, resume builder, and budgeting tool help

youth make informed career decisions. A new Young Adult career plan portfolio level was developed and shared with youth programs.

• CareerZone/JobZone (www.careerzone.ny.gov, www.jobzone.ny.gov), NYSDOL's online career planning tools, are the self-service customer interface for OSOS. Coordinated by the Career Development and Youth Initiatives Office, WIA youth programs across New York State started to integrate CareerZone into their program design and required the use of CareerZone in their grant contract RFPs. Similarly, JobZone was adopted in the Career Centers to reduce the OSOS data entry demands on staff and facilitate the staff-assisted assignment of online resources to customers. With phases one and two of the UI-ES Connectivity Project completed, significant updates and enhancements are available to CareerZone and JobZone customers including additional job seeker tools, improved assessments, enhanced graphics, and functional improvements including the integration of the SMART resume builder and job search tools. These tools work directly with NYTalent, a business job order writer and resume matching tool. Enhancements to CareerZone and JobZone will continue into 2016-17.

• The provision of technical assistance and support to encourage preparation and testing for the National Work Readiness Credential (NWRC) in youth programs across the state. The NWRC is a certification of an individual's readiness for entry-level work as defined by businesses. It is the first assessment for entry-level workers to provide a universal, transferable, national standard for work readiness. The National Work Readiness Credential is not intended to replace academics, high school, or postsecondary education. Instead, it addresses the ability of an individual to perform basic entry-level tasks. The NWRC can serve as the first step to help youth entering the job market successfully obtain entry-level jobs.

• The continued development and support of the NYSDOL Youth Portal (www.labor.ny.gov/youth) built around the theme of "Dream It, Plan it, Make it Happen." Resources were identified for youth ages 14-17 and 18-24, as well as for parents. Additional pages for educators, workforce professionals, and business are under development.

Professionals working with youth will use these tools to support the implementation of WIOA youth programs that meet the needs of individual and cultural differences, support the development of youth-centered plans, and embody a youth development approach. Materials in development include:

• Updated CareerZone User's Guide to highlight the recent updates and changes to this NYSDOL career exploration and planning system;

• New OSOS Youth Guide - a resource for new and experienced staff to better understand the basic elements of WIOA youth programming and how to keep track of data and use it to enhance programs; and

• The New, New York State Career Guide - an updated compilation of several NYSDOL career resources to be maintained online with customized resources for target populations such as youth, Veterans, New Americans including immigrants and refugees, etc.

The Program Development Office will continue to:

• Provide technical assistance to local areas, state agencies, and those community based organizations serving youth through monthly Youth Issues calls to disseminate workforce information

pertaining to youth with a special emphasis on building literacy and work-readiness skills to compete in the global economy. This will help to reinforce the effective implementation of all 14 required program elements. In addition, the Program Development Office will remain proactive and provide technical assistance webinars to programs needing assistance with WIOA Youth Common Measures to ensure youth receive the highest quality of service;

• Create youth-appropriate tools to prepare youth for the high-skill, high-wage, and high-demand occupations of the 21st century and meet the demands of business, especially in the high-growth industries of the knowledge economy. This involves the continued support and development of CareerZone and JobZone. The Program Development Office will continue work with NYSED to encourage the renewed interest in the Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Learning Standards; support the provision of Career and Technical Education (CTE) programming; and participate on the Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential Workgroup. Additionally, training will be developed for the NYSED Transition Coordinators in order for them to have the ability to provide technical assistance on CareerZone to educators across the state.

• Develop curriculum and training materials for professionals working with youth to support the implementation of programs that meet the needs of individual and cultural differences; support the development of youth-centered plans; and embody a youth development approach. This includes continued work and updating of resources to support the new CareerZone User's Guide for Educators, updating the relevant Work Based Learning Guide sections from NYSED, supporting the use of CareerZone and JobZone in the NYSED Literacy Zone program, and the incorporation of CareerZone into the New York City Education Department's DIG/IT initiative and Summer Enrichment Program for over-aged, under-credited students.

• Expand content for NYSDOL's Youth Portal.

• Work to support implementation of the NWRC in youth programs across the state to assist youth that lack basic work readiness skills (including workplace listening, math, reading, and situational judgment). NYSDOL support has come in the form of providing programs with NWRC test vouchers to help with the financial costs of implementing the program and coordinating training for front line staff on the official curriculum for the NWRC. The Youth Office will work with Business Services to expand promotion of the NWRC credential to businesses across NYS.

WIOA requires the establishment or reinforcement of certain program parameters to aid in Youth program implementation, as follows (excerpted from NYSDOL Technical Advisory 15-h):

• Procurement of Youth Program Services - LWDBs are responsible for providing guidance for Youth Program workforce investment activities and procuring eligible providers of youth workforce investment activities in the local area by awarding grants or contracts on a competitive basis. If youth services leveraged with non-WIOA funds do not cover any or all of the Youth Program Elements, they must be procured by the LWDB. In accordance with NPRM 681.470, LWDBs may leverage existing youth services that cover Youth program elements through non-WIOA funded partners, and if they do so they must enter into Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs) with these partners to ensure that the Youth Program elements will be offered. If the LWDB so chooses, an optional Youth Standing Committee can be designated to recommend competitively selected awardees to the LWDB. LWDBs are responsible for ensuring Youth service providers are held accountable for performance measures required under WIOA.

• As WIOA emphasizes serving out-of-school youth (OSY), LWDBs should evaluate programs to assess the balance of active in-school youth (ISY) and OSY. If a new youth RFP has already been developed with an exclusive focus on serving OSY, but ISY were enrolled in prior years and still require services, a plan for serving ISY must be developed.

## 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.

Consistent with the strategic visions and goals advanced in the Combined Plan, the State is committed to enhancing program alignment and service delivery. The State has established an Interagency Work Group to analyze service delivery strategies and identify opportunities for improvement across all participant populations including Out-of-School Youth (OSY). The work group, in collaboration with the Employment First State Leadership Mentorship Program (EFSLMP), has established a *Vision Quest* project with the stated goal “to develop alignment between agencies servicing youth to assure quality services and that youth do not fall through the cracks.” The *Vision Quest* project is initially focused on improving services for youth with disabilities or multiple barriers to employment following the Integrated Resource Team (IRT) model developed under the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) Project. The State seeks to expand the IRT model to OSY without regard to their disability status and provide the same level of service integration demonstrated in our multiple DEI projects. The WIOA expanded maximum age (up to age 24) of OSY and the increased flexibility in the provision of Youth services found in the Final Regulations increases the opportunity to serve OSY in a Career Center environment and more fully engage the required and optional partners found therein. The State believes that combining the system level intervention of the Interagency Work Group with the customer level coordination of services provided through IRTs creates an optimal service environment for OSY that will lead to improved outcomes.

## 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)

See 1 above for how the State will ensure that all 14 program elements are made available and implemented.

## 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).

Element services are provided through a network of competitively procured youth providers across the State’s 33 local areas. The specific services vary by local area. This local control is essential in a

state as large and diverse as New York, providing the program flexibility that a statewide program model would not.

The Program Development Office co-ordinates and supports youth activities across the state through a number of strategies including technical assistance; local area data monitoring; monthly conference calls and webinars; and outreach.

The need for local flexibility carries over to the development of criteria/policy for youth requiring additional assistance. Local areas are required to develop and document policies that reflect the specific needs of their economy and youth. Technical assistance has been provided to the locals explaining the calculation of the 5% limit for qualifying in-school youth under this criterion, and the need for the policy criteria to be both objective and quantifiable for monitoring and reporting purposes.

## 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 assessment of ISY for WIOA is based on the definition of “attending school” in State Law. NYSED defines P-12 education attendance as:

1. In each school district of the State, each minor from six to sixteen years of age shall attend upon full time instruction.

2. Each minor from six to sixteen years of age on an Indian reservation shall attend upon full time day instruction.

3. A minor who becomes six years of age on or before the first of December in any school year shall be required to attend upon full time instruction from the first day that the appropriate public schools are in session in September of such school year, and a minor who becomes six years of age after the first of December in any school year shall be required to attend upon full time instruction from the first day of session in the following September; and, except as otherwise provided in subdivision three of this section, shall be required to remain in attendance until the last day of session in the school year in which the minor becomes sixteen years of age.

NYSED defines post-secondary education attendance as youth enrolled in courses for credit that are recognized by the institution as seeking a degree or formal award (matriculated). Youth who are enrolled in vocational or occupational programs through post-secondary institutions are considered undergraduates and in-school.

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

Regarding the definition of the term “Basic Skills Deficient”, NYSDOL accepts the definition provided in WIOA that this term refers to an individual:

1. Who is a youth, that the individual has English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the 8th grade level on a generally accepted standardized test; or

2. Who is a youth or an adult, that the individual is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society.

## 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).)

This is not applicable to New York State.

## 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;

We are not requesting any waivers.

## 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.

The Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933 established a nationwide system of public employment offices known as the Employment Service. The Act was amended by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to make the Employment Service part of the One-Stop services delivery system.

Within the context of New York's functional alignment and in recognition that UI claimants comprise over 65% of the shared job seeker customer pool of the NYS one-stop system (W-P, Vets, WIOA, and TAA combined customer base), NYS implemented a statewide strategy to coordinate services to UI claimants that ensures claimants are afforded common service expectations and are held to common program requirements.

Through functional alignment, NYS workforce professionals are trained to provide seamless services to unemployed customers, from providing meaningful assistance with customers interested in filing for unemployment insurance benefits to providing job leads and training referrals.

Staff capacity building is a New York State priority. NYSDOL provides high quality continuous development to workforce professionals to ensure excellent customer service to both job seekers and businesses.

Professional development activities are provided weekly through Workforce Career Center Operator conference calls, monthly statewide management informational systems (MIS) webinars, UI training webinars, video conferencing, and train the trainer workshops. Professional Development activities are posted on a WebEx platform for easy system access and training events are viewable on a shared calendar at http://labor.ny.gov/workforcenypartners/training-events.shtm.

### 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.

In addition to live training provided by UI experts, staff resource guides are available on the NYSDOL internet and intranet site. Training and guides are updated regularly to provide current UI Reform laws and changes in regulations and implementation procedures. Training includes such topics as Assisting UI Customers in the Career Center and Identifying and Reporting UI Issues.

## 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.

New York State Career Centers provide assistance to customers wishing to file a UI claim in several ways:

• Via How To File for Unemployment Insurance brochures, available in multiple languages;

• Resource room computers and internet access for easy online UI claims filing and weekly certification (Resource Rooms are staffed with workforce professionals to assist as needed); and

• Access to telephones to file telephone claims and speak to UI Claims Representatives directly.

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

NYS has established minimal statewide program requirements designed to provide a statewide reemployment service strategy for UI claimants that:

• Emphasizes early intervention;

• Provides statewide service standards, yet encourages regional/local service delivery designs to tailor services to individual customer needs; and

• Speeds the referral of claimants who need additional help to other support services available within the public workforce system, including but not limited to training/retraining.

Key Reemployment Services requirements include:

• UI claimants are co-enrolled in Wagner-Peyser and WIOA Adult and/or Dislocated Worker programs and must receive a minimum of two staff assisted services. Co-enrollment of UI claimants makes the widest possible array of services available without duplication of resources and creates an automatic link between the UI and workforce system. Claimants are scheduled for an initial staff assisted enrolling service as early as possible in the claims cycle; at maximum within two weeks from the date the claimant information is available for scheduling in our Reemployment Operating System (REOS). Scheduling, delivery method, and format may be regionally determined, but the statewide framework encourages conducting one-on-one interviews to provide the highest level of customer service, if possible.

• UI claimants on Temporary Layoff (TLO) and/or union workers with exclusive union hiring arrangements must be individually assessed to verify status before any work search exemption is allowed. If excused from work search, all claimants must be provided with information regarding the full range of services available in the workforce system. UI claimants identified as work search exempt based on a temporary and/or seasonal loss of employment are to be scheduled for a staff assisted service, if still certifying for benefits beyond the anticipated return to work date.

• The service design for UI claimants subject to work search requirements must minimally include:

o A description of the full range of services available through the one-stop system and how services can be accessed;

o An initial assessment including a basic review of the individual's work history, skills, training, education, career objective, and any self-identified service needs (the initial assessment should be used to inform decisions on next steps such as scheduling additional services and/or targeting for follow-up services);

o Information notifying claimants of their work search related responsibilities including advisement that failure to report for scheduled reemployment services may impact their continuing eligibility for benefits;

o A complete, up-to-date, One-Stop Operating System (OSOS) case management record that will support program enrollments, effective job matching, and referrals; and

o A Comprehensive Assessment, when it is determined that the customer is in need of individualized career services. Such services may be needed in order to address barriers to employment; establish an employment/occupational goal that is relevant to the local labor market; and/or identify deficiencies in occupational knowledge, skills, and abilities that can be rectified through skills development and training. This leads to the development of an Individual Employment Plan.

In accordance with New York's functional alignment policy, REOS is accessible by both ES and WIOA partner staff based on functional assignment. Any/all staff providing reemployment services to UI customers have access to the comprehensive case management data available for all UI customers via REOS, as needed, to eliminate duplication of effort and facilitate effective, streamlined service to the customer.

## 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;

In accordance with New York's functional alignment policy, REOS is accessible by both ES and WIOA partner staff based on functional assignment. Any/all staff providing reemployment services to UI customers have access to the comprehensive case management data available for all UI customers via REOS, as needed, to eliminate duplication of effort and facilitate effective, streamlined service to the customer.

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

UI claimants are co-enrolled in Wagner-Peyser and WIOA Adult and/or Dislocated Worker programs and must receive a minimum of two staff assisted services. Co-enrollment of UI claimants makes the widest possible array of services available without duplication of resources and creates an automatic link between the UI and workforce system. Claimants are scheduled for an initial staff assisted

enrolling service as early as possible in the claims cycle; at maximum within two weeks from the date the claimant information is available for scheduling in our Reemployment Operating System (REOS). Scheduling, delivery method, and format may be regionally determined, but the statewide framework encourages conducting one-on-one interviews to provide the highest level of customer service, if possible.

### 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

The service design for UI claimants subject to work search requirements must minimally include:

o A description of the full range of services available through the one-stop system and how services can be accessed;

o An initial assessment including a basic review of the individual's work history, skills, training, education, career objective, and any self-identified service needs (the initial assessment should be used to inform decisions on next steps such as scheduling additional services and/or targeting for follow-up services);

o Information notifying claimants of their work search related responsibilities including advisement that failure to report for scheduled reemployment services may impact their continuing eligibility for benefits;

o A complete, up-to-date, One-Stop Operating System (OSOS) case management record that will support program enrollments, effective job matching, and referrals; and

o A Comprehensive Assessment, when it is determined that the customer is in need of individualized career services. Such services may be needed in order to address barriers to employment; establish an employment/occupational goal that is relevant to the local labor market; and/or identify deficiencies in occupational knowledge, skills, and abilities that can be rectified through skills development and training. This leads to the development of an Individual Employment Plan.

UI customer caseload management strategies are in place to ensure that UI Reemployment Services customers receive ongoing services following the initial service. Assuming that the UI claimant continues to certify for benefits, each claimant must receive additional staff assisted services within 90-day intervals of the initial enrolling service.

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

Customers whose initial assessment determines a need for additional services are referred quickly to training or system partners for supportive services to address barriers to reemployment.

## 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.

A review of the previous year's agricultural activity in the state:

Agriculture is one of the most important industries in NYS, providing food for the state's consumers and employment for many of its residents. Crops grown across the state are very diverse and include a variety of fruits, root vegetables, and plant/nursery stock. Throughout PY15, the AgLP recorded information on the specific crops grown on farms staff visited and provided vital data demonstrating the best time of year to visit certain farms based on the crops grown at that location.

#### 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.

Regional crop activity in PY15 was as follows:

1. Long Island - Nursery, Potatoes, Grapes (operating all year)

2. Hudson Valley - Apples and Onions (mid April-late November)

3. North Country - Corn and Hay (crops grown on Year Round Dairies), Apples (mid April-late November)

4. Central New York - Corn and Hay (crops grown on Year Round Dairies), Mixed Berries, Apples, Mixed Ground (mid April-late November)

5. Finger Lakes - Apples, Grapes, Mixed Ground (mid April-late November)

6. Western New York - Cabbage, Apples, Nursery (mid April-late November)

A review of the previous year's MSFW activity in the state:

For PY15, the estimated number of MSFWs in NYS totaled approximately 20,053. The estimated numbers of MSFWs per geographic region is:

1. Long Island/NYC - 1,595

2. Mid-Hudson Valley - 2,212

3. Capital/N. Country - 226

4. Central NY - 323

5. Finger Lakes - 13,405

6. Western NY - 2,292

This number is partially based on information obtained in the federally required 5148 report, which estimated 15,589 MSFWs in NYS using the numbers reported on the Grower/Processor Certificates issued by NYSDOL's Division of Labor Standards. However, these certificates only apply to farms with five or more migrant farmworkers. In order to capture seasonal workers and farmworkers on the smaller farms, the AgLP used data from the program's Farm Lists, which is collected for each region by AgLP staff. This resource added approximately 4,464 farm workers to the numbers listed on the 5148 report.

A projected level of agricultural activity in the state for the coming year:

The AgLP has seen a steady increase in the number of agricultural job orders, both for domestic labor and H-2A workers, submitted each program year, since PY12 . Based upon this consistent and steady increase, it is believed that the level of agricultural activity in PY16 will be equal to, or greater than, the level of agricultural activity in PY15.

Based upon the total number of Grower/Processor Registrations submitted to Labor Standards, combined with the AgLP's known number of MSFWs not captured by the registrations, the estimated number of MSFWs in NYS for PY15 totals 20,053 individuals.

In PY16, an increased focus will be placed on assisting Agricultural businesses in submitting job orders for domestic labor. As the AgLP was brand new in PY12, the focus was largely on meeting the Agricultural Businesses across the state and notifying them of the services the Agriculture Labor Specialists (AgLS) could provide to them and their workers on the farm. Now that the businesses are aware of the AgLS in their area, more focus can be placed on providing them with the labor supply required to ensure their farms thrive. An increased labor supply will ultimately correlate to a high activity level in the industry overall.

## 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.

## ASSESSMENT OF NEED

### *(I) NYS MIGRANT SEASONAL FARMWORKER CHARACTERISTICS AND MSFW NEEDS*

Typical Characteristics of MSFWs in NYS:

- Predominantly Spanish Speaking and/or Limited English Proficient (LEP).
- Countries of origin include Mexico, Guatemala, Jamaica, Burma, Haiti, Korea, and U.S. born workers from Puerto Rico.
- Common languages include Spanish, Haitian Creole, and Korean.
- Farmworkers are MSFW, seasonal, and year round workers depending on the crop and method of farming.

Farmworkers, including MSFWs, have similar needs to other immigrant, refugee, and low wage worker populations, including:

- Flexible hours for accessible services as agricultural work hours do not always coincide with typical business hours;
- Assistance with language barriers; and
- Assistance with finding work in agriculture by word-of-mouth and friends/neighbors.

In NYS, farmworkers tend to be seasonal workers that work at area farms seasonally. In the off season, workers may find other temporary jobs or will wait to be called back by their previous agricultural employer.

In PY15, AgLP staff visited small, medium, and large farming operations, including seasonal and year round workforces. The goal was to reach as many of the MSFWs in the state as possible. AgLP staff helped a total of 4,281 MSFWs with employment related and other services in PY15. The number of MSFWs served in each for geographic region includes:

1. Long Island/NYC - 1,290

2. Mid-Hudson Valley - 779

3. Capital/N. Country - 81

4. Central NY - 261

5. Finger Lakes - 1,382

6. Western NY - 488

PathStone, the current WIA Title I section 167 grantee, reported serving 2,408 MSFWs, resulting in a combined total of 6,689 individuals receiving employment services in PY15.

A projected number of MSFWs in the state for the coming year:

Based on last year's numbers, and the data provided by Labor Standards in the Farm Labor Contractor Registrations and Grower/Processor Registrations for each quarter's 5148 report and that provided by PathStone Corporation, it is the AgLP's estimate that approximately 20,000 or more farmworkers will be in NYS during PY16.

## 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:

Numerical goals for the number of MSFWs to be contacted during PY16:

The ten bilingual AgLS (one vacant position) are located in New York Career Centers close to high populations of agricultural workers. For those staff members who are not located in offices deemed significant by USDOL ETA, the AgLP worked with DEWS to ensure the AgLS can work in a significant office at least one day per week. This will ensure MSFWs can reach an AgLS from almost anywhere in the state on any given day. Because the staff is strategically located in close proximity to MSFW populations, the goal is to reach as many of the estimated 20,000 farmworkers in PY16 as possible. Likewise, an objective of the AgLP is to visit farms with an MSFW workforce twice during the season to provide outreach services to MSFWs working on the farm during the harvest season that may not have been there earlier in the year, during the planting season.

Outreach will also continue to be provided to dairy workers, who may be year- round workers. This will lead to an overall increase in the number of farmworkers reached by AgLP staff, and may also lead to the discovery of seasonal workers who may work at these dairies and can receive outreach services.

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

Tools used to conduct outreach:

In order to reach an estimated 20,000 MSFWs, as well as year-round agricultural workers in PY16, AgLP staff will use several tools:

• The primary delivery method is personal contact. Staff travel to farms several days each week to meet with MSFWs in person and provide them with packets of information relevant to their rights; supportive services available to them in the community; and employment related services available at the Career Centers across the state.

• Each AgLS is equipped with a mobile device, making the AgLS accessible to MSFWs even when they are not at the Career Center.

• Prior to visiting farms, staff assemble a packet of materials including fact sheets from NYSDOL, information on other agencies serving MSFWs in the community (Community Resource Guides),

and contact information for the AgLP staff. The following documents are included in the basic outreach packet for MSFWs (non-foreign guest workers):

o DIPA services (in English and Spanish)

o DIPA AgLP Contact List

o NYSDOL General Services (in English and Spanish)

o DEWS New York Career Center Locations (contains address and phone number)

o NYSDOL Protection for Farmworkers (in English and Spanish)

o Farmworker Fact Sheet (in English and Spanish)

o Community Resource Guide

In addition, the staff tailors these worker packets by adding specific information regarding workshop and training opportunities available at their local Career Centers.

• When applicable, staff also provides outreach services at various events across the state. Several times per year, there are events held in the agricultural community where outreach can take place and staff can have direct access to farmworkers. These events include:

o Empire Farm Days

o Mexican Consulate events throughout the year

o Guatemalan Consulate events throughout the year

## 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.

In February 2016, Agriculture Labor Program staff received training on the following.

- DIPA's Foreign Labor Certification Unit staff provided training on updated protocols and forms for 2016 including the Pre-Occupancy Housing Inspection protocol and form, and Referrals/Applicants to H-2A Job Orders. An AgLS provided training on updated Field Check Protocol and Form;

- NYSDOL's Office of Staff and Organizational Development (OSOD) conducted a session entitled Conversation with a Purpose: The Essentials of Interviewing & Customer Service;
- DIPA staff provided the Policy and Procedures on Providing Job Services to Customers and some OSOS activities and documentation; and
- A DIPA Supervisor provided an update on program reach and staff productivity as well as a refresher on documentation of field work in AgLogs (the AgLP's database system).

Technical Advisories are shared with all NYSDOL staff as appropriate. DIPA will also request training on employment services as needed for outreach staff. Additionally, DIPA is working on further developing its internal protocols and providing technical training as needed. At minimum, DIPA will train staff on all program areas on a yearly basis.

Assessment of available resources:

1. For PY16 there are currently nine AgLS and two Supervisors who conduct outreach to MSFWs. The AgLP also added a Labor Liaison to the outreach team. In addition to conducting outreach as needed, the Labor Liaison will also assist the AgLP in connecting local domestic labor with available jobs in NYS. The Division Director also maintains direct contact with farmworkers and conducts outreach to MSFWs with a hands-on approach to ensure Division of Immigrant Policies and Affairs (DIPA) provides information and services relevant to distinct needs of agricultural workers. All 11 positions are full time.

2. In addition to the 11 full time AgLP staff, the NY SMA will also conduct outreach throughout PY16 (position vacant as of September 2015).

3. In PY16, AgLP staff will work closely with PathStone Corporation. Staff continue to participate in PathStone's Program Area Advisory Committee Meetings throughout the season. Additionally, the local AgLS works at PathStone's Williamson office to provide outreach, information, and employment services to farmworkers who visit and are referred to the AgLP by Pathstone.

The AgLP also continues to develop the services and information available to farmworkers through the Farmworkers Community Center in Pine Island, also known as the Alamo. During PY15, the AgLP staff provided services and information from the Alamo three days per week. This will continue as we further develop the services that farmworkers can access at this location.

Furthermore, in PY16, Long Island's Riverhead Spanish Apostolate will continue to host the local AgLS at their offices. For both of these locations, our staff presence provides much needed outreach and assistance to workers who would not typically visit the nearest NYS Career Center.

## 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.

In order to ensure that MSFWs receive quality services when they visit any of the local Career Centers in NYS, the AgLP created and presented a specialized training webinar for Labor Services Representatives (LSRs) in DEWS who regularly serve customers seeking employment. The goal of the training is to guarantee that farmworkers are served by all LSRs in the Career Centers, rather than rely exclusively on the AgLP Staff. The content of the training details the distinct nature of agriculture and the nuanced employment needs of both agricultural businesses and farmworkers. It

also provides step-by-step instructions for creating comprehensive employment profiles for farmworkers; performing skills and job matching; and knowing where to find agricultural job openings in active recruitment in OSOS. The webinar is updated and recorded annually and is available online to allow newly hired LSRs to receive the training at any time and at their own pace . There is also a Quick Tips Guide that LSRs can reference quickly in order to make the resources readily available.

Staff capacity building is a New York State priority. Professional development activities are provided through conference calls, UI training webinars, video conferencing and train the trainer workshops. In addition to live training provided by UI experts, staff resource guides are available on our NYSDOL internet and intranet site. Training and guides are updated regularly to provide current UI Reform laws and changes in regulations and implementation procedures. Training has included such topics as *Assisting UI Customers in the Career Center* and *Identifying and Reporting UI Issues*.

DIPA will request Unemployment Insurance program training for outreach staff beginning in PY2016 and yearly thereafter.

## 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.

In order to ensure that MSFWs receive quality services when they visit any of the local Career Centers in NYS, the AgLP created and presented a specialized training webinar for Labor Services Representatives (LSRs) in DEWS who regularly serve customers seeking employment. The goal of the training is to guarantee that farmworkers are served by all LSRs in the Career Centers, rather than rely exclusively on the AgLP Staff. The content of the training details the distinct nature of agriculture and the nuanced employment needs of both agricultural businesses and farmworkers. It also provides step-by-step instructions for creating comprehensive employment profiles for farmworkers; performing skills and job matching; and knowing where to find agricultural job openings in active recruitment in OSOS. The webinar is updated and recorded annually and is available online to allow newly hired LSRs to receive the training at any time and at their own pace . There is also a Quick Tips Guide that LSRs can reference quickly in order to make the resources readily available.

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

In PY15, AgLP staff will work closely with PathStone Corporation. Staff continue to participate in PathStone's Program Area Advisory Committee Meetings throughout the season. Additionally, the local AgLS works at PathStone's Williamson office to provide outreach, information, and employment services to farmworkers who visit and are referred to the AgLP by Pathstone.

The AgLP also continues to develop the services and information available to farmworkers through the Farmworkers Community Center in Pine Island, also known as the Alamo. During PY14, the AgLP staff provided services and information from the Alamo three days per week. This will continue as we further develop the services that farmworkers can access at this location.

Furthermore, in PY15, Long Island's Riverhead Spanish Apostolate will continue to host the local AgLS at their offices. For both of these locations, our staff presence provides much needed outreach and assistance to workers who would not typically visit the nearest NYS Career Center.

## 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 through the American Job Center Network

The goal of outreach is to contact MSFWs who are not reached by the normal intake activities of the NYS Career Center. The AgLS provide outreach services to farmworkers at their living and gathering locations outside of the physical Career Center, which may include farm sites, labor camps, grocery stores, and churches. The AgLS explains the services that can be accessed at the local Career Center and educates the farmworkers on their rights and responsibilities under NYS labor law. With regard to employment services, the AgLP staff encourages farmworkers to visit the nearest NYS Career Center to explore the career services available to them.

AgLS provide the following services through outreach:

• Information on services available through PathStone Corporation, New York’s current WIA 167 grantee;

• Information on training services such as GED, ESL, and basic education available through the Career Center or other services provided in the community;

• Details on applying for UI, if applicable;

• Health care, transportation, and child care services available in the local area;

• Information about New York State and Federal labor laws and their enforcement;

• Appropriate channels for filing complaints through the Employment Services Complaint System; and

• Resolution of “apparent violations” observed or uncovered by the AgLS during their outreach visit.

In order to ensure that MSFWs receive quality services when they visit any of the local Career Centers in NYS, the AgLP created and presented a specialized training webinar for Labor Services Representatives (LSRs) in DEWS who regularly serve customers seeking employment. The goal of

the training is to guarantee that farmworkers are served by all LSRs in the Career Centers, rather than rely exclusively on the AgLP Staff. The content of the training details the distinct nature of agriculture and the nuanced employment needs of both agricultural businesses and farmworkers. It also provides step-by-step instructions for creating comprehensive employment profiles for farmworkers; performing skills and job matching; and knowing where to find agricultural job openings in active recruitment in OSOS. The webinar is updated and recorded annually and is available online to allow newly hired LSRs to receive the training at any time and at their own pace . There is also a Quick Tips Guide that LSRs can reference quickly in order to make the resources readily available.

Providing these services to farmworkers, and ensuring they utilize them, increases the likelihood of farmworkers becoming more competitive in the local, regional, and national economy, and enables them to use acquired skills to transition to employment in the non-agricultural sector if they so choose.

Services Provided to Agricultural Businesses through the American Job Center Network

Providing services to Agricultural Businesses in New York is extremely important because they require a reliable workforce to ensure the products they grow can be harvested in a time and manner that guarantees the highest quality product reaches consumers. The AgLS provide many services to employers, including updating them on compliance with state and federal labor laws and ensuring they have the most current posters, forms, and guides. AgLP staff also provides the following business services to Agricultural Employers:

• Assistance in recruiting domestic labor;

• Matching workers' skills and experience to business needs and available positions;

• Answering questions about recruiting and registering workers;

• Referrals for labor laws and compliance issues; and

• Labor market data

Additionally, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between NYSDOL and the NYSDOH was established in August 2015 to ensure that the goals of each agency are met while providing streamlined services to the agricultural businesses and farmworkers affected. More specifically, the agreement eliminates duplicative migrant labor camp pre-occupancy and occupancy inspections, which would otherwise be required by both agencies.

In PY15, the AgLP will continue to focus on providing Agricultural Businesses the domestic labor they need to succeed in this important industry. The AgLP will continue the "Labor Needs" project that began in PY13 to determine exactly what the businesses in the state are looking for in their workforce and the time of year they will most likely need workers. The Labor Needs Form provides an opportunity for the Agricultural Business to place a local job order with the AgLS. The AgLS then enters the information into OSOS, and the job order becomes active on the NYS Job Bank, becoming visible to potential workers on the Internet.

For those workers without computer access, these jobs are also posted in the NYS Career Centers, as well as the Farm Jobs Bulletin the AgLP implemented in April 2013. This bulletin is sent out to staff approximately every two weeks and can be posted at grocery stores, churches, and other

MSFW gathering locations so they may become aware of available positions across the state. We expect these initiatives will help workers obtain jobs and businesses receive the labor supply required at farms across the state.

While conducting field visits and outreach to MSFWs, the AgLP staff also speak with Agricultural Businesses and provide information on services available to them. Just as the workers have a packet, the staff also prepares an business packet prior to visiting the farm that includes the following:

• NYSDOL Services for Business Flyer

• DIPA Services Flyer

• DIPA AgLP Contact List

• NYS Agricultural Minimum Wage Poster

• NYS Federal Bonding Program

• Farm Labor Commissary Registration Form

• NYSDOL Application for Grower/Processor of Migrant Registration

• Pay Notice Agreement for Workers (in English and Spanish)

• Blank Wage Statement (For non-H2A employers)

• Blank Wage Statement (For H-2A employers)

• Unemployment Insurance Employer Registration Information

• Workers' Compensation Advocate for Business Booklet

• What Business Owners Must Know About Workers' Compensation Flyer

• USDOL H-2A Employer Handbook

• List of region-specific service providers by county for the AgLS' territory

Furthermore, AgLP staff develops and implements various trainings for farm labor contractors and agricultural employers. The goal of the written materials and information sessions is to promote an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of employers, as well as the rights and services available to farmworkers. Through online webinars, recorded training sessions, in-person workshops, and the distribution of written information along with employer-specific packets, AgLP staff has provided education such as:

• The 2015 Annual Christmas Tree Farmer's Association Meeting - Labor Law Overview Training;

• Cornell Cooperative Extension Agricultural Employer's Labor Law Workshops;

• Farm Labor Contractor Registration Online Webinar Training - Available online in both English & Spanish;

• Written Manual for Farm Labor Contractor Registration - Available online in both English & Spanish; and

• Deducting Money from a Worker's Wages: When is it legal and when is it not? - Online Webinar Training for Agricultural Businesses in NYS.

### (B) MARKETING THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE COMPLAINT SYSTEM TO FARMWORKERS AND OTHER FARMWORKER ADVOCACY GROUPS.

The ES Complaint system is currently being updated and training will be provided to all Career Center and partner staff. In the interim, the AgLP staff discuss the complaint process with workers when conducting outreach in the field. The ES Complaint system is also discussed with workers when they reach out to AgLP staff to discuss possible violations of labor law. Workers seeking to file formal complaints are assisted with completing the complaint form and the AgLP staff forward the form to the appropriate enforcement office. Where workers do not want to file formal complaints, the AgLP staff work with businesses to discuss potential violations and resolve them with business cooperation.

### (C) MARKETING THE AGRICULTURAL RECRUITMENT SYSTEM TO AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS AND HOW IT INTENDS TO IMPROVE SUCH PUBLICITY.

In the off season, the AgLP staff craft their regional outreach plans and begin contact with businesses to discuss their anticipated labor needs for the following season. The AgLP staff discuss ARS as a possible way to obtain the necessary labor for their business. The AgLP continue to make contact with these businesses throughout the season and will continue to offer ARS as a possible option for their labor needs. Many businesses feel comfortable with the H-2A guest worker visa process, but will occasionally submit smaller local job orders for early season or end of season labor needs.

## 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).

In PY15, AgLP staff will work closely with PathStone Corporation. Staff continue to participate in PathStone's Program Area Advisory Committee Meetings throughout the season. Additionally, the local AgLS works at PathStone's Williamson office to provide outreach, information, and employment services to farmworkers who visit and are referred to the AgLP by Pathstone.

The AgLP also continues to develop the services and information available to farmworkers through the Farmworkers Community Center in Pine Island, also known as the Alamo. During PY14, the

AgLP staff provided services and information from the Alamo three days per week. This will continue as we further develop the services that farmworkers can access at this location.

Furthermore, in PY15, Long Island's Riverhead Spanish Apostolate will continue to host the local AgLS at their offices. For both of these locations, our staff presence provides much needed outreach and assistance to workers who would not typically visit the nearest NYS Career Center.

Additionally, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between NYSDOL and the NYSDOH was established in August 2015 to ensure that the goals of each agency are met while providing streamlined services to the agricultural businesses and farmworkers affected. More specifically, the agreement eliminates duplicative migrant labor camp pre-occupancy and occupancy inspections, which would otherwise be required by both agencies.

## (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.

Review and Public Comment: The draft of this AOP was made available to the groups listed below. Each of the following were invited to share their input and comments:

• Cornell Cooperative Extension;

• New York Farm Bureau;

• New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets;

• PathStone Corporation;

• Worker Justice Center of New York;

• The International Institute of Buffalo; and

• Cornell Farmworker Program

Comments from the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets are below:

Eric S. Denk

Agricultural Labor Program and Communication Specialist

Division of Immigrant Policies and Affairs

New York State Department of Labor

Albany NY, 14420

February 8, 2016

Dear Mr. Denk,

On behalf of the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, I would like to thank you for soliciting comments for the Agricultural Outreach Plan for 2016 in particular the newly revised Agriculture Labor Program (formerly known as the Rural Employment Services Program) which transitioned to the Division of Immigrant Policies and Affairs (DIPA) as of April 2012.

The Department of Agriculture and Markets appreciates the work of DIPA and the staff, in conducting outreach, compliance, and inspections services for farm workers and farm employers in the agricultural areas of our state. New York farmers that utilize the H2A program services, in particular, find the DIPA staff invaluable in terms of assisting farmers with processing paperwork as well as helping to ensure compliance with regulations throughout the season. Below are comments from farmers across the state on the DIPA staff:

1- Farmers in the area continue to enjoy a good relationship with the new DIPA staff.

2- The new Agricultural Specialist staff is also helpful and has a good relationship with the farm workers which, in turn helps the farmers.

3- Some perceptions seems to continue about being more enforcement driven.

4- Some stakeholders still are skeptical about the program but we should continue to reach out to them. In particular, we should reach out to the Horticultural Society and NEDPA.

The department would also suggest utilizing data from the National Agricultural Statistical Services (NASS).

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions or concerns.

Respectfully,

Hector M. Gonzalez

Migrant Labor Program Coordinator

NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets

Comments received from the NFJP Grantee PathStone Corporation are below:

Dear Ms. Jeanette Lazelle,

I would like to start out by thanking the Department for sharing the New York State Plan and accepting our input into its development and final form. I have been engaged in PathStone Corporation's training and employment efforts for 35 years, through several different training and employment legislations. We have active MOUs with several One-Stops in key agricultural areas of the state. I remember the NYS Department of Labor previously had Agriculture Labor Specialists in key areas of the state and I can attest that, in most instances, this was beneficial to employers and in filling agriculture job openings.

We at PathStone are well aware of the importance of Agriculture and agriculture jobs to New York State. We hope that this Plan results in fewer H2A job orders and spurs the matching of interested workers to agriculture job openings. I laud the Department for the work and inclusion of 14 paid Wagner-Peyser staff and for keeping a strong Monitor Advocate in place at the state level. I assure you that through our field offices throughout the state, PathStone will continue to provide training and placement services to the farmworkers we interact with annually.

Please see specific comments noted below.

Regards,

Jeffrey D. Lewis

Sr. Vice President, Direct Services

PathStone Corporation

400 East Avenue

Rochester, NY 14607

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<u>Comments:</u>

1. Section B, subsection (i): I want to congratulate the Department for the hiring of ten bilingual AgLS positions and locating them close to the farms and Farmworker population for the purpose of getting service information to them in a more practical fashion. (See Page 3.)

2. Section B, subsection (i): What was significantly absent was combined outreach, which has proven effective in the past. There was no mention of joint distribution of both agencies' written materials, which has been the policy in the recent past and has been coordinated through the Monitor Advocate at the beginning of each season. (See Page 4.)

3. Section B, Tools used to conduct outreach, subsection (iii): When writing this section, we wish you would have mentioned our Agency because often the tools used are referral and co-enrollment in collaborative ventures to meet farmworkers' unique service needs and to further their career paths through training and/or placement within and outside agriculture. We feel this inclusion would have been consistent with the intent of the Judge Ritchie Order. (See Page 5.)

4. Section B, Assessment of available resources, subsection (ii): We believe that the inclusion of our office in Williamson and the other offices listed is a great way to build rapport between staff of both parties. We wish that the Department would consider similarly stationing someone in our Middletown Office. (See Page 4.)

5. Section B, subsection (iii): I laud the Department for the inclusion of technology upgrades for staff and think it will be beneficial to all. (See Page 5.)

6. Section B, subsection (iii ): PathStone would also add Farmworker Recognition Days and Farmworker Recognition Picnics to the list closing page 5.

7. Section C: PathStone would love to be included in the Workshop sessions mentioned in the last paragraph of the Plan on page 5.

8. Section C, Services provided thru the American Job Center Network: We think that this first paragraph seems to steer participant farmworkers away from PathStone services instead of co-enrolling to make the most efficient use of both partners in the training plan and career pathways design. (See Page 6.)

9. Section D, Services to Agricultural Employers: We like the content on page seven with the addition of sending PathStone the Bulletin mentioned so we may assist in its distribution. (See Page 7.)

10. Section D: We support this section and we encourage the use of the employment service by agricultural entities. (See Page 8.)

The Division of Immigrant Policies and Affairs did not feel any changes to the plan were required based on these comments.

## (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.

Data based on the Equity Ratio Indicators for program years 2012-2014 (final numbers for PY2015 are not yet available) indicate that the State typically meets three of the five indicators (referred to jobs, referred to supportive services, and job development contacts). However, the Equity Ratio Indicators for services in the last four years are difficult to fully review because the data is not cumulative over the four quarters. It is therefore difficult to determine, if over the course of the

program year, the service Equity Ratio Indicators are being met. Additionally, the formulas used to track the Equity Ratio Indicators will be reviewed for accuracy.

DIPA provided training in 2016 regarding better documentation of support services provided to farmworkers. We will review the quarterly 5148 data to determine if the training has helped with reporting requirements. DIPA will also discuss further training for outreach staff by other NYSDOL staff to ensure proper documentation of services provided.

## (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.

Assessment of AgLP Progress and Assessment of Equity Ratio Indicators:

In PY 15, the AgLP Program had less field staff but more work was completed per staff person. This is reflective of a stabilization of the field staff and their growing expertise. DIPA reviewed the field staff Regional Outreach Plans (ROPs) for 2015 and the following detailed assessment of each AgLS' ROP indicates progress in services being provided to all farmworkers in NYS.

- Long Island/NYC-The AgLS in this region intended to conduct activity at 208 farms, and did so at 195. He also made contact with farmworkers in Riverhead at the Spanish Apostolate. In total, the AgLS made almost 3,000 agricultural contacts for calendar year 2015, which includes activity related to MSFWs, H-2A workers, year-round workers, and agricultural employers.
- Mid-Hudson Valley-The two AgLS in this region estimated field activity at 104 businesses, with one AgLS conducting outreach at 99 farms and the other at 89 farms. Activity was conducted both in the field and at the region's Farmworker Community Center, or "The Alamo", in Pine Island, NY. Between the two AgLS in the Hudson Valley, 2,785 agricultural contacts were made.
- Capital/N. Country-Due to the high volume of farms and H-2A activity, and lack of available AgLP resources in the Capital and North Country area, the AgLS in this region conducted outreach to approximately 590 agricultural contacts, which is much lower than a typical season, but with twice as many field checks done as the previous year.
- Central NY-In this region there are approximately 20 counties, which one AgLS covered for a large part of PY15. With the addition of a second AgLS to the territory, additional field work will be completed going forward. In PY 15, agricultural activity was conducted with approximately 900 contacts.
- Finger Lakes-The AgLS in this region accepted a new position outside of NYSDOL in late PY14, and the territory was covered by the Labor Liaison and other available staff. Without an appropriate AgLS in place, outreach was still conducted at 64 businesses and over 1,000 contacts were made in total.
- Western NY-Due to an AgLS shortage in the region, DIPA's Director and the Foreign Labor Certification staff conducted outreach as available. In the 10 county region, approximately 85 farms were visited with direct contact made to over 1,100 MSFWs, H-2A workers, year-round workers, and farms. An AgLS has since been placed in Western NY and will prioritize field work in PY16.

## (E) STATE MONITOR ADVOCATE

The plan must contain a statement confirming the State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved the AOP.

State Monitor Advocate: At the time of review, there was no NY SMA in place to review and comment on the PY15 Agricultural Outreach Plan. At this time, the State is working to fill this position and the review was conducted in the manner described below.

## 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 ACADEMIC STANDARDS

VI.a Aligning of Content Standards

New York adopted the CCR Standards for Adult Education released in 2013, which are aligned the New York State's K-12 standards in May 2016.

At the September 10, 2012 ACCES Committee meeting, the New York State Board of Regents charged NYSED ACCES adult education staff to develop and release an RFP for a new High School Equivalency (HSE) test to replace the 2002 GED test. The Regents policy called for a test with increased academic rigor that would gradually phase in national college and career readiness standards over a three year period. This new HSE test would serve as the exit graduation standard for adult education students, and shift all HSE instruction to reflect the exam's more rigorous content expectations. The expectation of Regents policy was to accomplish this goal by July 1, 2016.

**The Policy Decision to Align All Adult Education Instruction With Federal Adult Education College and Career Readiness (AE-CCR) Standards**

NY's Adult Education standards are aligned with NY state's K-12 standards. This alignment was determined by the review of the TASC test standards tested by GHI by common core content experts from the NYS Office of Assessment which also reviewed and analyzed over 6,000 TASC questions to ensure alignment and also full alignment to the AE-CCR standards. In September 2012, NYSED issued an RFP to procure a new HSE test. The Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC) test developed by CTB/McGraw-Hill (now Data Recognition Corporation) was selected as the sole HSE test for New York State. As per the requirements of the RFP, the TASC has increased in rigor over three years, with content aligned to the federal AE-CCR standards for ELA and math (AE-CCR) standards. The third set of forms released on September 26, 2016, are based upon, and fully aligned to, AE-CCR standards levels E and D. The academic content standards used in the test form blue print and test specifications for the development of the operational forms G,H,I were approved by NYSED for TASC in May, 2016. At the same time, the decision was made to align all federal and state-funded adult education instruction with AE-CCR standards in May, 2016. AE-CCR standards explicitly guide required professional development instruction provided by NYSED to 5,500 adult education teachers throughout the span of the Combined State plan. This includes annual Master Teacher training that is turn-keyed to all adult education teachers in the state. Aligning WIOA and non-federally funded instruction with AE-CCR standards is an explicit requirement in the comprehensive RFP to rebid WIOA funds by July 1, 2017.

Beginning in 2014, two dedicated adult education professional development websites—www.TeachingtotheCoreNY.org and www.CollectEDNY.org -- were also created to provide instructional resources tied to rigorous academic adult education standards. In 2016-17 and each year of the combined State Plan, these will continue to identify instructional resources that are based upon AE-CCR standards for all WIOA instruction that were adopted by the State in May, 2016.

## 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 literacty 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.

During grant year 2016-17, NYSED ACCES-AEPP will implement a new competitive application process for all federal WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) local funding that will determine the eligible providers that will be awarded funds. The comprehensive RFP will bundle separate competitions for:

o Section 225 Corrections Education and other institutionalized individuals

o Section 211 funding Grants and Contracts for Eligible Providers; and

o Section 243 Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education.

All applicants for all funds must meet broad WIOA local provider eligibility requirements, with the exception of applicants receiving NYS WEP funds, which are only open to schools and BOCES. The estimated funds available are $35,222,138 in federal WIOA Title II funds and $1,843,000 in NYS WEP funding.

There are four types of competition: Part 1. Adult Basic Education and Literacy Services, including integrated education and training ($21,568,941 in Section 211 funding); Part 2. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education ($7,748,870 in Section 243 funding) Part 3. Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Education Programs ($2,747,327 in Section 225 funding); and Part 4. Literacy Zones ($3,157,00 in WIOA Section 211 funds with $1,843,000 in WEP to fund 40-50 literacy zones)

Part 1 will support these WIOA activities defined in Section 203:

- Adult education
- Literacy
- English language acquisition activities
- Integrated education and training
- Workforce preparation activities.

Integrated education and training will be an option for receiving funds under Part 1. The RFP will require that integrated education and training programs include adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training in order to more efficiently co-enroll participants, as appropriate, in integrated education and training offerings available through WIOA Title 1 and other sources.

Specifically, the RFP will support applications that connect contextualized instruction, delivered concurrently with workforce training and workforce preparation activities funded with WIOA Title 1, SUNY community college FTE aid, private funding, adult secondary-level career and technical education supported by NYS Employment Preparation Education, federal SNAP funding and other sources to support the concurrent and contextualized occupational component in order to develop effective integrated education and training programs tied to career pathways. Each of these requirements for the workforce training of an integrated education and education program will be evaluated in a point-based evaluation rubric.

Part 2 will be focused exclusively on integrated English Literacy and Civics Education. All instruction funded under this Part will adopt a service approach that provides English language acquisition and literacy for English language learners concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purposes of educational and career advancement.

Part 3 will support adult education, literacy, English language acquisition activities, and integrated education and training activities for programs in corrections education and other institutionalized individuals.

Literacy zones in Part 4 will use WIOA Section 211 funds to support adult education academic instruction and educational services---especially case management---in family welcome centers in communities of high poverty and high concentrations of limited English language proficiency.

Beginning in July 1, 2017, family literacy activities and workplace literacy activities will be funded with $90 million in State funding from NYS Adult Literacy Education (ALE) and Employment Preparation Education (EPE) State aid programs. Federal WIOA funds will not be used to fund family literacy activities and workplace literacy activities. The rationale is that reporting and performance can be more effectively handled with these more flexible funding sources. State literacy funding will also support the following AEFLA activities: adult education, literacy, English language acquisition activities and workforce preparation activities, including career exploration using 10 sector based career kits being rolled out in 2016-17. NYSED will continue to annually reduce its match from state funding the allowable 10% in order to be able to use the funding as a match for other federal funding opportunities and restructure performance and accountability requirements for all state maintenance of effort funding to make it more effective in serving those immigrant students without SSN numbers, family literacy, work readiness, workplace literacy and career exploration.

New York State has a long-standing commitment to increase low-skilled individuals' access to and successful completion of postsecondary education and to career pathways leading to self-sufficiency, and will continue such efforts under WIOA. Applicants for funding under Part 1 must clearly describe how the instructional program integrates workforce preparation activities into instructional services, such as utilizing resources, using information, working with others, understanding systems, and other employability skills. All program areas must include a program of instruction that:

- Include curriculum, lesson plans, and instructional materials aligned with NYSED required AE-CCR standards;
- Offer educational and career counseling service that assist an eligible individual to transition to postsecondary education or employment;
- Concurrently, be part of a career pathway to post-secondary education, training, apprenticeship programs and employment.

NYSED assures that all federal considerations outlined in Section 231 (3) will be met in each of the 4 Parts of the comprehensive, multi-year RFP, for all WIOA Title 2 funding. NYS will use the considerations specified in Section 231 (e) by requiring applicants to fully address each of the thirteen considerations into the narrative portion of the application in each of the four Parts of the RFP. NYS will evaluate the narrative section using a point-based scoring rubric weighting each of the 13 considerations.

### 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.

New York State will use the same application process for Section 225 funding being used for section 231 and section 243 funds. New York ensures the following:

- The same grant or contract announcement, application and proposal process is used for all eligible providers;
- All eligible providers have direct and equitable access to apply for grants and contracts;
- NYSED uses the considerations specified in Section 231 (e) of WIOA to fund eligible providers by incorporating each of the considerations as part of the review criteria;
- All applications are evaluated using the same rubric and scoring criteria; and
- As part of the State agency rating criteria, specific consideration is given to eligible applicants that indicate priority of service to individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.

WIOA expands the use of funds to support academic programs for criminal offenders in correctional institutions and for other institutionalized individuals. The expanded list of academic programs supported with section 225 funds allows states the opportunity to provide instruction in not only adult education and literacy activities, but also provide integrated education and training; career pathways; concurrent enrollment; peer tutoring; and transition to re-entry initiatives and post-release services with the goal of reducing recidivism. This will be reflected in the Section 225 RFP. Specifically, NYS will require as part of the eligible provider's grant application that the correctional institutions describe and define the academic program areas in which they intend to provide academic instruction, and describe how the agency will deliver any of these programs. All applications involving programs at state correctional facilities must have letters of support from NYS Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS). Priorities will be focused on:

- Adult education and literacy activities;
- Career pathways;
- Concurrent enrollment;
- Peer tutoring
- Integrated education and training; and
- Transition to re-entry initiatives and post release services.

Given projected appropriation levels it is anticipated that the same percentage set aside (10%) will be used as in 2013, pending final federal guidance and other considerations. In 2013-14 there was $ 2,607,193 WIA funding statewide available to provide educational programs for criminal offenders in correctional institutions or for other institutionalized education programs. There was a $250,000 cap for individual applications. Similar structure will be part of the 2016-17 RFP process.

## 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 WIA, NYS has a long-standing history of providing English literacy and civics education. NYSED will leverage these past successes to meet the new requirements under WIOA. NYSED's application for IELCE (i.e., section 243) funds will require applicants to describe how they plan to provide English language acquisition and civics education concurrently and contextually. The proposed activities and budget will be reviewed by NYSED to ensure that they meet all statutory requirements.

Specifically, the RFP will support the development of integrated education and training programs for English Language Learners that concurrently provides civic education. Occupational skills training will be sector based and support next steps in a career pathway. This training could be provided, for example, by an LEA or BOCES that receives Employment Preparation Education state aid for secondary level occupational education; a community college receiving Full Time Equivalent Aid; or a WIOA Title 1 providers. It will also support an adult education program at a Big Five School district that partners with a local refugee training center to work with newly arrived refugees. In this example, the adult education program in the Big Five City School District will provide the general employability, workplace, and financial vocabulary as well as instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation. The civics education curriculum will include an overview of important dates/events in U.S. history. It also includes an overview of the U.S. government at the federal, state, and local levels. As appropriate, the training center provides hands-on training and skill building opportunities related to the work context.

As outlined in OCTAE's January 11, 2016 Program Memorandum 15-7, Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) program under section 243(a) of WIOA must be delivered in combination with integrated education and training activities. The Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education programs under section 243(a) of WIOA need 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. Programs enable adult students in IELCE programs to achieve competency in the English language and acquire the basic and more advanced skills needed to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens in the United States.

2015-16 has been used to establish foundations to support IELCE programs through the following:

- Dedicated funding for CUNY for the development of 10 Sector Career kits that will be adapted in each of seven Regional Adult Education Network (RAEN) regions. Each Career Kit will include instruction for low level ELL students (e.g., health literacy for the health sector Career Kit) but also modules to support IELCE programming. NYSDOL labor analysts and staff will support the development of the Career Kits.

- The first CUNY Career Pathways Institute to train case managers, Teacher Leaders and Program Coordinators on the Health Sector Career kit was held on February 25-26 to begin a cadre of turn-key support and capacity building in each RAEN region.
- Support for CUNY development of sector-based contextualized ESOL instruction as a priority PD activity supported in every RAEN region.
- Dissemination of key instructional resources such as LaGuardia Community College's College and Career Pathways new online course for contextualized instruction: http://elearningpd.worlded.org/contextualized-instruction/
- Joint SUNY/ACCES-adult education workgroup established to better coordinate and leverage SUNY Full time Equivalent aid and NYS Employment Preparation Education (EPE) State aid to support bridge programming and career pathway partnerships between NYSED funded adult education programs that receive $82 million in EPE State aid and SUNY community colleges to build a strong foundation ahead of the proposed 2016-17 comprehensive WIOA RFP.
- Expansion of two adult education Professional Development websites (www.TeachingtothecoreNY.org and www.CollectEDNY.org) to include career pathways, integrated education and training, and IELCE open source curricula. Links will be established to the NYC Workforce Development open source curricula website: *www.nyc.gov/bridge*
- Close coordination and collaboration with the New York City Mayors Office of workforce development, NYC Human Resources Administration, and NYC Department of Youth and Community Development as they support integrated education and training and bridge to college and career programs. PD for career pathways and integrated education and training supported by WIOA and state funding will be shared with New York City partners, including accessibility to train the trainer resources from CUNY.
- Participation in OCTAE's *Moving Pathways Forward* Project and closely collaborating with Massachusetts and other participating states to share resources.
- Expansion of RAEN professional development to support and disseminate effective IELCE programs and practice.

## 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.

NYSED requires all eligible providers for sections 225, 231, and/or 243 to use the same application process. This ensures that all applications are evaluated using the similar evaluation rubrics; i.e. same standards but similar scoring criteria. NYSED ensures that all eligible providers have direct and equitable access to apply for grants and contracts under all three WIOA sections. It also ensures that the same grant or contract announcement, application, and proposal process is used for all eligible providers through NYSED's grant management system. During the initial period of grant or contract submission process, any eligible agency that contacts the agency with an interest in participating will be provided the information needed. NYSED believes that these approaches meet the requirements specified in WIOA Title II AEFLA and is committed to ensure direct and equitable access. The agency uses the 13 considerations specified in section 231 (e) of WIOA to fund eligible providers by incorporating each of the considerations into the narrative portion of the application. The agency attaches a point-based scoring rubric weighting each of the considerations. Applicants must provide narrative detail to demonstrate how they will meet each consideration.Bottom of Form

## 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.

WIOA establishes 4 priorities for State Leadership activities under section 223 of WIOA. These will be addressed in the following ways:

(A) The alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other core programs and one-stop partners, including eligible providers, to implement the strategy identified in the unified State plan under section 102 or the combined State plan under section 103, including the development of career pathways to provide access to employment and training services for individuals in adult education and literacy activities.

This is a major focus of the annual workplans of seven Regional Adult Education Network centers funded with Section 223 funding, beginning in 2016-17. In 2015-16 to lay a foundation for RAEN support, NYSED conducted a comprehensive, mandatory survey of every NYSED-funded adult education program to assess how Title 2 programs were aligned with 33 workforce development boards and 92 one-stop partners and systems in each RAEN region. Gaps and best practice are currently being analyzied and will support action plans in each region.

(B) The establishment or operation of high quality professional development programs to improve the instruction provided pursuant to local activities required under section 231(b), 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 of a State or outlying area, and dissemination of information about models and promising practices related to such programs.

This is a major focus of the RAEN and are explicit deliverables in the RAEN workplans beginning in 2015-16. This has been supplemented by the development of state funded PD ( $1.2 million) that supports CUNY Teacher Leader Institutes for common core and the development and expansion of two PD websites: www.TeachingtotheCoreNY.org and www.CollectEDNY.org. This has resulted in a cohort of Teacher Leaders who have received in-depth training in each RAEN region who work with RAENs to turnkey training.

(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; (ii) the role of eligible providers as a one-stop partner to provide access to employment, education, and training 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. This is a major focus of each RAEN. As mentioned above, there is a systemic, comprehensive turn-key training related to rigorous academic instruction in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition. At the HSE level, Teacher Leader Institutes and turn key training use the CUNY HSE Curriculum Framework that was developed by CUNY with WIA Incentive Grant funding. Distance learning and staff training are also key RAEN deliverables. This Framework can be found at: www.collectedny.org/hseframework.

(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 or promising practices within the State.

Leadership funds help to support NYSED ACCES-AEPP regional associates who work under the NY State Director for adult education, the seven RAEN centers, and the NYS Accountability Specialist. As described below in this State Plan section F, all programs are assessed quarterly. Based on risk assessment, ITAP programs in each RAEN region are identified. Based on performance and funding deliverables, programs are also based under Corrective Action. Together the State director, regionals, RAEN center directors and the NYS accountability specialist monitor and evaluate the quality of, and the improvement in these key programs as a major focus each quarter, as well as support the improvement of all funded programs in each RAEN region throughAccountability Specialist and RAEN funded workshops that disseminate information on policy, requirements and effective practice.

## 2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT PERMISSIBLE STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA, IF APPLICABLE.

NYSED will use State Leadership funds for the following allowable discretionary purposes:

A) The support of State or regional networks of literacy resource centers: State leadership funds will support seven RAEN centers on a multi-year basis throughout the years covered by the Combined State Plan.

(B) The development and implementation of technology applications, translation technology, or distance education, including professional development to support the use of instructional technology: State Leadership contracts with KET and Intellicom will support PD and instructional content for distance learning and supplemental instruction in the classroom.

(C) Developing and disseminating curricula, including curricula incorporating the essential components of reading instruction as such components relate to adults: These are deliverables for seven RAEN centers.

(D) Developing content and models for integrated education and training and career pathways: State Leadership funding will support the development of 10 sector-based Career Kits and training as part of the CUNY Career Kit Project. All WIOA funded curricula for integrated education and training will be disseminated to programs throughout the state, as well as to WIOA Title 1 partner programs, through www.TeachingtotheCoreNY.org and www.CollectedNY.org. Videos of instructional modules from Career Pathway Institutes will be accessible through www.TeachingtotheCoreNY.org.

(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): by funding the NYC Literacy Assistance Center to adapt and administer New York's student data and reporting system (ASISTS)--including connections to the overall NYS WIOA case management and reporting system administered by NYS DOL for reporting NYS WIOA outcomes; and supporting salaries for NYSED regional staff and the NYSED NRS accountability specialist. Workshops and training funded by RAEN centers will support this as well.

RAEN centers, funded with Leadership dollars under section 223, will also address through annual workplan deliverables:

(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.

(G) Integration of literacy and English language instruction with occupational skill training, including promoting linkages with employers.

(H) Activities to promote workplace adult education and literacy activities.

(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 (ii) take into consideration the following: (I) State adopted academic standards. (II) The current adult skills and literacy assessments used in the State or outlying area. (III) The primary indicators of performance described in section 116. (IV) Standards and academic requirements for enrollment in nonremedial, nonremedial, for-credit courses in postsecondary educational institutions or institutions of higher education supported by the State or outlying area. (V) Where appropriate, the content of occupational and industry skill standards widely used by business and industry in the State or outlying area. (J) Developing and piloting of strategies for improving teacher quality and retention.

(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 assessment 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.

## 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.

NYSED has a very comprehensive system of providing high quality professional development programs to improve the instruction provided pursuant to local activities required under section 231(b), 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 of a State, and dissemination of information about models and promising practices related to such programs.

The Adult Education and Literacy Programs Adult Student Information System and Technical Support (ASISTS) is a NYSED-funded, custom built management information system. This system has been used by funded programs in NYS since PY2007-08. In addition to serving as the database for all program data related to adult literacy, it also provides reports designed to check for data quality and compliance with NRS. To ensure consistent and continual availability of training support, ASISTS produced a number of training videos, focusing on daily required action with program data. Round table discussions are scheduled quarterly to promote data quality.

Section 223 State Leadership funding will continue to support a contract for technical assistance, training, and troubleshooting to improve data quality and monitor program performance in every program. The NYSED NRS accountability specialist funded by this NYSED contract works directly with NYSED staff. Duties include focusing on the largest providers with significant enrollments and programs who need intensive technical assistance to achieve improvement.

Continuing in 2016-17, under the Combined State Plan, three programs from each region (for a total of 21) will be selected for inclusion in the Individual Technical Assistance Program (ITAP). The Big5 city school district programs (NYC, Yonkers, Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo) consistently receive support from ITAP, given their large size. All ITAP programs will be desk monitored, accompanied by monthly conference calls and an annual scheduled site visit. All communication and quarterly data analysis will be collected electronically and stored on the NYS accountability website in a secure portal for each program. The portal is accessible by the NRS specialist, the NYSED Regional Liaison, the RAEN Director, and the program manager. Each fiscal year, report card data is reviewed by NYSED, and any program's performance that places that program in Quartile 1 and missed one or more of the state benchmarks, is placed under Corrective Action. The program will be required to correspond electronically on the accountability website.

Quarterly data reviews will be conducted by the NRS Accountability Specialist and subsequent conference calls will be scheduled with those programs exhibiting poor performance or inconsistent data patterns. The NRS Accountability Specialist will assist in identifying problems and trends on a statewide and regional level. Professional development in the areas of data collection, recording, and reporting continues to be a priority. Added to that is the constant need for NRS training at all levels. The Accountability Specialist will provide a minimum of two training events in each of the seven geographic regions annually. Topics include NRS Foundations, NRS for Teachers, and NYS Report Card Training.

Beginning in 2007, all funded agencies continue to receive NYSED issued annual NRS report cards. This will continue in 2016-17 and each year of the Combined State Plan. The report cards evaluate programs under two distinct methodologies:

1. The first is a standard benchmark measurement. NYS benchmarks for performance in Educational Gain, Post Test Rate, and Follow up Outcomes are set each year by NYSED based on the averages derived from the prior year's state data. When programs meet all three benchmarks, they are scored as "proficient."

2. The second method of evaluation is based on a quartile ranking among all programs in the state. In the case of Educational Gain, the program's scores are weighted based on the educational functioning levels indicating the strongest proponent for gain. The weighting of each EFL is determined by the aggregate data analysis of the prior year's data. The quartiles are determined using the following rubric:

• 50% of the score is from the weighted educational gain;

• 20% of the score is from the post-test rate;

• 20% of the score is based on the four follow-up measures, i.e., total students with a follow-up goal who achieved the goal upon exiting divided by the total exiters with one of the identified goals; and

• 10% of the score will be based on achieving both a 50% and 70% response rate on the survey of all students who exited the program with a follow-up goal.

Local program data will be entered quarterly into ASISTS according to the following dates:

• Quarter I (7/01-9/30) data entered and reviewed by 11/30;

• Quarter II (10/01-12/31) data entered and reviewed by 2/28;

• Quarter III (1/01-3/31) data entered and reviewed by 4/30; and

• Quarter IV (4/01-6/30) data entered and reviewed by 8/31.

Note that the program has until 10/31 each year to finalize the annual data submitted over the previous four quarters. It is the responsibility of the program to have data entry up to date for each quarter. This timeline was shortened in 2015-16 in anticipation of the final WIOA NRS rule and NRS policy guidelines that may require a significant shortening of the State NRS reporting timeline.

Intensive Technical Assistance Plan (ITAP) continues as a tool and process for asssessing the quality of funded providers in 2016-17. ITAPs identify agencies in need of intense technical assistance. The contracted NRS Accountability Specialist, NYSED ACCES-AEPP regional staff, and RAEN directors work closely with these programs to identify gaps in quality and performance, and implement an effective program improvement plan. Effective use of webinars and conference calls provide a consistent line of communication with these programs as they implement change to improve their performance. As programs improve their performance, they are removed from ITAP status and others are then identified.

Beginning in November 2014 and continuing through 2016-2017, NYSED annually issues a Program Evaluation Report for each funded program. The annual Program Evaluation Report will identify whether the agency met the NYS benchmarks for Educational Gain, Post Test Rate, and Follow up Outcomes. These are aggregate benchmarks set annually by NYSED based upon NRS targets negotiated with the U.S. Education Department and previous year performance data from programs funded by NYSED. Programs that do not meet these NYS annual benchmarks will be required to undertake a formal Corrective Action Planning (CAP) process. The program must submit and receive NYSED approval for a comprehensive CAP plan that identifies specific steps for meeting NYS annual benchmarks by June 30, 2017. For programs identified for corrective action in November of 2015 or 2016, they must meet their annual benchmarks by June 30, 2017 and June 30, 2018, respectively. After the Corrective Action Plan (CAP) process is initiated, NYSED staff will conduct virtual calls/webinars to include the local program staff identified by the adult education director, the NRS Accountability Specialist under contract with NYSED and the program's RAEN director to track progress toward meeting the NYS annual benchmarks.

For a program placed in CAP in 2015-2016, 2016-17 and each year for the duration of the combined state plan, the program will have two years to raise performance to meet or exceed the New York State annual NRS benchmarks. All communication is documented on the accountability website. Program data and related data reports are stored in secure, user-protected, individual program accounts accessible only to NYSED staff, the RAEN director, and the NRS Accountability Specialist. The website and all secure documents are maintained through the office of the NRS Accountability Specialist, funded under contract with NYSED. As part of the comprehensive CAP, there is a Continuous Evaluation Process (CEP) under which programs and NYSED must identify quarterly

progress milestones on key indicators such as educational gain that lead to meeting NYS annual benchmarks within two years. NYSED staff, the RAEN director, and the NRS Accountability Specialist will conduct a quarterly review to determine whether approved quarterly milestones were met for each agency on corrective action. Failure to meet the quarterly progress milestones for any three consecutive quarters could result in the termination of the grant at the end of that program year. This means that a grant could be terminated as early as June 30, 2016.

Both the CAP and CEP processes will be reported and tracked through the accountability website at: http://www.adult-education-accountability.org for each program funded through this RFP. Under the federal NRS for adult literacy programs, NYS, and ultimately local service providers, will be evaluated based on performance indicators. Successful applicants must submit data based on the federal requirements of the NRS. Information on the NRS may be found on the web page www.nrsweb.org.

Tracking data in ASISTS follows a four category process. These categories are sequential and allow for the diversity among New York's adult literacy programming. The categories are as follows:

Category I - Setup. Programs enter the following categories of data to set up their data account in ASISTS: • Funding sources - Programs can track services funded by multiple sources. • Sites - Providers enter data pertaining to each of their sites and connect it to services so they can run reports separately by site. • Outcomes - In addition to tracking required outcomes, programs may also track outcomes that are specific to their own specialized programming, such as training or career pathways. • Personnel - Providers add teacher information including name, experience, certification information, and longevity. • Classes/Services - Providers create their roster of classes adding the schedule, teacher, and type/level of classes.

Category II - Registration. All state funded programs must use a standard registration form, the Individual Student Record Form (ISRF). • Student information - This includes name; DOB; contact information; and demographic information such as gender, ethnicity, employment status, educational background, and public assistance status. ASISTS also allows providers to note whether a person is a parent or disabled. • Initial Assessment - All providers use one of two standardized assessments (the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) for Adult Basic Education (ABE) students or BEST Plus for English Language Learner (ELL) students) with registrants at intake or within 12 hours of instruction. This assessment is used to place students in literacy classes. • Enrollment - Once registration is complete, registrants are assigned to classes based on their assessments and availability.

Category III - Services. • Hours - Adult Education providers use ASISTS to track attendance hours on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. • Test scores - Post-tests are given by providers at regular intervals to demonstrate learning gains. ASISTS calculates the educational gain based on their standardized assessment scores.

Category IV - Outcomes. Adult Education providers track student outcomes regularly, both during and after their participation in a program. • Educational Gain - NRS guidelines define a student as demonstrating educational gain when his or her test score places him or her in an NRS level (one of six predefined educational functioning levels) that is higher than the one determined by that student's initial or pre-test. • Primary follow-up outcomes - Providers focus on the following three key NRS outcomes: o Employment and Retention of Employment; o Attaining the NYS High School Equivalency Diploma; and o Entering postsecondary education or training. • Other Outcomes -

ASISTS also facilitates the tracking of a wide variety of outcomes that are customized per program. Review - Reports and Downloads.

ASISTS includes the following reports to review the data and use it for reporting and management purposes;

• Funding reports - Reports that present data critical to reporting following state funding guidelines. The most critical report is the Program Evaluation report indicating on one page the most critical performance statistics NYSED uses to evaluate programs. Employment Preparation Education (EPE) claim forms are also generated from ASISTS.

• Data management reports primarily meant for tracking and internal program management purposes.

• Data checks that are specifically designed to help providers detect and correct issues relating to data quality and completeness. All of these resources will serve as the basis of core program alignment to support WIOA success. Dissemination of high quality programs and practices are comprehensively shared throughout the state through seven Regional Adult Education Network (RAEN) centers through monthly program managers meetings by each RAEN, workshop presentations at state conference (NYACCE, statewide incarcerated conference, NYC Adult Basic Education conference).

## 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 **NYS Education Department**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Kevin Smith**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Deputy Commissioner, NYSED Office of ACCES**

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;

The New York State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is mandated under the Rehabilitation Act to work in partnership with the Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services – Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES–VR). Together, the SRC and ACCES–VR partner to ensure that individuals with disabilities receive timely and effective vocational rehabilitation (VR) services. The SRC represents a diverse cross–section of ACCES–VR consumers, agencies and organizational stakeholders committed to improving employment and quality of life outcomes for all people with disabilities. The SRC relies on the following committees to carry out its responsibilities: the Executive Committee; the Membership Committee; the Policy and Planning Committee; the Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee; the Workforce Development Committee and the Transition Committee. The SRC Chairperson, Vice Chairpersons, Committee Chairpersons and the ACCES–VR SRC liaisons constitute the Executive Committee that coordinates the work of the full Council. ACCES–VR and the SRC work cooperatively in setting strategic priorities and in developing agency policy for the delivery of VR services to eligible New Yorkers with disabilities. When ACCES–VR undertakes substantive policy changes, the agency convenes an ad hoc policy development committee that is chaired by an ACCES–VR Resource Development Unit policy staff person. These policy development committees also include representation from ACCES–VR management, vocational rehabilitation counselors (VRCs) and key stakeholders, including an SRC representative. The SRC has served as an integral partner in the development of all substantive ACCES–VR policy reforms throughout Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2014.

General Council:

• Recommendation: ACCES–VR will sponsor a minimum of one SRC representative to no less than the joint spring and fall conferences of the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) and Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR).

• Recommendation: ACCES–VR develop a proposed set of metrics to report to the SRC on a semiannual basis with regard to related outcomes associated with VR State Plan Attachment for State Goals and Priorities to allow for a high level evaluation of ACCES–VR Goals and Priorities. The matrix should be provided to the full SRC at least four weeks prior to the March and September meeting. The metrics should include a description of the priority, a baseline, a target and an actual year to date figure. The metrics should also include a written description as to describe measures that are underway that came to address deficient results. Policy and Planning Committee (PPC)

• Recommendation: ACCES–VR promote consumer input into the VR State Plan process by mailing an announcement of State Plan meetings to consumers and include written notice of VR State Plan public forums with all routine written correspondence to consumers of service soon after the time and location of the public forums are determined.

• Recommendation: The PPC Committee serve as the primary point of contact for ACCES–VR in the development of the new Combined State Plan.

• Recommendation: ACCES–VR evaluate the need and potential service options to provide social pragmatic speech therapy services for people on the autism spectrum; identify other consumer groups that require these services, and consider offering the services under the current Core Rehabilitation Services (CRS) services system.

Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee (QAI)

• Recommendation: On an annual basis the ACCES–VR Quality Assurance Unit develop and share a formal work plan for the evaluation of ACCES–VR programs with the QAI Committee and present to the QAI committee for review prior to the start of each calendar year, beginning with the 2015 calendar year.

• Recommendation: ACCES–VR use an outside vendor to complete an assessment of the un–met needs for consumers of VR services. QAI requests a plan, and a time–line and notice of any opportunity for QAI to provide input into the development of an associated RFP.

• Recommendation: ACCES–VR include new survey methods and new populations as components of a request for proposal (RFP) to secure an outside vendor to carry out the consumer satisfaction survey, statewide.

Workforce Development Committee (WDC)

• Recommendation: ACCES–VR provide the Statewide/Regional/Business Relations Unit’s plans to the Workforce Development Committee (WDC) and establishes a budget to support the goals of the plan.

• Recommendation: ACCES–VR consider holding quarterly focus group meetings and develop a Business Advisory Council.

• Recommendation: ACCES–VR should expand on the job training (OJT) and work tryout (WTO) funding to include workers compensation costs as a means of making these work–based training options more attractive to businesses and businesses.

Council Reports The SRC Workforce Development Committee prepared two white papers and is working on a third:

1. “ACCES–VR, Transition, and Middle Skills Employment: Creating Strategic Alignment to Satisfy Labor Demand”. The paper highlights burgeoning “middle skills” employment opportunities in areas such as health care, specialty manufacturing and a range of other technology–based and high paying employment opportunities throughout New York State. The report suggests that these fields represent viable career tracks for high functioning youth with disabilities, if tailored pathways to these careers are developed. The report was shared with NYS Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (DDPC) that then earmarked funds for a statewide RFP to support the development of three middle skills work based learning program models for youth and/or adults with disabilities.

2. “NYS Alternatives to Individualized Education Plan Diplomas: Implications for ACCES–VR”. This paper addresses how ACCES–VR can assist in the implementation of the state Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Commencement Credential.

3. The committee is currently working on the White Paper, “Adult Middle Skills”. This paper intends to identify additional employment opportunities and the adult and associated training pathways that build the requisite skills necessary for New Yorkers with disabilities to achieve economic self–sufficiency in today’s workplace. The National Skills Coalition Bureau of Statistics has indicated nearly 50% of all jobs in NYS are in the middle skill area. Data further indicates that 39% of new jobs being created will require middle skill competencies.

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

General Council:

• Recommendation: ACCES–VR will sponsor a minimum of one SRC representative to no less than the joint spring and fall conferences of the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) and Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR).

• ACCES–VR Response: ACCES–VR supports SRC representation at the spring annual Washington–based CSAVR conference and NCSRC training. The approval for this travel is subject to the limitations imposed by NYS State Education Department (SED) and/or the NYS Division of Budget (DOB).

• Recommendation: ACCES–VR develop a proposed set of metrics to report to the SRC on a semiannual basis with regard to related outcomes associated with VR State Plan Attachment for State Goals and Priorities to allow for a high level evaluation of ACCES–VR Goals and Priorities. The matrix should be provided to the full SRC at least four weeks prior to the March and September meeting. The metrics should include a description of the priority, a baseline, a target and an actual year to date figure. The metrics should also include a written description as to describe measures that are underway that came to address deficient results.

• ACCES–VR Response: As part of the VR State Plan development process, ACCES–VR evaluates its progress in achieving the State Goals and Priorities. ACCES–VR will work with the SRC Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee (QAI) to undertake a joint assessment of its progress in achieving the Goals and Priorities. Going forward, ACCES–VR will update the Goals and Priorities to

ensure alignment with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) core performance measures, and will provide reports per WIOA specifications.

Policy and Planning Committee (PPC)

• Recommendation: ACCES–VR promote consumer input into the VR State Plan process by mailing an announcement of State Plan meetings to consumers and include written notice of VR State Plan public forums with all routine written correspondence to consumers of service soon after the time and location of the public forums are determined.

• ACCES–VR Response: The logistics of including notice of the State Plan meetings with written correspondence to consumers/participants is likely to result in confusion. ACCES–VR has started to mail out the public forum list to a sampling of at least 50 consumers/participants of services in those regions where public forums are planned and will continue to promote virtual State Plan meetings on the ACCES–VR website and through broad distribution of VR State Plan public notices to service and advocacy organizations. The notice will also be posted in the ACCES district office reception area. As appropriate, space permitting, the number of consumer/participant invitations can be increased. Moving forward, ACCES–VR will provide support to our WIOA partners for public meetings.

• Recommendation: The PPC Committee serve as the primary point of contact for ACCES–VR in the development of the new Combined State Plan.

• ACCES–VR Response: ACCES–VR will make a particular effort to work with the SRC PPC in providing the Council with ongoing progress in the development of both the VR Portion of the Combined State Plan and the Combined State Plan in its entirety.

• Recommendation: ACCES–VR evaluate the need and potential service options to provide social pragmatic speech therapy services for people on the autism spectrum; identify other consumer groups that require these services, and consider offering the services under the current Core Rehabilitation Services (CRS) services system.

• ACCES–VR Response: ACCES–VR has a management workgroup charged to develop and assess a program design for the development of the recommended services. Some service options to address social speech and communication skill development for individuals on the autism spectrum will be made available through the established procurement processes. A pilot is planned with City University of New York (CUNY). Results from this pilot may inform of future opportunities, and may result in an Autism Center for CUNY students.

Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee (QAI)

• Recommendation: On an annual basis the ACCES–VR Quality Assurance Unit develop and share a formal work plan for the evaluation of ACCES–VR programs with the QAI Committee and present to the QAI committee for review prior to the start of each calendar year, beginning with the 2015 calendar year.

• ACCES–VR Response: The ACCES–VR Quality Assurance Unit has provided ongoing notice to the SRC QAI committee on planned ACCES–VR district office reviews, upcoming Independent Hearing Officer (IHO) training, consumer satisfaction reviews and related activities.

• Recommendation: ACCES–VR use an outside vendor to complete an assessment of the un–met needs for consumers of VR services. QAI requests a plan, and a time–line and notice of any opportunity for QAI to provide input into the development of an associated RFP.

• ACCES–VR Response: ACCES–VR conducted an open session with the full SRC to solicit SRC feedback on a broad range of recommendations and considerations for the design and implementation of the next ACCES–VR statewide needs assessment. ACCES–VR concurs with the recommendation and is in the process of developing an RFP to identify an outside vendor to complete the planned statewide needs assessment.

• Recommendation: ACCES–VR include new survey methods and new populations as components of a request for proposal (RFP) to secure an outside vendor to carry out the consumer satisfaction survey, statewide.

• ACCES–VR Response: ACCES–VR contracted with the Potsdam Institute for Applied Research (PIAR) at SUNY Potsdam to conduct a consumer satisfaction survey in July 2015. Over 5,000 former consumers were surveyed to evaluate their satisfaction with ACCES–VR and to gather information about their employment after exiting the VR program. The final report is due January 2016.

Workforce Development Committee (WDC)

• Recommendation: ACCES–VR provide the Statewide/Regional/Business Relations Unit's plans to the Workforce Development Committee (WDC) and establishes a budget to support the goals of the plan.

• ACCES–VR Response: ACCES–VR secured funding for a range of Integrated Employment Specialists (IESs) functions, media production and media purchasing. As ACCES–VR works to develop regional and statewide Business Relations initiatives, it will also consider the need and value of developing a budget specific to statewide business relations goals and objectives.

• Recommendation: ACCES–VR consider holding quarterly focus group meetings and develop a Business Advisory Council.

• ACCES–VR Response: ACCES–VR is working in conjunction with the IES statewide network to assess the value of creating regional business advisory councils and other business relationship strategies. As part of that effort ACCES–VR will consider how focus group meetings with the business community and other initiatives will be selected and evaluated with an emphasis on connecting efforts with the broader workforce system, particularly core program partners.

• Recommendation: ACCES–VR should expand on the job training (OJT) and work tryout (WTO) funding to include workers compensation costs as a means of making these work–based training options more attractive to businesses.

• ACCES–VR Response: The current support levels for OJT and WTO opportunities were intended to be sufficient to cover those costs. However, ACCES–VR is fully committed to expanding utilization and increased support for OJT and WTO opportunities statewide and will consider what additional support might be appropriate.

### 3. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S EXPLANATIONS FOR REJECTING ANY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT OR RECOMMENDATIONS.

Responses in a. 2 above address alternate options, where applicable.

## 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;

REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS This agency has not requested a waiver of statewideness. The services provided under the State Plan are available statewide.

### 2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL APPROVE EACH PROPOSED SERVICE BEFORE IT IS PUT INTO EFFECT; AND

Not applicable as agency is not requesting waiver of statewideness.

### 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.

Not applicable as agency is not requesting waiver of statewideness.

## C. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH AGENCIES NOT CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES UNDER THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM.

Describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the servivces 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;

ACCES–VR continues to coordinate and work cooperatively with agencies that are not in the Statewide Workforce Development System to improve access to appropriate vocational training and employment opportunities, particularly for individuals with significant disabilities who often have multiple needs requiring the intervention of more than one State agency. Other State, federal and local agencies are a significant referral source for the individuals referred to ACCES–VR for services. Coordinating the support needs of people with disabilities (such as transportation, medical care, housing, case management, family supports and work incentives) is essential for many individuals to be able to obtain and maintain their competitive integrated employment. Interagency

cooperation and coordination in service delivery is a driving force within Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 and Chapter 515 of the Laws of 1992 (NYS Integrated Employment legislation). This interagency collaboration occurs at both the State and local levels through coordinated planning and service delivery initiatives, as well as through the implementation of formal Memoranda of Agreement. Throughout the year, ACCES–VR participates and convenes meetings, workshops, and other opportunities for communication and collaboration.

ACCES–VR works closely with a variety of entities to enhance VR services and placement opportunities for ACCES–VR consumers. Many of these efforts are described in Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) and Memorandums of Understanding (MOU). Although some partner agreements have not been recently updated, they demonstrate ACCES–VR's overall values and commitments. More importantly, those agreements and understandings established a foundation for relationships that have continued to evolve and grow to meet changing needs. Formalized structures can sometimes limit innovation, our approach is to keep the system flexible and fluid by focusing on collaboration.

Several of the key agreements include:

• Memorandum of Interagency Understanding regarding Supported Employment, between ACCES–VR, Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) and the NYS Commission for the Blind (NYSCB), Office of Mental Health (OMH) and Office for People with Development Disabilities (OPWDD), January 2001

• Joint Agreement between NYSED ACCES–VR and the Office of P–12 Education – Office of Special Education, regarding the Provision of Transition Services, December 2012

• MOA for the Workforce Investment Act: Title II, Adult Education and Family Literacy between the NYSED and Local Workforce Investment Boards (WIB), June 30, 2000

• MOA to Provide Services to Individuals who are Deaf/Blind, November 1999 between ACCES–VR and NYSCB

• MOU between the NYSED ACCES–VR and OMH, October 1999

• MOU between the NYSED ACCES–VR and the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS), July 2010

• MOA to promote and expand vocational rehabilitation services between ACCES–VR and the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, September 2010. • Statement of Collaboration between the NYSED ACCES–VR and New York State Financial Aid Administrators Association (NYSFAAA), March 1, 1998

• Joint Agreement between the NYSED ACCES–VR and the Office of Higher and Professional Education (OHPE), August 4, 1994

• Joint Agreement between the NYSED ACCES–VR and Public Institutions of Higher Education (IHE), (SUNY and CUNY) August, 2007

### 2. STATE PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

In NYS, The Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs, through a federal grant from the US Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Community Living (ACL), administers the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities (TRAID) Program. The TRAID Program's mission is to coordinate statewide activities to increase access to and acquisition of assistive technology in the areas of education, employment, community living and information technology/telecommunications. The program serves individuals of all ages and disabilities. The Justice Center supports 12 Regional TRAID Centers (RTCs) which provide information, training, device demonstration, reuse, exchange, and loans. In addition, the Justice Center TRAID Program and RTCs provide technical assistance and advocacy on how to obtain and use assistive technology services and devices. The Justice Center also participates in a multi-state online equipment exchange collaborative. ACCES-VR and the Justice Center are currently finalizing an MOU.

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

ACCES–VR has identified outreach to the NYS USDA Rural Development as a component of its Business Engagement Plan to explore opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

### 4. NONEDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH; AND

General information is noted in C. 1 above. However, ACCES–VR is also exploring opportunities to enhance its direct involvement with agencies that serve out–of–school youth, particularly seeking to ensure that new or non–traditional agencies are included in the outreach efforts.

### 5. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS.

All New York State agencies must procure commodities, services, and technology in accordance with Article 11 of the New York State Finance Law. NYS State Finance Law Article 11, Section 162 specifically states: To advance special social and economic goals, selected providers shall have preferred source status for the purposes of procurement in accordance with the provisions of this section. Procurement from these providers shall be exempted from the competitive procurement provisions of section one hundred sixty-three of this article and other competitive procurement statutes. Such exemption shall apply to commodities produced, manufactured or assembled, including those repackaged to meet the form, function and utility required by state agencies, in New York state and, where so designated, services provided by those sources in accordance with this section.

ACCES-VR complies fully with NYS procurement requirements.

## 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.

ACCES–VR considers the coordination of services to youth with disabilities as one of its main priorities. ACCES–VR works closely with the New York State Education Department (NYSED) Office of P–12 Education – Office of Special Education to ensure that students with disabilities are prepared for employment, postsecondary education, and community living when they leave school. ACCES–VR, through its vocational rehabilitation counselors (VRCs) and 15 district offices, also works closely with the local education agencies to provide transition services. ACCES–VR policy seeks school referrals within two years prior to high school exit to coordinate vocational rehabilitation (VR) services with school transition planning. Youth, as defined by ACCES–VR, are individuals with disabilities who are less than 25 years of age at application to the VR program.

In Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2014, ACCES–VR served 39,051 youth, a slight numerical decrease from the previous year, but at the same percentage of the whole. Caseload statistics for youth are monitored to determine the progress of ACCES–VR in serving and placing youth.

ACCES–VR Transition and Youth Services (TAYS) Team was launched in April 2014, currently staffed with a Manager and Associate Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in Central Administration and a dedicated Senior Vocational Rehabilitation (SVRC) assigned in each district office.

The goals of the team are to:

1. Engage youth, parents, high schools, and other transition specialists in exploring and planning career choices that connect to a full range of post–secondary options for training, career development, and employment;

2. Improve the number, quality, and rate of employment outcomes for youth participating in VR services;

3. Collaborate with multiple stakeholders, including other state agencies, Special Education Quality Assurance (SEQA) and Regional Special Education – Technical Assistance Support Center (RSE–TASC) Transition Specialists; and

4. Substantiate the policies and practices that lead to increased outcomes through gathering and tracking data and using it to guide the implementation and continuous improvement efforts at building knowledge and skill of VR staff and our partners.

TAYS began planning early in 2015 to build upon WIOA’s focus to increase the potential of people with disabilities who enter the VR system to meet with employment success, and the requirement to spend 15% of federal VR dollars on the provision of pre–employment transition services (PETS) for students.

In 2016, ACCES–VR plans to issue a Youth Employment Initiative Request for Proposal (RFP) to develop specific programs and services, including PETS as appropriate, for VR eligible in–school

students, and out–of–school disengaged youth, with a critical emphasis to engage and continue to engage youth until they obtain quality employment outcomes. The project is scheduled to start in the 2017 school year.

VR Transition Policy ACCES–VR collaborated with the Office of Special Education and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) in 2008 to revise the 421.00 Youth in School – Transition Referral, Planning and Services Policy, to ensure a common understanding of transition requirements and responsibilities and to assist with building a collaborative partnership between transition specialists, school districts and ACCES–VR district offices throughout the state. The policy provides information about the requirements, roles and responsibilities of VR in preparing students with disabilities for successful employment. ACCES–VR, with the SRC, reviews the policy periodically to determine its current relevance. While much of the policy remains up–to–date, a revision is planned for the end of this year to ensure compliance with the requirements under WIOA, including pre–employment transition services and the use of assistive technology. This policy establishes an affirmative role for VRCs working with students in transition from school to work, a critical time for young adults with disabilities. The policy delineates the referral process of students with disabilities two years prior to their expected school exit. It outlines the role of the VRC as an active participant in the transition planning process. The policy provides information regarding the documentation that may, with parental or student consent as appropriate, be available from school districts to assist the VRC in determining the students' eligibility for VR services and to expedite post–school services. The ACCES–VR counselor works with the school districts to identify in–school youth who are likely to be eligible for VR services. The VRC can assist students with disabilities to prepare for and obtain employment consistent with their employment factors. While local school districts are responsible for providing education and transition services to students with disabilities who are still in high school, the ACCES–VR counselor can provide transition services that involve preparing for the students' future. After application, the ACCES–VR counselor, the student, and the student's family work with the school district to coordinate VR services for students with disabilities.

VR and State Education Agency Agreement

The New York State Education Agency Agreement (SEA) between ACCES–VR and the Office of Special Education was signed by the two offices and is in effect from January 1, 2013 – December 31, 2017. The SEA agreement outlines the collaborative and coordinated responsibilities of each office to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities to post–school employment. The SEA, called the Joint Agreement on the Provision of Transition Services between the New York State Education Department's (NYSED'S) Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services–Vocational Rehabilitation and the Office of P–12 Education – Office of Special Education replaces the 1992 Joint Agreement.

The current Joint Agreement on the Provision of Transition Services reflects VR federal requirements and provides an overview of the purposes, objectives and responsibilities of each office in the transition process.

The purposes of agreement are to:

1. Strengthen shared efforts to prepare youth with disabilities for successful careers, community jobs and independent living;

2. Outline a collaborative framework for coordinating state and local services and resources; and

3. Provide guidance for coordinating plans, policies and procedures developed to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to post–school activities – including the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services leading to employment. The SEA agreement and the 421.00 Youth in School – Transition Referral, Planning and Services Policy are posted on the ACCES–VR website.

State Level Coordination and Collaboration

A consistent transition and youth referral system has been initiated across the state, both within ACCES–VR and with collaborating agencies. The application process has been streamlined to reduce barriers for students and youth to access post–secondary services necessary to obtain and maintain quality employment outcomes. Statewide consistent orientation presentations for in–school students will be conducted two years prior to high school exit and for out–of–school youth under 25 years of age.

All direct service staff have received comprehensive information on the WIOA definition of and focus on pre–employment transition services for students.

In 2016, specific training will be provided to district office vocational rehabilitation counselor assistants, counselors, senior counselors, and integrated employment specialists on the following:

• Job exploration counseling, as it relates to students specifically;

• Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education;

• Self–advocacy, including peer mentoring, from the perspective of a student;

• Work–based learning; and

• Workplace readiness training for development of social skills and independent living.

The training will provide an opportunity for staff to enhance understanding and to share best practices. The TAYS unit staff will receive training on all pre–employment transition services for students with disabilities. They are responsible for leading efforts by disseminating information, developing new opportunities, and educating others on the services. To do this competently, they require a comprehensive understanding of each service, school partner obligations, and tools for fully accessing community opportunities presented through these services with business.

In July 2015 ACCES–VR launched a Regional Vocational Rehabilitation (RVR) project across ten Regional Special Education – Technical Assistance Support Centers (RSE–TASC), hiring a total of 32 RVR–Community Employment Specialists (CES) to provide technical assistance to school districts about VR services, referral process and timelines, as well as information about other post–secondary options leading to quality employment outcomes. Cornell University will assist in this by providing professional development to the CES through a joint MOU for the length of the project through June 30, 2019.

In Long Island youth work readiness programs run by ACCES–VR IES are offered for both students and their families. Participants have the option to work individually to develop summer jobs with local businesses using a work tryout service.

There is a pilot program in New York City for ten juniors from one high school in each of four boroughs working with a single provider contract for work readiness, work experience development, and an optional paid internship. Preliminary results indicate that 64 students were referred. There were 56 work readiness participants; 52 completed the work readiness, and there were 43 internship participants.

Internal staff training on Counseling and Guidance with the youth population is being developed to enhance the VRC's skill set and to provide tools to improve the VRC's ability to work effectively with youth. Topic areas to be covered include counseling youth, transitioning from an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), career maturity, the teen world, teens as involuntary consumers, and maximizing use of assistive technology most specifically for job exploration, transition or postsecondary education programs, work–based learning, and workplace readiness training.

ACCES–VR plans to develop a request for proposal (RFP) in 2017 for a pre–college summer experience to provide the opportunity for high school students to participate in a program on a college campus during the summer between their junior and senior year to learn critical safety and social factors, learn self–advocacy skills, complete a writing assignment in the style and process of a college paper and gain skills and experience to make an informed decision about college. Data from the Office of Special Education is being reviewed to identify potential numbers of applicants for VR services.

Outreach to both in–school and out–of–school disengaged youth is being increased through the use of flyers and posters, and presentations at professional conferences. ACCES–VR will work within its Case Management System to track the specific high school referral source of in–school youth and set improvement targets for high schools in need of attention. Identification of referral sources of out–of–school youth under 25 years of age will help assess the effectiveness of outreach efforts to that age group.

## 2. INFORMATION ON THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY WITH RESPECT TO:

### A. CONSULTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO ASSIST EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES IN PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO POST-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING VR SERVICES;

The Office of Special Education shall undertake the following responsibilities with respect to the education and transition planning for students with disabilities:

• Designate Office of Special Education personnel to be responsible for the provision of technical assistance, consultation and the development of statewide program strategies and procedures applicable for students with disabilities.

• Assure that LEAs are implementing the special education requirements for transition services as specified by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education.

• Coordinate a network of professional development specialists focused on assisting LEAs with implementing effective transition planning, programs and services.

• Through this network, create and maintain community networks for effective linkages between families, schools and State and community agencies that serve youth and adults with disabilities.

• Promote access, as appropriate, for students with disabilities to career and technical education.

• Provide technical assistance to vocational rehabilitation personnel through formal and informal training, joint problem–solving, and exchange of information on policies and procedures.

ACCES–VR shall undertake the following responsibilities with respect to transition planning and vocational rehabilitation services for eligible youth:

• Designate vocational rehabilitation personnel to be responsible for the provision of technical assistance, consultation and the development of statewide program strategies and procedures applicable for youth with disabilities.

• Facilitate the identification of youth with disabilities who may benefit from vocational rehabilitation services as early as possible during the transition planning process. Two years prior to expected school exit, the ACCES–VR counselor will work to identify and foster the referral and application process of in–school youth with disabilities likely to be eligible for ACCES–VR services.

• Make relevant data available about eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services and track information about employment outcomes for youth with disabilities.

• Assign vocational rehabilitation counseling personnel to liaison relationships with LEAs to formalize collaborative approaches to student outreach and transition planning and referral development and tracking. • Make LEA personnel, students and their families aware of the vocational rehabilitation program, including VR eligibility requirements (in accordance with CFR 361.42), the application procedures and scope of services (in accordance with 34 CFR 361.48) that may be provided to all eligible individuals;

• To begin the application process, the ACCES–VR counselor designated by the local ACCES–VR district office will work with designated school personnel or the youth/student to obtain the signed application for VR service, the confidentiality release forms and necessary available school records needed to determine eligibility. Youth/students can directly apply for services from ACCES–VR without a referral from the school. If the student is 18 or older and has no legal guardian, the student can make this decision independently.

• Utilize existing school records, to the extent possible, to determine eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services. Only the ACCES–VR counselor, in accordance with ACCES–VR policies and federal regulation 34 CFR 361.42, may determine whether youth/students meet the eligibility criteria for vocational rehabilitation services. The eligibility determination is based on the student having a physical or mental impairment that is a substantial impediment to employment and needs VR services to prepare for, secure, retain or regain employment.

• Collaborate with educational agency personnel to ensure alignment of the IEP with the IPE.

• Develop approved (signed by the student and ACCES–VR counselor) IPE prior to the eligible student exiting school.

• Implement policies and procedures that allow flexibility with respect to assessment, eligibility determination and career preparation.

• Provide technical assistance on vocational rehabilitation to LEA personnel through formal and informal training, joint problem–solving and exchange of information on policies and procedures.

• Track agency data in order to improve collaboration efforts, vocational rehabilitation services and employment outcomes.

## B. TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS;

Information is included in A directly 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;

The Office of Special Education and ACCES–VR will work in collaboration with school districts and other State agencies to ensure a coordinated approach to the provision of transition services. While local school districts are responsible for providing transition services to facilitate the movement of students with disabilities from school to post–school activities, including but not limited to, postsecondary education, vocational education, employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living and community participation, ACCES–VR can provide transition services that involve preparing for the students' future employment.

ACCES–VR and the Office of Special Education jointly agree to the following:

• School districts have the primary planning and programmatic responsibilities for the provision of transition services for their students.

• School districts are financially responsible for transition services mandated for school districts by federal or State laws and regulations.

• School districts are responsible for the coordination of educational programs, including transition planning, programs and services that prepare students with disabilities for adult living, learning and earning.

• With parental or student consent, as appropriate, ACCES–VR district office staff will be informed of students who may require vocational rehabilitation services and will have the opportunity to participate in the transition planning for such students.

• Referrals and applications to ACCES–VR will be made on the basis of referral procedures outlined in the ACCES–VR Youth in School – Transition Services and Planning Policy.

• ACCES–VR is fiscally responsible for providing VR services that are not otherwise mandated through special education requirements, in accordance with ACCES–VR policy.

• The Office of Special Education and ACCES–VR will continue to work together to implement consistent policies and procedures for transition planning and services, including, but not limited to, student referral and access to VR services.

• The Office of Special Education and ACCES–VR will work in collaboration with LEAs and other State agencies to ensure a coordinated approach to the provision of transition services and to eliminate the duplication of assessments, services and reporting requirements.

• ACCES–VR and the Office of Special Education will work in collaboration with Independent Living Centers to enhance their role in working with students with disabilities, their families and educational personnel during the transition planning and service delivery process.

• When coordinating services through the IEP and IPE, the student and, as appropriate, the student's family, are the primary source of information regarding the student's needs, goals and services.

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

Information on outreach is included in d. 1 and d. 2 A and C. Additionally, it can be noted that outreach efforts will include a description of the VR program, the eligibility requirements, the application procedures and the scope of services that may be provided to eligible individuals.

## 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.

ACCES–VR works cooperatively, collaboratively and collectively with primarily non–profit vocational rehabilitation service providers to increase access to competitive, integrated employment opportunities. The district offices work with vocational rehabilitation service providers to allocate resources that meet consumer and business needs for employment outcomes. These programs, such as situational assessment, community–based training, supported employment, job coaching and direct placement services, assist consumers in achieving community–based outcomes.

ACCES–VR has approximately 340 Core Rehabilitation Service contracts with providers to conduct many of these services. The five year contracts that were implemented January 1, 2014, were to expand ACCES–VR's capacity, improve the quality of service delivery and increase competitive integrated employment outcomes. The contracts include specific vocational rehabilitation service deliverables, criteria for monitoring contract compliance and criteria to monitor the quality of services. Rates of pay were modified and new services were added.

Due to new service requirements in WIOA, ACCES–VR is planning to issue a new RFP in 2016 for CRS contracts. Current contracts are being reviewed to assess the number of consumers employed, receiving job development and supported employment that obtained employment, the length of time it takes a consumer to become successfully employed, the number of hours a consumer is working per week, and hourly wages earned by the consumer. The new contracts will expand and enhance many service areas including the use of summer youth employment and pre–employment services. The new CRS RFP will be issued in 2016 for organizations, and current providers to offer vocational rehabilitation entry, assessment, assistive technology, rehabilitation technology, work readiness, job placement, driver rehabilitation and related adjunct services for individuals with disabilities throughout New York State. Supported Employment intensive service plans will be offered up to 24 months, and extended services for youth will be made available (up to age 24 and/or up to 4 years). When service providers identify unmet business needs, they can develop customized employment opportunities to fill those needs that support the skills, talents and interests of the consumer.

Due to the large supported employment program in the State, ACCES–VR expects to meet the required 50 percent Title VI–B and Title I funds for funding youth in supported employment programs, including extended services.

## 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.

New York State, in response to recommendations made by other State agencies, service providers, advocacy organizations, parents and consumers has moved to improve the State's delivery system for supported employment by establishing clear roles and responsibilities for this vocational service outcome.

In 2014, Supported Employment was integrated within the Core Rehabilitation Services contract. This not only streamlined contract processing for providers but also aligned service expectations for supported employment with direct placement.

In New York State, ACCES–VR has been designated as having the primary statewide responsibility for program development and administration of integrated employment, including intensive supported employment services. Relevant State agencies are responsible for the extended phases of supported employment and are working collaboratively with ACCES–VR to ensure the provision of comprehensive supported employment services in New York State. In July 2015, the NYS Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) began offering intensive supported employment services for a select group of individuals as part of its menu of service options. Consumers have choice. All individuals may apply for ACCES–VR. However, some individuals choose to remain with OPWDD with whom they are familiar as they transition from sheltered workshop settings or high school. Through a Medicaid waiver, OMH is also beginning to offer intensive supported employment services to its consumers. The framework for implementing supported employment has been established by the interagency "Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Supported Employment", the "Principles and Operating Guidelines for Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Employment"

and the "Quality Indicators for Supported Employment". These documents constitute the policy and procedural base for the delivery of supported employment services in New York State.

ACCES–VR will be working with Supported Employment partners in the coming year to update and streamline procedures and to develop new strategies so as to be fully able to embrace the new opportunities within the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

Implementation Strategies Used to Increase Employment Outcomes: The integrated employment outcomes that have been achieved occurred by implementing specific interagency strategies and action steps. The strategies and action steps were developed from implementation themes established through interagency consensus.

The four major implementation themes driving these strategies include:

• Employment opportunities and business partnerships;

• Consumer empowerment and informed choice;

• Coordination and delivery of supports; and

• Management and administration of the system.

These implementation strategies were agreed upon through interagency consensus and were revised as necessary to accommodate the employment needs of consumers and the employment opportunities offered by business. The following summarizes the major implementation strategies and employment outcomes achieved as a result of these strategies:

• Increased the use of options that promote consumer choice;

• Increased activity with regional business consortia and/or business advisory councils;

• Established local marketing efforts;

• Promoted the development of entrepreneurship;

• Facilitated school–to–work transition opportunities;

• Established formal methods of assessing consumer satisfaction;

• Increased coordination between ACCES–VR and mental health providers;

• Increased coordination to enhance support services;

• Restructured consumer assessment methodology to a community–based approach;

• Coordinated job development and placement activities;

• Promoted cost effectiveness through innovative service delivery mechanisms; and,

• Coordinated program development, requests for proposal (RFP) and program evaluation activities. ACCES–VR engages the provider and business communities in identifying innovative approaches.

Further dialogue will take place to identify strategies for:

• Increasing the use of assistive technology;

• Addressing concerns around liability as it relates to businesses being willing to serve as mentors or to provide short–term volunteer opportunities; and,

• Providing benefits advisement both early in the process and at the time of placement in a job.

Provider Guidelines for Supported Employment:

ACCES–VR revised the "Provider Guidelines for Supported Employment" in 2014 to reflect contract changes. The Guidelines assist in establishing a common base of accepted practices and procedures for supported employment. These guidelines, which are on the ACCES–VR website, are intended to facilitate service delivery and cooperation between ACCES–VR and employment service providers. ACCES–VR has been assigned the responsibility for administering, establishing standards and monitoring the intensive service component of supported employment programs. ACCES–VR also has responsibility for the provision of extended services to individuals who are not eligible for such services through other sources. ACCES–VR's Quality Assurance Unit conducts reviews at provider agencies. Partner state agencies that provide extended services are invited to participate in those reviews.

## 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

ACCES–VR has a Business Relations Unit. The Unit is led by the Resource Development Manager in Central Administration and consists of a Statewide Coordinator, also located in Central Administration, and placement and marketing representatives, known as Integrated Employment Specialists (IES) in the 15 District Offices. In addition there is an IES 2 for each of the five regions of the state.

A statewide plan for business coordination is being revised to link directly to the goals and strategies outlined in the combined State Plan that will be in place by July 2016. There will be five regional plans that connect to the statewide plan and to the work of the local district offices. The regional plans will reflect integration and coordination with the larger workforce development system in each respective area, including the workforce development boards and local American Career Centers. These plans reflect a heightened focus on business needs and how ACCES–VR and its consumers can meet those needs.

The plan also continues to build on the following collaborations: statewide disability employment training initiative with Cornell University; local job placement and marketing initiatives with the

Society for Human Resource Management; and The American Federation of Labor–Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL–CIO) unions across the State. In addition, ACCES–VR is a member of The New York State Association of Training and Employment Professionals (NYATEP) New York State's workforce association. NYATEP serves a cross–section of the major titles of WIOA, including Workforce Boards, Career Centers, partner programs, and organizations that serve individuals with disabilities.

ACCES–VR intends to work closely with NYATEP during the initial implementation of WIOA to increase communication and common understanding of the law across the four titles of WIOA. Specifically, working with NYATEP to ensure partners understand, value, and include robust rehabilitation programming locally. Additionally, ACCES–VR intends to work with NYATEP in future years to provide professional development and networking opportunities to rehabilitation staff.

Each year ACCES–VR recognizes outstanding businesses during National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). This nationwide campaign raises awareness about disability employment issues and celebrates the contributions of America's workers with disabilities, past and present and the business that hire them.

Additionally, ACCES–VR has initiated outreach activities in conjunction with the July anniversary of the American with Disabilities Act with its downstate IES, City University of New York, and the Mayor's Office in NYC. There were two "Champions for Change" events held in 2015. Discussion is underway with the State Rehabilitation Council about how they can further support ACCES–VR IESs to establish new relationships with business and enhance customized employment options.

ACCES–VR is also working with our provider agency partners as well as the NYS Department of Labor and NYS Commission for the Blind, to explore additional services, supports, or projects that could engage businesses that have had limited experiences with hiring people with disabilities.

In addition, given the expectation that business must be dually addressed as both a customer and partner of the State vocational rehabilitation program in building employment opportunities for people with disabilities (Section 109 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended), ACCES-VR has explored options for expanding services to business. Many activities will flow from that strategic exploration. One specific initiative is with the New York City Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) in collaboration with the Poses Family Foundation titled, NYC: AT WORK. This is a 3-year pilot project (hereafter, Project) being designed to focus on the following goals: 1) increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities by educating businesses about disability awareness and employing people with disabilities; 2) enlist businesses that successfully employ people with disabilities to mentor and provide technical assistance to other businesses; 3) seek commitment of businesses to adopt policies and practices within their organizations around outreach to and the hiring and training of people with disabilities; and, 4) successfully place a minimum of 200 individuals with disabilities in competitive integrated employment each year. ACCES-VR will direct the work of the Project that is funded with vocational rehabilitation dollars to ensure compliance with federal regulations, and will continuously monitor the deliverables and outcomes to ensure adherence to Project goals and timelines. It is expected that this Project will assist ACCES-VR by obtaining direct input from business on developing strategies to better identify and train individuals to meet the skill sets required by the current and emerging labor markets. The Project is designed to meet the needs of businesses and individuals served by VR through local community and State partnerships. Currently, the MOPD partners with a 35 member Business Development Council, the city's one-stop career centers, colleges and universities, local education agencies, State agencies and VR service provider agencies. The initiative will enhance these

partnerships through its focus on active business engagement. There are specific outcome expectations for the development of a Business-to-Business Mentoring Program and Written Polices and Practice Implementation related to recruiting, hiring and employing people with disabilities. The Project outcomes will be evaluated to assist ACCES-VR with expanding the successes statewide to further enhance the Workforce Development System as a whole. It is expected that the expansion efforts would be a combination of procuring contracts (e.g. RFP) and/or expanding ACCES-VR staff roles.

ACCES–VR will include in its new CRS contracts to start in 2017, opportunities and funding for providers to develop customized employment opportunities. Training will also be provided to providers regarding provision of this service.

### 2. TRANSITION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, FOR STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES.

Information noted in 1 above is also applicable to students and youth with disabilities. Additionally, the Transition and Youth Services Unit staffs work closely with the IES staffs on opportunities to engage business, and many of those efforts are formalized in the Business Engagement Plan.

Significant information, including examples of initiatives that are underway or in development that address this topic can be found embedded in d.1 as well as in other sections that address service provision for students and youth.

## H. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

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

### 1. THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT;

In New York State, the Department of Health is the single agency that administers Medicaid. The OPWDD and OMH work directly in partnership with DOH on administering Medicaid waiver services. ACCES–VR works with DOH directly but collaborates with OPWDD and OMH most specifically on details for service provision.

### 2. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES; AND

ACCES–VR has a longstanding working partnership with the Office for People with Development Disabilities (OPWDD). Collaborative projects and initiatives are ongoing.

In 2014, NYS established an Employment First policy. This policy outlines several strategies and demonstrates NYS's full commitment to inclusion for people with disabilities. To accomplish the vision and goals there are collaborative efforts that require participation for all State agencies. Many of these strategies build upon the existing linkages. Over the past several years OPWDD, OMH and ACCES–VR have been providing targeted training to employment staff on the delivery of high quality

evidence–based employment services to individuals with disabilities. To more fully support the goals of Employment First, an expansion of this training is being planned.

ACCES–VR will continue to work with OMH and OPWDD as well as NYS CB on supported employment guidelines to ensure the appropriate and smooth transitions for individuals with disabilities.

OPWDD provides person–centered services, supports and advocacy to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. OPWDD works with a network of nearly 800 not–for–profit providers to help people with developmental disabilities lead richer lives that include meaningful relationships, good health, personal growth and productivity and homes in their communities. Through its “Putting People First”, vision, OPWDD invests in enhancing its partnership with other state and local agencies. The 1915c People First HCBS waiver is a comprehensive plan that includes strategies to increase competitive integrated employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

ACCES–VR works in partnership with OPWDD to identify how the two systems need to mesh regarding employment. OPWDD makes some employment services available, with a high focus on preparing the individual to be ready to seek employment. Often volunteer activities in the community are used to help underscore the social values of inclusion and productivity. Supports to the individual may include vocational training, job coaching, travel training, technological aids, counseling, job placement and any other supports needed to meet the individual’s unique circumstances in preparing for competitive integrated employment.

OPWDD and ACCES–VR have recently agreed that OPWDD eligible individuals participating in certain pre–employment programs, known as Pathway to Employment, Employment Training Program (ETP) or Prevocational Services can participate in these services with OPWDD without need for a formal denial of ACCES–VR services. The justification for this process is an understanding that OPWDD individuals receiving Pathway to Employment, Employment Training Program or Prevocational Services will need extreme levels of support to engage in work activity. Additionally, most of the individuals participating in Pathway to Employment, Employment Training Program or Prevocational Services are OPWDD eligible individuals who because of very limited employment and vocational experiences need exposure to community social and volunteer experiences and work readiness classes. Traditionally, these individuals have been enrolled in other OPWDD programs such as day habilitation which have precluded individuals from participating in employment services. As a general rule these individuals have Medicaid Service Coordinators and are following a broader plan for inclusion in the community. This process allows the consumer to choose which service best fits his/her need at a point in time. It is made clear that at any time, any person with a disability may apply for ACCES–VR services.

## 3. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

ACCES–VR has a longstanding working partnership with the Office of Mental Health (OMH). Collaborative projects and initiatives are ongoing. In 2014, NYS established an Employment First policy. This policy outlines several strategies and demonstrates NYS’s full commitment to inclusion for people with disabilities. To accomplish the vision and goals there are collaborative efforts that require participation for all State agencies. Many of these strategies build upon the existing linkages. Over the past several years OPWDD, OMH and ACCES–VR have been providing targeted training to employment staff on the delivery of high quality evidence–based employment services to

individuals with disabilities. To more fully support the goals of Employment First, an expansion of this training is being planned.

Recently, ACCES–VR collaborated with OMH to provide a workshop on how to coordinate services that might be provided from a variety of state agencies. The workshop was delivered at a conference whose audience was primarily mental health providers and consumers. This workshop was a project that developed out of an ongoing Recovery–Oriented Vocational Rehabilitation Community of Practice that evolved from an initial training program on the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model and recovery from mental illness that was jointly developed several years ago. Through quarterly training sessions and on–going sharing of resources through e–mail, formal presenters and colleagues share knowledge and practices related to working with individuals with mental health conditions all year long. These connections play out in a variety of collaborative projects.

## 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;

ACCES–VR is committed to establishing and maintaining an adequate supply of vocational rehabilitation counselors (VRCs) and relies on two systems to assess its qualified personnel needs. These systems are the New York State Education Department (NYSED) Fiscal and Human Resources Information Management System and the VR Reporting System. ACCES–VR collects data from these systems to track information about its Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRCs) who meet the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) requirements and the number of consumers served, and then uses the information to make trend data projections to assess staffing needs.

ACCES–VR hires VRCs who meet CSPD requirements to provide vocational rehabilitation services. ACCES–VR employs vocational rehabilitation counselor assistants (VRCAs) to perform a variety of paraprofessional tasks to support the VRCs in assisting individuals with disabilities to obtain or retain employment. The VRCAs interact with consumers and perform administrative tasks to facilitate service delivery. ACCES–VR does not employ any other type of rehabilitation staff, such as mobility instructors or rehabilitation teachers.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor – 291 Full Time Equivalent (FTE);

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Assistant – 86 (FTE);

Number of individuals served: 50,504

ii. the number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and

ACCES–VR personnel numbers noted in 1 A. i., reflect adequate staff to meet current need.

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.

ACCES–VR uses trend data projections to estimate the number of individuals that will be found eligible for ACCES–VR services. Based on these projections, ACCES–VR determined that 68 new VRCs will be needed to serve its consumers over the next five years. The estimate is based on the anticipated number of individuals to be served, the number of VRCs and supervisory counseling staff age 50 or older with 25 years of service who will be eligible for retirement within the next five years and others who may leave the agency.

There are 86 FTE VRCA positions filled. ACCES–VR estimates it will need 43 new VRCAs over the next five years. The estimate is calculated based on a projected need for a total of 97 VRCA positions (1 VRCA: 3 VRC ratio), the number of VRCAs age 50 or older with 25 years of service who will be eligible for retirement within the next five years and others who may leave the agency. The number of consumers served decreased from 52,361 last year to 50,504 this year. Based on a ratio of 1:175 VRC to consumer, the current level of counselors and counselor assistants allows us to adequately serve current numbers of eligible individuals.

Summary:

VRC, total: 291; current vacancies: 24; projected need: 68

VRCA, total: 86; current vacancies: 2: projected need: 43

## 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 Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) is the agency that provides accreditation to Master’s programs in Rehabilitation Counselor Education at institutions of higher education. CORE and the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) have agreed to merge. Beginning July 1, 2017, CACREP will carry on the mission of both organizations and the CORE standards may be reformatted to fit into the CACREP review structure.

The CORE accredited programs in New York State (NYS) are:

University at Buffalo – State University of New York (SUNY),

Hofstra University, and

Hunter College – City University of New York (CUNY).

These universities provide a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling.

ii. the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and

107 students are enrolled at the University at Buffalo

40 students are enrolled at Hofstra University

94 students are enrolled at Hunter College

All students are enrolled in a course of study that results in the attainment of a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling.

iii. the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of theose 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.

27 students graduated from the University at Buffalo

11 students graduated from Hofstra University

21 students graduated from Hunter College

All students received a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling.

## 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.

ACCES–VR works with CORE programs in New York and contiguous states to attract potential candidates from diverse backgrounds for employment at ACCES–VR. To maximize outreach efforts, ACCES–VR increased its use of technology to share information and maintain contact with schools.

In 2014, recruitment visits focused on colleges and universities in and around New York State. The benefits of working in NYS were shared with Program Directors and students in graduate Rehabilitation Counseling programs. They were also advised of internship opportunities and the application process for taking the NYS Civil Service exam for VR counselors.

ACCES–VR has an internship program to provide second–year graduate students with an opportunity to perform their internships in one of the ACCES–VR field offices. This initiative allows students to complete their degree requirements while building valuable experience with the State VR program. The internship program is comprised of two components: a practicum and an internship. These are offered three times each year and recently graduated students can work in intern status while pursuing full time employment at ACCES–VR. When resources allow, paid internships are made available to students. More than 245 students have participated in the internship program since 2006 with 45 VRCs hired. In 2014, ACCES–VR provided five practicum experiences and 27 paid internships.

## 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

Since NYS does not have State certification or licensure for VR counselors, ACCES–VR elected to use the national standard established by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC). The nine counselors who do not meet this standard engaged in a training program to meet the standard or plan to retire by May 30, 2018.

The participation of VRCs in an educational program to meet the standard is regularly monitored to evaluate compliance with SED personnel standards (cited below). ACCES–VR employs VRCs who have, or are eligible to obtain qualification as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC).

All VRCs are required to have:

• A Master’s degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, including a supervised internship, from a CORE accredited program; or

• A Master’s degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or Counseling and notice of eligibility to participate in the CRCC certificate examination.

VRCs considered for appointment to a "Manual Communication" or "Spanish Language" position are required to demonstrate proficiency in the manual sign language or in the Spanish language. Proficiency must be at a level which will permit them to perform the duties of the position satisfactorily.

Civil Service Qualifications for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Assistant:

ACCES–VR employs VRCAs to assist VRCs in the administrative, paraprofessional and routine communication tasks that enhance the vocational rehabilitation process. The VRCAs do not determine eligibility, develop the vocational goal, write the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), or determine case closures.

To be eligible for employment, VRCAs must meet the following qualifications:

• Bachelor degree in vocational rehabilitation, social work, counseling, or psychology; or

• Bachelor degree and one year of qualifying experience; or

• 60 semester college credit hours and two years of qualifying experience; or

• Four years of qualifying experience.

In order for experience to be considered qualifying, the primary responsibilities of a position must have involved professional or paraprofessional duties in one of the following areas:

o Either providing direct services beyond routine personal care or supervision to physically, mentally or learning disabled adults or adolescents in a rehabilitation program or facility; or

o Providing vocational or educational services to adults or adolescents with disabilities in the areas of assessment, counseling, job coaching, guidance, placement or job development.

### 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.

In NYS standards and classifications for job positions are established by NYS Department of Civil Service. The qualifications and requirements for for VRC and VRCA positions have not been changed. However, ACCES–VR, will supplement staff knowledge with training on evolving labor force needs of the 21st century.

## 4. STAFF DEVELOPMENT.

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

### A. SYSTEM OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT

a system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated State unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation

technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and

ACCES–VR is committed to ensuring personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities. Training is an important part of the development of qualified staff to meet the requirements of CSPD and evolving labor needs, and to meet and maintain professional certification.

ACCES–VR implemented the In–Service Training (IST) program to provide training and education opportunities for all VR staff to strengthen skills to enhance the delivery of quality services to consumers. An annual training needs assessment was conducted to identify staff training needs to enhance staffs' skills and knowledge in the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities that lead to successful employment outcomes. The results of the assessment were shared with the Region 2 Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Center (TACE), which assisted ACCES–VR in providing training to VR professionals. Managers and the State Rehabilitation Council provided input into the training program that was developed. In FFY 2014, ACCES–VR staff, including 262 CRCs, participated in 104 training opportunities. ACCES–VR provided funds through the IST grant to 16 staff to pursue certificate, non–degree, undergraduate, graduate or post–graduate degree courses. ACCES–VR staff participated in training.

In 2014 and 2015, training was provided on the following topics:

• ACCES–VR policies, procedures and technical assistance briefs: including Vehicle Modification, HIV/AIDS; Core Rehabilitation Services (CRS) contracts; Case Management System (CaMS); Supervisory staff trainings on VR practices; Management trainings on internal process on service delivery; and, Statewide Training for professional staff.

Staff were also trained on a few of the recommendations adopted from the Strategic Planning Initiative ACCES–VR completed.

• Assessment: including vocational evaluations; psychological evaluation; and, career development and occupational studies.

• Vocational rehabilitation counseling and professional conferences: including transition; customized training for transition team, engaging and preparing youth for employment; developing the IPE including counseling and guidance plans; motivational interviewing; ethical issues in rehabilitation; case management; managing challenging behaviors in employment; working with consumers with: co–existing conditions; mental illness and substance abuse; autism, traumatic brain injury; multiple sclerosis; counseling; providing VR services to diverse and minority group of individuals with disabilities; post–secondary education plans; deescalation and crisis management techniques; and working with sex offenders.

• Rehabilitation technology, including Microsoft applications (e.g., power point, access and excel).

• Job placement and employment: including labor market information; labor trends; placement initiatives and self–employment; work incentives; VR partnerships in employment; transferable skills; training techniques in employment setting; integration of recovery; re–entry for ex–offenders with disabilities; returning to work with a traumatic brain injury; placing transgender individuals into the workforce; independent living; improving employment outcomes; and Americans with Disabilities Act.

• Disability–related training: including professional conferences in mental health, developmental disabilities, deafness and hearing impairments, the medical and vocational aspects of HIV/AIDS; and substance abuse disorders. Training included post–traumatic stress disorder; traumatic brain injury; epilepsy; mood disorders; personality disorders; autism spectrum disorders; anxiety disorders; addiction; managing challenging behavior; visual acuity; multiple sclerosis; bullying; workforce investment home modifications, and neuropsychology.

• Supported employment: including professional conferences. Training was provided for supported employment; counseling skills for direct service providers; documentation and record keeping; job retention and career development; and benefits advisement. An initial training program on the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model and recovery from mental illness has evolved into an on–going Recovery–Oriented Vocational Rehabilitation Community of Practice.

Through quarterly training sessions and on–going sharing of resources through e–mail, formal presenters and colleagues share their knowledge and practices related to working with individuals with mental health conditions.

Effective December 2014, ACCES–VR entered into a 5–year MOU with The University at Buffalo for the provision of training for staff. The training needs assessment and expectation of delivery was modeled, to some extent, on the former Rehabilitation Services Administration Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) format. Through the MOU the University at Buffalo will:

• Provide 80 full days of training per year.

• Develop and provide a Leadership Certificate series.

• Develop and provide a Supervisor Certificate series that focuses on the multiple roles of the supervisor.

• Provide workshops at ACCES–VR's all staff training, supervisory institutes, and management institutes.

• Build curriculum and provide training (community setting, evening option) for the business community/businesses. This training will include an overview of disability etiquette, reasonable accommodations, navigating financial incentives, and the value of people with disability as members of the workforce.

## 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.

Training and education opportunities for VR staff have been funded through the IST grant. Under WIOA, the training to support staff will continue, but with other funds. ACCES–VR collaborates with other State agencies and disability organizations to jointly develop or provide disability and/or systems trainings for staff. ACCES–VR also partnered with TACE, and more recently directly with the University of Buffalo, to increase staff skills and enhance their knowledge. This partnership expands training opportunities for staff and gives ACCES–VR additional resources to maximize

funding for trainings. Additionally, this partnership provides trainings for CRCs to earn continuing education credits to meet the Ethics certification requirements.

Key partnerships include the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS); NYS Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD); New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH); Association for Persons in Supported Employment (APSE), New York State Rehabilitation Association (NYSRA), New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services, Inc. (NYAPRS), New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals (NYATEP) and the New York State Independent Living Council (NYSILC).

Training is provided through a variety of modalities such as distance learning, video–conference, seminars, workshops, individual district office training, and attendance at local, regional and statewide training programs and conferences. ACCES–VR utilizes video–conferencing training as much as possible to facilitate training opportunities and to minimize costs. Consideration is given to the diversity of staff, skill levels, and experiences and needs when developing training programs.

## 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.

ACCES–VR ensures adequate services to applicants or eligible individuals with limited English proficiency or who use other modes of communication such as sign language, by hiring staff able to communicate in other native languages or via other modes of communication, such as sign language. When such staff is not available, ACCES–VR obtains the services of other individuals able to communicate in appropriate modes with applicants or eligible individuals. ACCES–VR contracts with outside agencies and individuals for interpreter or communication services, and uses only certified or State–approved interpreters for the deaf when sign language interpreter services are required in the provision of VR services.

## 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.

Through its administration of vocational rehabilitation and independent living programs, ACCES–VR coordinates policy and services relating to transition services for students with disabilities from school to adult services and begins planning VR services for individuals with disabilities prior to their exiting high school. The coordination of meaningful transition services for students with disabilities from school–age to postsecondary settings is a priority for ACCES–VR. Within the State Education Department (SED), ACCES–VR collaborates with the P–12: Office of Special Education. The program managers jointly review and share training information and, when relevant, coordinate efforts by inviting respective staff to receive training on transition, accommodations, assessment and knowledge of specific disabilities.

Training continues on the Career Development and Commencement Credential (CDOS), as it relates to ACCES–VR's overall efforts in serving youth. The CDOS is a NYS educational credential that replaced the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Diploma for students with significant disabilities effective July 1, 2013. The CDOS requires students with disabilities to participate in a set of experiences related to preparing for employment. It is envisioned that this credential will provide more documentation about the accomplishments of students in the areas of academic instruction, career exploration and development, and provide potential businesses with documentation on which students are exiting school with demonstrated knowledge and experience for entry–level employment. ACCES–VR has a number of VRCs across the State dedicated solely to transition.

## 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 information in j. 1 A–E primarily reflects findings from the most recent Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (FFY 2014) which has been reported in prior State Plans. Only the State Plan Public Meetings section has been updated. However, it is significant to note that there is related updated information throughout this Plan that reflects assessments and information collection that occurs on a continuous basis through a variety of mechanisms. The next comprehensive statewide needs assessment will include a specific focus on the vocational needs of students and youth with disabilities.

Meantime, for this Plan, the more direct assessment of need for students and youth with disabilities is included in Coordination with Education Officials.

New York State ACCES–VR jointly conducted the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) for the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2014 to determine the rehabilitation (and other) needs of residents with disabilities and to identify gaps in vocational rehabilitation (VR) services. The assessment was based on information provided by consumers, advocacy groups, disability advisory councils, community rehabilitation programs, VR staff, and other partner agency representatives. It included a review of disability statistics for New York State (NYS), RSA 911 data, and public input gathered by ACCES–VR and its SRC members during the FFY 2014 State plan public meetings. ACCES–VR also conducted or collaborated on several key surveys that directly addressed the CSNA requirements.

Since this assessment was done, there have been additional public meetings and consumer satisfaction surveys; services provided to individuals with disabilities served through other components of the workforce investment system, and under WIOA, a new definition for youth and additional services provided to youth and students.

This assessment is due to be reviewed and updated in FFY 2017. At that time, the new information will be incorporated into the next comprehensive needs assessment.

Methodology: Assessment Activities

The SRC and ACCES–VR jointly developed a work plan for the CSNA that includes:

1. An analysis of population statistics in NYS that describe the:

o Numbers and percentages of people with disabilities, their employment status, educational levels and income;

o VR participation rates of minority individuals in comparison to individuals in the overall population; and

o VR services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, individuals with mental health disabilities, individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including individuals with autism spectrum disorder and individuals with substance use disorders, youth, and individuals receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI);

2. Findings from the State Plan Public meetings ;

3. Results of the consumer satisfaction survey;

4. Results of the Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute (Cornell EDI) data analysis of VR services, focusing on youth, postsecondary training and the impact of supported employment on outcomes achieved by consumers;

5. Services provided to individuals with disabilities served through other components of the workforce investment system;

6. ACCES–VR's review of supported employment programs and quality of services for the development of new performance based funding contracts; and,

7. An analysis of supported employment provider evaluations and surveys to assess needs and develop training.

ACCES–VR is committed to making effective use of the findings from the CSNA and using what is learned to shape policy, procedures, training, operations and practice.

1. Key Findings of Population Statistics for New Yorkers with Disabilities

Individuals can apply for services, receive services, and have their cases opened or closed throughout the year. The data in this report is gathered at the end of the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY), which is September 30.

The three primary data elements for this report include information about individuals with:

• Open cases: individuals who applied for services and their cases are open (status 02–24)

• Active cases: individuals who are eligible and/or receiving VR services under an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) (status 10–24)

• Served: all individuals, open and closed cases (status 02–30).

In FFY 2012, NYS served 90,374 individuals with disabilities. Of these, 52,341 were active cases with VR as of September 30, 2012. The number of individuals served is a decrease of 17.6 percent from the 109,728 individuals served in FFY 2009.

The following information is from Cornell University Online Resource for U.S. Disability Statistics that provide an overall context for the VR program to consider the potential needs of individuals with disabilities in New York State.

There are 1.05 million individuals 18–64 years of age with disabilities in NYS (8.5 percent prevalence rate). The NYS employment rate of working–age individuals with disabilities (age 18 to 64) is 31.9 percent, compared to 72.1 percent for persons without disabilities, a gap of 40.2 percent. Twenty–five percent of New Yorkers with disabilities have less than a high school diploma, compared to 11 percent without disabilities. Only 16.5 percent of working age individuals with disabilities in NYS holds a bachelor degree, compared to 36.6 percent of individuals without disabilities. The median household income of working–age adults with disabilities in NYS is $37,600 and $66,400 for families without disabilities, a gap of $28,800. The percentage of New Yorkers ages 21–64 years with a disability living below the poverty line in 2011 was 30 percent, compared to 12.3 percent of non–disabled adults.

Within NYS, there is a large gap between working age adults with disabilities and those without on key factors such as educational attainment and employment. For New Yorkers with disabilities, more than twice the number do not have a high school diploma, and less than half have a bachelor degree when compared to those without disabilities. The percent of individuals with disabilities who are employed are less than half of those without disabilities. The median household income and poverty rate is more than double for New Yorkers with disabilities.

In NYS, more working age individuals with disabilities have a bachelor degree, higher median earnings and household income compared to national data.

The poverty rate for New Yorkers with disabilities (30%) is higher than the national rate (27.8%). ACCES–VR is working to close these gaps through services such as postsecondary education that should lead to increased wages. Although many institutions of higher education have not put in place the level of supports needed by individuals with disabilities to succeed, ACCES–VR provides advocacy and support to individuals requiring these services, and has identified services to youth as a priority.

For transitioning youth, services that include paid work experiences are being developed as a strategy for career advancement.

27.2 percent of individuals served by ACCES–VR in 2012 (24,606 persons) received SSI/SSDI. Of these, 70.9 percent were considered to have most significant disabilities.

2.4 percent of individuals served came to ACCES–VR as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) recipients and 14.6 percent came as Safety Net participants. The employment gap is an issue of vital concern to the public–private VR system.

The employment rate for individuals with disabilities is suppressed by factors such as access to housing, transportation, health care (including treatment for mental illness, substance abuse, and

chronic disabilities), childcare, and opportunities for asset accumulation. All of these factors impact the employment rate for individuals with disabilities and closing the employment gap will require a much broader public policy approach across federal, state, and local economic initiatives and programs.

See additional detail in C on individuals with most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services.

2. Findings from the August 2015 State Plan Public Meetings

The State Plan Public Meetings for the VR Portion of the State Plan, effective July 1, 2016, focused on goals and priorities for VR but with an emphasis on how to meet these goals in collaboration with WIOA partners. Two public meetings were held, one each in Manhattan and Syracuse. A statewide video–conference with a facilitated discussion was broadcast to Albany, Buffalo, and Hauppauge. For each there was a call–in number for those unable to attend in person. Also, at each meeting Core Program partners (DOL, Adult Education and NYS CB) participated by providing brief remarks, and listening and engaging in the full discussion. Individuals were also invited to submit comments in writing.

Though there were no restrictions on what individuals might wish to comment upon, participants were specifically asked to think about how the program partners could collaborate in providing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities; how NYS could improve employment outcomes for underserved and unserved including youth with disabilities; and how to best engage the business community in moving toward the NYS goal to increase the employment rate of individuals with disabilities.

The public comment period ended August 31, 2015.

The following themes emerged from the meetings, as well as from other verbal and written information obtained from participants:

• Employment: need more collaboration of stakeholders, providers and State agencies.

• Businesses: need to be educated about hiring individuals with disabilities and available financial incentives credits.

• ACCES–VR: should consider enhancement of the self–employment advisement committee. Recommendation is to explore how local businesses could be further engaged and could share their knowledge.

• Supported Employment:

o Effective program, but providers are concerned about the impact of the milestone system. Perhaps a tier system could be considered. Also, need to reevaluate retention measures under the milestone system.

o Best practices with customized employment should be identified with a focus on replication and more engagement of business in the process.

o Stronger collaboration is needed for ACCES–VR and OPWDD services.

• Pre–employment skills: provide training in hard and soft skills, work readiness and placement services, incorporating socialization and interviewing skills into the procurement process for new rehabilitation service contracts.

• Benefit Counseling: should be used more to increase employment outcomes. Families should understand the incentives.

• Consumers: need to be more engaged in the process and let everyone know they are looking for work.

• Youth:

o Link between ACCES–VR and schools needs to be strengthened so youth don't miss the opportunity to benefit from VR services.

o VR could create better outcomes for youth by funding Independent Living Centers to provide youth transition services to high school seniors and those who have recently left school. With WIOA this is a fifth core IL services. VR should get providers involved in the transition process earlier.

o All youth should be exposed to work experiences.

• Other:

o Create a statewide outreach and education component so businesses and the community at large understand benefit of hiring people with disabilities and the incentives available. Constantly bombarding agencies and business seeking job placements is not working. Formalizing a statewide outreach campaign would lay the ground work for more meaningful conversations and establish VR as a business partner.

o Look carefully at ways to better serve underserved populations. Specifically, bring focus to individuals with autism. It is important for schools, postsecondary education institutions and businesses to understand how this disability impacts on social roles as well as job task function.

3. Consumer Satisfaction Survey

Consumer Satisfaction Survey:

In December, 2011, the Potsdam Institute for Applied Research at SUNY Potsdam sent a survey to 6,825 consumers who had received placement services the previous year. The purpose of the survey was to determine the satisfaction of these consumers with the services they received from ACCES–VR, as well as the outcomes they experienced.

The survey consisted of 45 questions, printed in English and Spanish, and available in English on the Internet. The participant pool received placement services between 7/1/2010 to 8/31/2011, and was divided into three status categories; Status 26 (closed with employment); Status 28 (closed without employment); and Status 14, 16, 18, 20, 22 or 24 (continuing services/Other–Open).

Surveys were sent to 2,887 participants who were closed employed; 1,260 participants who were closed without employment; and 2,678 participants who were other–open.

There were 864 surveys completed, of which 781 were returned by mail and 83 completed using the on–line version. This is a return rate of 12.7 percent. Most responders were 46–55 years old. The response rate by status was 353 employed (12.2 percent); 90 closed without employment (7.1 percent) and 421 other–opened (15.7 percent).

Over 76 percent of respondents indicated satisfaction with ACCES–VR services, one percentage point less than those surveyed last year, and below the established target of 90 percent. Only 50 percent of respondents closed without employment reported the same satisfaction. Over 95 percent of the consumers who responded understood that the purpose of ACCES–VR services was to help them get a job, and almost 52 percent reported that orientation sessions were scheduled in less than 30 days.

In 2012, surveys were sent to 10,376 consumers who were receiving postsecondary training, and were closed in employment (Status 26); closed after plan was initiated without employment (Status 28); or were continuing services with an Open status (Status 18 or 22). Preliminary results indicate there was a 9.1 percent response rate, with 86 percent reporting satisfaction with ACCES–VR services.

4.Cornell Data Analysis

Cornell Employment and Disability Institute (EDI) conducted an analysis of ACCES–VR Case Management System (CaMS) data to examine the impact of supported employment services, postsecondary education services and VR services for transition–aged youth and young adults in New York State. The sample size was 76,303 consumers who had an IPE in 2006 and 2007 and had closure status assigned as of 2010. Individuals with physical disabilities accounted for 17 percent, learning disabilities 22 percent and other mental health disabilities were 29 percent. Nearly half had secondary disabilities. The analysis included 41 percent youth and 33 percent SSI/SSDI recipients. It included 12.5 percent of Hispanic ethnicity, 27 percent African–Americans and 57 percent Caucasians. Fifty–five percent of the sample exited with employment. The report of the data analysis was issued March 2013.

Key Findings:

Supported employment has a beneficial impact for ACCES–VR consumers when compared to a national sample. Twenty–five percent of participants received supported employment services with 60 percent rehabilitated – two percent higher than national–level data and five percent higher than for other ACCES–VR employment services. Consumers' receipt of supported employment services varied substantially across VR district offices, ranging from 37 percent for the Albany office to 14 percent for the Brooklyn and Garden City offices. The likelihood of success, however, was 18 percent higher in New York City offices compared to 9 percent in Albany office outcomes.

Fifty–four percent of consumers participating in Postsecondary Education Services were successfully rehabilitated. Overall, consumers who participated in Postsecondary Education Services were about two percent less likely to achieve an employment outcome compared with their peers who received other training services for employment (compared to nine percent less likely nationally).

However, youth who participated in Postsecondary Education Services were five percent more likely to be successfully rehabilitated compared with older adult consumers. State plan data on individuals who complete indicates that they earn higher wages.

Youth who participated in training for work, Postsecondary Education Services and those who received rehabilitation technology services had 15–16 percent higher likelihood of successful case closures compared with their peers who only participated in pre–vocational services. Young adult consumers had a four percent lower likelihood of successful case closures compared to their adult counterparts. Youth with minority statuses were three to seven percent less likely to achieve a successful closure compared to Caucasian youth. Youth with mental health disabilities were four percent less likely to achieve an employment outcome when compared to youth with learning disabilities.

The data analysis indicate that services that primarily build human capital (e.g., training, postsecondary education, etc.) improve employment outcomes for young people, whereas restoration/rehabilitation services such as rehabilitation technology, have greater impact for the adult population. These findings are too preliminary to draw any definitive conclusions related to service design and more analysis is needed. ACCES–VR will be sharing the report with the SRC and district managers to explore the implications for policy, procedure and practices.

5. Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities who have been Served Through Other Components of the Statewide Workforce Investment System

ACCES–VR continues to develop local strategies to increase access to employment services for individuals with disabilities. There are 13 Disability Employment Initiative Projects at the upstate NY local workforce areas that focus on Employment Networks and services for VR consumers related to assessment, benefits advisement and placement. ACCES–VR liaisons meet periodically with the Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs) to better understand and coordinate cross–systems services and to better meet the needs of individuals with disabilities.

ACCES–VR and the Research Foundation for Mental Hygiene (RFMH), representing OMH, have signed a Partnership Plus Memorandum of Agreement. Through this agreement, ACCES–VR can coordinate the Ticket to Work assignment with RFMH, which is acting as a statewide administrative employment network. ACCES–VR is also negotiating the data sharing agreement provided by OMH as part of their collaboration with DOL to transform the One–Stop Operating System into a data and case services system. The system includes all the components of the New York Interagency Supported Employment Reporting Data System (NYISER) that was replaced in 2012 by the New York Employment Services System (NYESS) for its supported employment providers. The NYESS is a combined data warehouse and information sharing system for state and community agencies and a job matching/labor exchange system for consumers and businesses.

ACCES–VR Review of Supported Employment Programs and Quality of Services for Rate Development for New Milestones that are Performance Based

ACCES–VR will integrate the Supported Employment contracts with the Unified Contract Services into one proposed contract, Core Rehabilitation Services (CRS), effective October 1, 2013. This will result in one set of nearly 500 contracts. New standards and measures will be developed to improve services to individuals and the provision of services by community rehabilitation providers. This realignment of services and contracts will allow us to further develop the rehabilitation provider capacity to serve people with the most significant disabilities.

Changes under CRS include moving supported employment services to a performance–based system, with new milestone payments and program enhancements, such as quality outcome payment for hours worked per week by the consumer. All job retention services will have a quality outcome payment based on the hourly wage earned by the consumer. Rates to providers will be increased for soft skills training and transportation assistance to encourage utilization of the service. Services already provided, such as pre–employment, employment and individual services to enhance job readiness, will be emphasized for transition aged youth, under Youth Employment Services. A new service, community work experience, will be added.

Analysis of Supported Provider Evaluations and Surveys to Assess Needs and Develop Training

ACCES–VR is responsible for administering, establishing standards for and monitoring the intensive services component of all supported employment programs in New York State. ACCES–VR, with the cooperation of OMH, OPWDD and NYSCB, established the Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team in October 2006 for ongoing coordination of the implementation of supported employment intensive and extended services in the State. The Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team meets bi–annually to discuss program, data and funding issues, facilitate cross–systems implementation and identify opportunities for program improvements.

Supported employment providers are surveyed periodically to assess their needs and to improve and develop training curriculums. Supported employment training began in 2007 for supported employment providers. The training is considered essential for assuring quality of services. It helps maintain effective core skills for a work force that evidences moderate staff turnover. Training improves essential job development and placement skills needed to develop strategies to increase employment outcomes consistent with ACCES–VR's State Plan Goals and Priorities, and helps ensure quality services for ACCES–VR's most significantly disabled consumers.

ACCES–VR solicited proposals to provide the training through a Request for Proposal, and awarded the contract to Cornell University's Employment and Disability Institute (EDI), School of Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR). The training will be provided under a program known as the NYS Consortium for Advancement of Supported Employment (CASE). CASE is a collaboration comprised of Cornell University's EDI (the lead agency), the Center for Human Services Education (CHSE), a division of the Heritage Christian Services, the NYS Association for Persons in Supported Employment (APSE) and the NYS Rehabilitation Association (NYSRA). An agreement with Cornell for a term of five years, went into effect April 1, 2013. Through the CASE, and collaboration with Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team, training and technical assistance focused on improving the capacity of community rehabilitation providers to place individuals with most significant disabilities into employment.

## B. WHO ARE MINORITIES;

Characteristics of Individuals Served including Minority Individuals

In FFY 2012, ACCES–VR served 90,374 consumers. When compared to the general State population, ACCES–VR served a higher proportion of minority individuals who were African–American (26.1 percent) or Multiracial, (0.4 percent). ACCES–VR served a smaller proportion of minority individuals who were Hispanic (14 percent), Asian (1.6 percent) and American Indian (0.6 percent). Compared to the general State Population, the largest differences were 6.2 percentage points less for individuals who were Asian, and 4.0 percentage points less for individuals who were Hispanic.

FFY 2012 VR Participation Rates of Minority Individuals (all statuses)

Ethnicity % Served % General Population Difference

White 54.2 71.5 –17.3

Black 26.1 17.5 +8.6

Hispanic 14.0 18.0 –4.0

American

Indian 0.6 1.0 –0.4

Asian 1.6 7.8 –6.2

Pacific

Islander 0.1 0.1 None

Multiracial 2.8 2.2 +0.4

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

Needs of Special Populations including Individuals with Most Significant Disabilities, and those Individuals considered Unserved and Underserved In order to better understand the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, including the need for supported employment and those that are unserved and underserved, ACCES–VR, jointly with the SRC, conducted a range of activities, one of which was an analysis of data on participation in VR services. The following information represents individuals with the most significant disabilities, mental health disabilities, intellectual and developmental disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, substance use disorders, receiving SSI or SSDI and youth. Greater than half of the individuals served by ACCES–VR continue to be determined to have a most significant disability.

FFY 2012 ACCES–VR Unserved/Underserved Populations

Disability Total No. % of All % of % with most

Group (open/closed) active cases all 26’s significant disability

Mental Health, 17,392 20.2 17.8 71.5

Intellectual Dev. Dis (ID/DD) 14,946 19.0 18.6 78.9

Autism Spectrum Disorder 2,823 4.0 2.8 88.5

Substance Use Disorders 16,798 17.6 20.7 39.5

Youth (apply before age 22) 35,064 42.2 36.3 61.0

SSI/SSDI 24,606 28.9 23.8 70.9

Visual 323 0.4 0.55

Deaf/hard of hearing/deaf/blind 3,023 3.3 5.1 63.8

Those with active cases are eligible and/or receiving services under an IPE (status 10–24). The percentage of individuals with a mental health (MH) diagnosis consistently averages 20 percent of the total number of consumers, of which 71.5 percent have most significant disabilities. Individuals with mental health conditions who achieved an employment outcome (status 26) accounts for 17.8 percent (2,122 individuals) of all ACCES–VR employment outcomes (11,900 individuals). ACCES–VR and OMH discussed services for individuals with mental health conditions that would incorporate application of the “Individualized Placement and Support” (IPS) model with existing providers who are jointly funded by ACCES–VR and Office of Mental Health. Counselors were provided training in IPS that evolved into a series of trainings in the components of recovery that identify specific techniques for supporting individuals with mental health conditions in achieving employment outcomes.

For the purposes of this CSNA, intellectual disability and developmental disability (ID/DD) is defined as primary impairment due to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism, cerebral palsy, congenital condition or birth injury, epilepsy, or intellectual development disorder. Individuals with ID/DD comprise 19 percent of the total number of consumers with ACCES–VR, an increase of 1.1 percent since FFY 2009. The percentage of individuals with ID/DD who achieved an employment outcome remained at 18.6 percent (2,213 individuals) of all ACCES–VR employment outcomes. Of the total served in all VR statuses, 78.9 percent of individuals with ID/DD were considered to have a most significant disability. ACCES–VR has been engaged in a strategic collaboration with the New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) for several decades, and over the past 25 years, has worked extensively in the joint implementation of supported employment services.

ACCES–VR consumers with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) have increased to 4.0 percent (1,899 individuals) of the total number of active cases in the VR Program, an increase of 1.6 percentage points since 2009. The percentage of individuals with ASD who achieved an employment outcome (status 26) increased from 1.5 percent of all employment outcomes in FFY 2009 (183 individuals) to 2.8 percent (337 individuals). Of the total number of individuals with ASD served, 88.5 percent were considered to have a most significant disability.

Individuals with Substance Use Disorders (SUD) comprise 17.6 percent (8,418 individuals) of the total number of active consumers. In FFY 2012, 2,833 individuals with SUD achieved an employment outcome, 20.7 percent of all outcomes. Of the total served in all VR statuses, 39.5 percent of individuals with SUD were considered to have a most significant disability. The NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) and ACCES–VR collaborate to support recovery for individuals with substance use disorders with employment as an integral part of that recovery. To enhance the integration of recovery principles into VR and to enable individuals to pursue high quality employment outcomes, ACCES–VR and OASAS provide periodic joint trainings on the collaborative working relationship in serving common consumers.

ACCES–VR defines youth as applicants for VR services prior to age 22 years. There has been a decrease of 1.6 percentage points (9,215 individuals) of youth served since 2009. This could be due in part to the end of the Model Transition Program, which saw an increase of almost 3,000 youth applying for VR services in FFY 2009. Youth with active cases make up 42.2 percent (20,226 individuals) of all consumers with active cases. The percent of youth who achieved employment was 36.3 percent of all employment outcomes, an increase of 1.7 percentage points since FFY 2009. Of the total served in all VR statuses, 61 percent of youth were considered to have a most significant disability.

Individuals on SSI/SSDI make up 28 percent of all active cases or 13,882 individuals. Those who were considered to have a most significant disability were 70.9 percent of those served in all VR statuses. While individuals receiving SSI/SSDI were only 23.8 percent of all employment outcomes in FFY 2012, the employment rate for these individuals did increase. ACCES–VR is working with the SRC to examine data on consumers who receive SSI and SSDI, and is increasing the use of benefits planning services as a strategy to increase outcomes.

Individuals who are Deaf, Deaf–Blind, Hard of Hearing or Late Deafened The Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation in the Fifth Edition 2008 Model State Plan (MSP) for Rehabilitation of Persons who are Deaf, Deaf–Blind, Hard of Hearing or Late Deafened report that "Hearing loss is the most prevalent, chronic, physically disabling condition in the United States today." The National Institute on Deafness and other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) reported in June 2010 that approximately 17 percent (36 million) of American adults report some degree of hearing loss; 15 percent (26 million) of Americans between the ages of 20 and 69 have high frequency hearing loss due to exposure to loud sounds or noise at work or in leisure activities and 4,000 new cases of sudden deafness occur each year in the United States. Hearing loss is becoming more prevalent among the general population. These losses can impact the employment status of individuals, depending on the level of loss. In FFY 2012, ACCES–VR served a total of 3,023 (3.3 percent) individuals who had a primary impairment of deafness, hearing loss, other hearing impairment and deaf–blindness, almost one third more than the number served in FFY 2009. Of these, 63.8 percent were considered to have a most significant disability. In FFY 2012, 612 individuals who were deaf, hard of hearing or deaf–blind achieved an employment outcome. This is 5.1 percent of all employment outcomes.

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

ACCES–VR continues to develop local strategies to increase access to employment services for individuals with disabilities. There are 13 Disability Employment Initiative Projects at the upstate NY local workforce areas that focus on Employment Networks and services for VR consumers related to assessment, benefits advisement and placement. ACCES–VR liaisons meet periodically with the Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs) to better understand and coordinate cross–systems services and to better meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. ACCES–VR and the Research Foundation for Mental Hygiene (RFMH), representing OMH, have signed a Partnership Plus Memorandum of Agreement. Through this agreement, ACCES–VR can coordinate the Ticket to Work assignment with RFMH, which is acting as a statewide administrative employment network. ACCES–VR is also negotiating the data sharing agreement provided by OMH as part of their collaboration with DOL to transform the One–Stop Operating System into a data and case services system. The system includes all the components of the New York Interagency Supported Employment Reporting Data System (NYISER) that was replaced in 2012 by the New York Employment Services System (NYESS) for its supported employment providers. The NYESS is a

combined data warehouse and information sharing system for state and community agencies and a job matching/labor exchange system for consumers and businesses.

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

Cornell Employment and Disability Institute (EDI) conducted an analysis of ACCES–VR Case Management System (CaMS) data to examine the impact of supported employment services, postsecondary education services and VR services for transition–aged youth and young adults in New York State. The sample size was 76,303 consumers who had an IPE in 2006 and 2007 and had closure status assigned as of 2010. Individuals with physical disabilities accounted for 17 percent, learning disabilities 22 percent and other mental health disabilities were 29 percent. Nearly half had secondary disabilities.

The analysis included 41 percent youth and 33 percent SSI/SSDI recipients. It included 12.5 percent of Hispanic ethnicity, 27 percent African–Americans and 57 percent Caucasians. Fifty–five percent of the sample exited with employment. The report of the data analysis was issued March 2013.

Key Findings: Fifty–four percent of consumers participating in Postsecondary Education Services were successfully rehabilitated. Overall, consumers who participated in Postsecondary Education Services were about two percent less likely to achieve an employment outcome compared with their peers who received other training services for employment (compared to nine percent less likely nationally).

However, youth who participated in Postsecondary Education Services were five percent more likely to be successfully rehabilitated compared with older adult consumers. State plan data on individuals who complete indicates that they earn higher wages.

Youth who participated in training for work, Postsecondary Education Services and those who received rehabilitation technology services had 15–16 percent higher likelihood of successful case closures compared with their peers who only participated in pre–vocational services. Young adult consumers had a four percent lower likelihood of successful case closures compared to their adult counterparts. Youth with minority statuses were three to seven percent less likely to achieve a successful closure compared to Caucasian youth. Youth with mental health disabilities were four percent less likely to achieve an employment outcome when compared to youth with learning disabilities.

The data analysis indicate that services that primarily build human capital (e.g., training, postsecondary education, etc.) improve employment outcomes for young people, whereas restoration/rehabilitation services such as rehabilitation technology, have greater impact for the adult population. These findings are too preliminary to draw any definitive conclusions related to service design and more analysis is needed. ACCES–VR will be sharing the report with the SRC and district managers to explore the implications for policy, procedure and practices.

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

ACCES–VR will integrate the Supported Employment contracts with the Unified Contract Services into one proposed contract, Core Rehabilitation Services (CRS), effective October 1, 2013. This will result in one set of nearly 500 contracts. New standards and measures will be developed to improve services to individuals and the provision of services by community rehabilitation providers. This realignment of services and contracts will allow us to further develop the rehabilitation provider capacity to serve people with the most significant disabilities.

Changes under CRS include moving supported employment services to a performance–based system, with new milestone payments and program enhancements, such as quality outcome payment for hours worked per week by the consumer. All job retention services will have a quality outcome payment based on the hourly wage earned by the consumer. Rates to providers will be increased for soft skills training and transportation assistance to encourage utilization of the service. Services already provided, such as pre–employment, employment and individual services to enhance job readiness, will be emphasized for transition aged youth, under Youth Employment Services. A new service, community work experience, will be added.

Analysis of Supported Provider Evaluations and Surveys to Assess Needs and Develop Training

ACCES–VR is responsible for administering, establishing standards for and monitoring the intensive services component of all supported employment programs in New York State. ACCES–VR, with the cooperation of OMH, OPWDD and NYSCB, established the Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team in October 2006 for ongoing coordination of the implementation of supported employment intensive and extended services in the State. The Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team meets bi–annually to discuss program, data and funding issues, facilitate cross–systems implementation and identify opportunities for program improvements.

Supported employment providers are surveyed periodically to assess their needs and to improve and develop training curriculums. Supported employment training began in 2007 for supported employment providers. The training is considered essential for assuring quality of services. It helps maintain effective core skills for a work force that evidences moderate staff turnover. Training improves essential job development and placement skills needed to develop strategies to increase employment outcomes consistent with ACCES–VR's State Plan Goals and Priorities, and helps ensure quality services for ACCES–VR's most significantly disabled consumers.

ACCES–VR solicited proposals to provide the training through a Request for Proposal, and awarded the contract to Cornell University's Employment and Disability Institute (EDI), School of Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR). The training will be provided under a program known as the NYS Consortium for Advancement of Supported Employment (CASE). CASE is a collaboration comprised of Cornell University's EDI (the lead agency), the Center for Human Services Education (CHSE), a division of the Heritage Christian Services, the NYS Association for Persons in Supported Employment (APSE) and the NYS Rehabilitation Association (NYSRA). An agreement with Cornell for a term of five years, went into effect April 1, 2013. Through the CASE, and collaboration with Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team, training and technical assistance focused on improving the capacity of community rehabilitation providers to place individuals with most significant disabilities into employment.

### 3. INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES FOR TRANSITION CAREER SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH SUCH SERVICES ARE COORDINATED WITH TRANSITION SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT .

Needs of individuals with disabilities for transition career services and pre–employment transition services is a key focus area for ACCES–VR. It is the intent of ACCES–VR that this will be a focal point of the 2017 Comprehensive Needs Assessment.

Please see E and d.1 for detailed information on service needs and service delivery to students and youth as is currently available. Analysis of the strategies in place and further development of initiatives is underway.

## K. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.11(b)). Describe:

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

ACCES–VR expects that during the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2016, fiscal and personnel resources will be sufficient to serve all eligible persons who apply for services. This expectation is based on ACCES–VR's projections of federal and State funding, staffing plans, referral levels, eligibility rates and service needs, including persons with significant disabilities.

In meeting this expectation, ACCES–VR affirms that it will:

• Continue to provide a full range of services to all persons currently receiving services;

• Provide assessment services to all persons expected to apply next fiscal year;

• Serve all persons expected to be determined eligible next year; and,

• Meet all statutory program requirements.

Number of Individuals who are Eligible for VR Services and the Number of Eligible Individuals who will Receive VR Services

As required in 34 CFR 361.29(b)(1), ACCES–VR estimates the number of individuals with disabilities that will be found eligible for VR services is 29,000. The estimate is based on the applicant numbers during FFY 2014. Using a five–year trend formula, ACCES–VR could potentially serve 71,000 individuals during FFY 2016. This figure, however, is based exclusively on trend data for the previous five years and does not include several new initiatives that should increase the number of applicants for VR services. The FFY 2015 State Plan estimated that 72,200 individuals would be served, but as of 6/1/2015, 75,618 individuals are being served.

ACCES–VR expects to serve 71,000 individuals in FFY 2016. This estimate is based on the anticipated increase in the number of individuals to be served due to: the expected referrals from Office for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) as it moves more individuals into employment; ACCES–VR's new transition unit developed to work with schools and students; a robust advertising campaign; an increase in the maximum allowable earnings for services based on economic need (from 200 to 500 percent of federal poverty level); an increase in VR levels of funding for postsecondary training; and, an improving economy. Based on the above, the total estimated cost for services is $217.5 million.

As required in 34 CFR 361.29(b)(2), ACCES–VR estimates that under Title I and Title VI Part B, approximately 11,100 of the estimated 71,000 individuals served during FFY 2016 will receive supported employment services. All of these individuals receiving supported employment services will be served using a combination of Title VI Part B funds and State funds.

## 2. THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL RECEIVE SERVICES UNDER:

### A. THE VR PROGRAM;

59,900

### B. THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM; AND

11,100

### C. EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION;

This agency is not in an order of selection.

## 3. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR VR SERVICES, BUT ARE NOT RECEIVING SUCH SERVICES DUE TO AN ORDER OF SELECTION; AND

This agency is not in an order of selection.

## 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.

Part B of Title 1 – Estimated Funds=$22,000,000; estimated number to be served=59,900; average cost of services $367.28

Part B of Title VI – Estimated Funds=$1,200,000; estimated number to be served=11,100; average cost of services=$108.11

Totals: Estimated funds=$23,200,000; estimated number to be served=71,000; average cost=$326.76

All individuals receiving supported employment services will be served using a combination of Title VI Part B funds and Stat funds.

## 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.

ACCES–VR and the SRC jointly developed the goals and priorities. The SRC, through its standing committees, reviewed each WIOA focus area to identify how to link to services and goals and to establish mechanisms for tracking progress and outcomes. The comprehensive statewide needs assessment data, as well as statewide employment trends and data (reflected in the combined sections of this document), were carefully reviewed. In addition, information from a wide variety of venues has been taken into account. For example, ACCES–VR staff frequently provide workshops at provider and business conferences and at high school and postsecondary events. The feedback and recommendations are used to assess needs. These goals and priorities, (effective July 1, 2016), reflect the broad NYS workforce vision and retain linkage to the key priorities established in prior years. To reflect WIOA's heightened focus on ensuring that individuals, including students and youth, receive a strong foundation of information and quality service, succeed in postsecondary education, and obtain, retain and advance in competitive, integrated employment the priorities and goals have been modified from those established in prior plans. In addition to the consumer–based goals, a priority for meeting business needs has been added.

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

These changed goals and priorities more closely align and reflect WIOA common performance measures.

Priority 1: Increase the employment rate and earnings for individuals with disabilities served by ACCES–VR.

• Goal 1.1: Increase the percentage of individuals exiting the VR program after receiving services that achieve an employment outcome.

• Goal 1.2: Increase the percentage of youth (under age 25 at application) exiting the VR program after receiving services that achieve an employment outcome.

• Goal 1.3: Improve the median earnings of individuals achieving an employment outcome.

• Goal 1.4: Monitor employment rates at 2nd and 4th quarter to obtain baseline data for establishing an appropriate performance measure.

Priority 2: Increase services to target populations: students with disabilities; and, unserved and underserved groups.

• Goal 2.1: The service rate for identified unserved and underserved populations will be commensurate with the NYS population rates for those populations based on race, ethnicity and disability.

• Goal 2.2: Students with disabilities will receive pre–employment transition services to establish a solid foundation upon which to build their career path.

Priority 3: Improve the quality of ACCES–VR services.

• Goal 3.1: Increase to 90% the number of respondents expressing satisfaction on key questions contained in VR's consumer satisfaction surveys.

• Goal 3.2: Through use of established contract performance measures for service providers, 80% of providers will meet or exceed the standard.

Priority 4: Increase the percentage of individuals who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential.

• Goal 4.1: Increase partnerships with postsecondary education institutions.

• Goal 4.2: Assess and track the percentage of individuals who obtain skills gain.

• Goal 4.3: Increase the percentage of individuals who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential.

Priority 5: Effectively serve businesses.

• Goal 5.1: Provide training on accommodations and financial incentives to a minimum of 100 businesses per year.

• Goal 5.2: Bring together regional businesses and providers for events or activities to further enhance linkages around hiring individuals with disabilities.

## 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;

Priorities and goals noted in 2 reflect information as noted in the most recent statewide needs assessment.

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

Priorities and goals noted in 2 very specifically align to the WIOA performance expectations.

### 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.

Priorities and goals in 2 are reflective of other available information including findings from surveys and monitoring activities. The State Rehabilitation Council jointly developed these goals and priorities.

## 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.

This agency will not implement an order of selection.

### B. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER.

### C. THE SERVICE AND OUTCOME GOALS.

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

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

### 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.

## 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.

Federal Title VI, Part B funds for supported employment services were initially used to develop model programs to determine the most effective structure for supported employment and to determine the types of services and supports that work best with different populations. In NYS these funds alone are not sufficient to meet the overall demand for supported employment services. ACCES–VR total funding level for supported employment contracts for FFY 2014 was $22 million.

The Title VI, Part B funds to serve approximately 11,100 individuals accounted for $1.2 million. At present, Title VI, Part B funds represent less than five percent of the total funds ACCES–VR uses for intensive supported employment services. ACCES–VR will continue the operation of the supported employment services established under Title VI, Part B and use the funds to supplement, but not supplant, Title I funds. ACCES–VR combines Title VI, Part B and Section 110 funds to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities. Individuals served through supported employment services include individuals with all types of disabilities.

ACCES–VR maintains agreements (Memorandum of Understanding and Integrated Employment Implementation Plan, Chapter 515 of the NYS Laws of 1992) with the Office of Mental Health (OMH), the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) and the NYS Commission for the Blind (NYSCB), which define ACCES–VR as the source for intensive funding. Under WIOA, OPWDD can also provide intensive funding for supported employment. Program evaluation includes a review of data from interagency quarterly reports and on–site reviews by ACCES–VR Quality Assurance Unit. Successful and exemplary practices have been disseminated to the staff of the State agencies involved and to other project sites.

Supported Employment Programs

On December 31, 2013 ACCES–VR concluded its five year hourly fee–for–service supported employment contracts with approximately 200 supported employment providers. Effective January 1, 2014 ACCES–VR began a performance–based contracting system with payments being based on the attainment of specific milestones and outcomes for supported employment. ACCES–VR is responsible for administering, establishing standards for and monitoring the intensive services component of supported employment programs in NYS except those funded by OPWDD, and for the provision of extended services to individuals who are not eligible for such services through other sources. In October 2006, ACCES–VR, with the cooperation of OMH, OPWDD and NYSCB, established the Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team for ongoing coordination of the implementation of supported employment intensive and extended services in New York State. The Chapter 515 Interagency Implementation Team consists of employment program managers from the respective State agencies. The Team meets as needed to discuss program, data and funding issues, facilitate cross–systems implementation and identify opportunities for program improvements.

Supported Employment Goals and Priorities

ACCES–VR’s Title VI, Part B program goals are to:

• Provide services to individuals, including youth, with the most significant disabilities who might not be traditionally considered appropriate for competitive integrated employment;

• Develop techniques for unserved and underserved populations, such as persons with acquired brain injuries, deafness, multiple disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, significant learning disabilities and significant mental illness;

• Develop quality programs that could be used for replication purposes; and

• Establish successful supported employment programs that will provide technical assistance to other programs.

Discussions that occur with partner agencies help to achieve the above goals, as well as to meet our challenge to close the employment gap between individuals without disabling conditions and individuals with disabilities. Program performance and costs are reviewed at least annually. Service re–negotiations occur based on overall performance, including performance on projected outcomes agreed to by ACCES–VR and the provider. ACCES–VR vocational rehabilitation counselors manage the individual program of each consumer participating in intensive supported employment. This includes developing the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) and monitoring its implementation. The programs funded under Title VI, Part B represent previously underserved individuals. Every effort is made to improve the project's performance through continuing technical assistance and service delivery improvements.

### 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

ACCES-VR will provide extended services for a period not to exceed four years, to youth with the most significant disabilities. Currently, ACCES–VR is developing staff guidance regarding provision of extended services for youth pursuant to section 603(d). The expectation for delivery of this service is 2017 so as to align it with other changes expected in service delivery upon execution of a new Core Rehabilitation Services contract.

### 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.

At this time ACCES–VR has begun very preliminary discussions with entities interested in partnering to create and/or support new opportunities. Additional outreach and research is necessary.

## O. STATE'S STRATEGIES

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

### 1. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO EXPAND AND IMPROVE SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

The strategies below detail how ACCES–VR will achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities and overcome barriers to accessing the VR and the Supported Employment programs. Many of the strategies will impact on more than one priority. To minimize repetition, the strategy is noted only once with alignment to those goals where the highest direct impact is expected.

Priority 1: Increase the employment rate and earnings for individuals with disabilities served by ACCES–VR.

Goals for this priority include: increase the percentage of individuals exiting the VR program after receiving services that achieve an employment outcome; increase the percentage of youth (under age 25 at application) exiting the VR program after receiving services that achieve an employment outcome; improve the median earnings of individuals achieving an employment outcome; and, monitor employment rates at 2nd and 4th quarter to establish and subsequently meet performance measures.

Strategies:

• Collaborate with WIOA core program partners and other State agencies that serve individuals with disabilities to provide a cooperative referral process which results in streamlined access to services across the programs and to better integration of VR services with the employment preparation resources within each respective system.

• Move job ready consumers quickly into ACCES–VR placement services or DOL's job placement services.

• Maintain a data bank of job ready consumers and actively promote those candidates to business through local Chambers of Commerce, Society for Human Resource Managers events, and local workforce development activities.

• Promote and enhance On–the–Job training and Work Try Out opportunities.

• Develop stronger local partnerships with school districts and postsecondary institutions.

• Provide experiential learning and work experiences though summer, part–time and temporary work experience.

• Explore use of customized employment techniques and other promising practices.

• Explore supports, including use of innovation and expansion funds, for a pilot project, to further enhance self–employment opportunities.

• Collaborate with the DDPC, OPWDD, the Office of P–12 Education on implementing better methods for youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities to obtain and maintain employment; continue collaborative planning with OPWDD on their Pathways to Employment 1915b/c waiver option.

• Provide benefits counseling at several key points in the VR process. • Train ACCES–VR counselors who serve as liaisons to mental health programs on OMH Individual Placement with Supports (IPS) model, implementation and provide on–going technical assistance.

• Inform training program providers and the postsecondary education sector about incentives for hiring people with disabilities to encourage those entities to directly assist individuals with disabilities in obtaining employment.

• Establish regional goals for achieving higher wage outcomes.

• Focus on postsecondary education as a means to increasing skilled employment.

• Reopen cases of those that are underemployed to provide additional vocational instruction, resume restructuring, other services that might be appropriate; and/or, refer the individual to the American Job Center for internships or training, to support career advancement.

• Maintain email list serve of employed consumers for sharing job notices. This allows the individual to pursue career advancement opportunities.

• Provide training to job placement providers on employment trends and business needs, including what constitutes a good resume for a particular field.

• Collaborate with the New York State Justice Center to develop innovative options around the purchase, use, and sharing of assistive technology to enable individuals to be successful in employment. The Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs administers the Technology Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities (TRAID) program.

Priority 2: Increase services to target populations: students with disabilities; and underserved and underserved groups.

Goals for this priority include: the service rate for identified unserved and underserved populations will be commensurate with the NYS population rates for those populations based on race, ethnicity and disability; and, students with disabilities will receive preemployment transition services to establish a solid foundation upon which to build their career path. Strategies:

• Enhance marketing. In 2015, ACCES–VR contracted to have advertising on buses, trains, subway stations, and bus shelters. The primary audience was unserved/underserved individuals with disabilities. • Direct the work of the TAYS Unit to increase awareness in the postsecondary community of vocational rehabilitation services. Staff will offer on–site orientations at numerous college campuses throughout the state, meet with parent/student groups during the colleges' summer orientations, and, attend college career events.

• Add service options that will more specifically address the needs of those on the Autism spectrum.

• Engage the Independent Living Centers (ILCs) in a coordinated effort to include independent living service, such as peer mentoring and other offerings available at local ILCs that support a person in sustain their VR efforts as part of the VR process and IPE.

• Work directly with schools to provide pre–employment transition services for students with disabilities.

• Increase the coordination and participation of VR consumers in adult education and Literacy Zone services, as well as increase the provision of services to English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

Priority 3: Improve the quality of ACCES–VR services.

Goals for this priority include: increase to 90% the number of respondents expressing satisfaction on key questions contained in VR's consumer satisfaction surveys; and, through use of established contract performance measures for service providers, 80% of providers will meet or exceed the standard. Strategies:

• Revitalize waiting areas. Individuals will have the opportunity to view a welcome video that provides a brief overview of services and success stories. Brochures, information packets, and job leads will be available.

• Conduct case record reviews both internally and externally to monitor service provision. The review results are assessed by Central Administration and District Offices. Training and technical assistance is then designed and provided to address any deficits noted.

• Expand the Training and Assistance Group. In 2013, ACCES–VR convened a team of people from across units to work together to assess staff needs (using review results and staff surveys) and meet those needs through a variety of methods, including consistent training and technical assistance guidance memos.

• Act upon recommendations gathered through the Information Collection Project. ACCES–VR recently entered into an MOU with SUNY Potsdam, Institute of Applied Research (PIAR) for an Information Collection Project. The contract was developed in response to SRC and ACCES–VR determination that traditional paper consumer satisfaction surveys were not providing the breadth of information needed for good assessment. The 5–year contract allows for a combination of in–person town forums, scripted telephone surveys, and paper surveys. The findings from these activities will assist ACCES–VR with assessing the needs of individuals with disabilities, providers and business in future years.

• Provide on–going training for supervisors. Supervisors are brought to a central location at least biannually for a three–day training. The trainings focus on the multiple roles of a supervisor and provide updates on policy, data collection and more to ensure good communication.

• Improve the quality of supported employment services by training ACCES–VR and supported employment providers on updated supported employment policy, procedures and guidelines to ensure the integrity and effectiveness of the supported employment program.

• Provide a Management Community of Practice. ACCES–VR is collaborating with Cornell University, Employment Disability Institute for the provision of a community of practice training project for management level staff.

• Identify additional mechanisms that allow for continuous feedback from consumers, business, and providers.

Priority 4: Increase the percentage of individuals who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential.

Goals for this priority include: increase partnerships with postsecondary education institutions; assess and track the percentage of individuals who obtain skills gain; and, increase the percentage of individuals who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential.

Strategies:

• Attend community events to share information. One example is attendance at a Guidance Expo. This event brings together hundreds of guidance counselors and is an opportunity for ACCES–VR staff to directly communicate with individuals that are assisting students in making career decision and selecting post school options.

• Collaborate with postsecondary institutions to increase focus on assistive technology. Students are encouraged to participate in an evaluation of assistive technology needs to determine how/what assistive technology could be of value to them.

• Develop a plan of action to implement recommendations resulting for the NYS Board of Regents Advisory Council on Postsecondary Education for Students with Disabilities.

Priority 5: Effectively serve businesses.

Goals for this priority include: provide training on accommodations and financial incentives to a minimum of 100 businesses per year; and, bring together regional businesses and providers for events or activities to further enhance linkages around hiring individuals with disabilities.

Strategies:

• Revise and enhance the statewide and regional business plans to reflect the NYS workforce vision and goals as outlined in the Combined State Plan.

• Provide training to business on topics as requested but specifically including accommodations and financial incentives.

• Partner with Statewide leaders from all communities: business, government, and, provider to acknowledge and expand the role of individuals with disabilities in the workforce. The celebrations, throughout October, to acknowledge National Disability Employment Awareness month are the culmination of year–long activities and projects.

• Target advertising to the business community to increase awareness of ACCES–VR services and as a link to skilled workers.

• Participate in business–sponsored activities, including having memberships with the Chambers of Commerce throughout the state.

• Actively participate on the Workforce Development Board in each local region.

## 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.

ACCES–VR currently provides assistive technology services and devices as needed by an individual in pursuit of IPE goals at each stage of the rehabilitation process. Staff will receive training on new technologies and new options that may evolve. The MOU with the Justice Center for People with Special Needs will make available additional options. Part of the MOU focuses on availability of devices through a loan program. This is expected to enhance statewide access to 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.

ACCES–VR is enhancing its marketing and communication efforts. Strategies to reach individuals who are minorities, including those with most significant disabilities, and those that are underserved or unserved is a priority. Research is occurring on what kind of information, in what format, and in what locations, we should target to reach the identified audiences. One example is discussion with a radio station in NYC that broadcasts in Spanish.

## 4. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO IMPROVE AND EXPAND VR SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE COORDINATION OF SERVICES DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF SUCH STUDENTS FROM SCHOOL TO POSTSECONDARY LIFE (INCLUDING THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES).

In multiple sections within the ACCES–VR portion of this Plan, details on current and planned initiatives are stated that address the intent of ACCES–VR to expand and improve services for students with disabilities, including coordinating services designed to facilitate the transition of such students from school to postsecondary life. Of particular note is that ACCES–VR has a full Unit of 17 dedicated staff for Transition Services and a contract via which 32 additional (non–staff) individuals are supported to be throughout the state providing linkages and information for this population. Those 49 individuals are in addition to counselors and counselor assistants that work directly with transition students and youth, and in addition to the staff and services provided by the Office of Special Education and local education agencies. There are ongoing discussions with the colleges and universities and other system stakeholders to identify specific programs and services (including opportunities for internships) that would improve and facilitate transition from school to postsecondary life. Multiple projects are in development and under consideration.

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

ACCES–VR works very closely with its community rehabilitation programs and networks. Regular meetings are held at local offices and on a statewide basis. The contract process includes establishment of expectations and deliverables. ACCES–VR provides monitoring and technical assistance to ensure continuous improvement. The contract process allows new entities to apply to become providers of service.

## 6. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE STATE WITH RESPECT TO THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA.

ACCES–VR has identified strategies to meet goals and priorities that are linked directly to the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA. The detailed list is provided in O 1.

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

ACCES–VR is working closely with Core Partners to fully implement the commitments as articulated in the Combined State Plan. Cross agency training is being planned, and there is intent by ACCES–VR to provide any disability–specific follow up training that might be requested by the statewide workforce development system with regard to serving and assisting individuals with disabilities.

## 8. HOW THE AGENCY'S STRATEGIES WILL BE USED TO:

### A. ACHIEVE GOALS AND PRIORITIES BY THE STATE, CONSISTENT WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT;

The strategies were designed to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities within the framework of an expectation that the program meet WIOA performance expectations. The priorities and goals are consistent with the needs identified through the comprehensive needs assessment.

### B. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES; AND

ACCES–VR uses innovation and expansion funding to support activities and initiatives of the State Rehabilitation Council.

### 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.

ACCES–VR continuously seeks to remove barriers and to ensure that all individuals with disabilities are able to participate fully. One example has been increased staff training around setting up Trial Work Experiences. The intent is to ensure individuals with most significant disabilities have opportunity for more than one type of work try out.

## 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.

Please note, the information below reflects progress to close–out the indicators that are being replaced by WIOA common performance measures. Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended in 1998, requires the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to evaluate State vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies based on their performance on evaluation standards and indicators. Performance on these standards is used to determine whether a State VR agency is complying substantially with the provisions of its State Plan.

ACCES–VR, together with the SRC, had established additional measures related to the priorities, goals, strategies and performance measures that are consistent with Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act and with regulations found in 34 CFR 361. The baseline and target performance measures for each indicator below was initially established using Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2010 data, with the expectation that ACCES–VR would start to report the results after FFY 2012, the year in which the agency could gather a full year of complete data. The following evaluative results are based on the most recent data available on the federal performance indicators and the priorities and goals.

RSA Performance Indicator 1.1: The number of individuals exiting the VR program who have achieved an employment outcome must equal or exceed performance in the previous period.

Baseline FFY 2010: 12,092 individuals achieved an employment outcome

Performance FFY 2014: 12,059 individuals achieved an employment outcome

Performance FFY 2015: 11,284 individuals achieved an employment outcome

Performance Target: ACCES–VR will exceed the final FFY 2010 result for RSA Performance Indicator 1.1.

Results: The number of individuals exiting the VR program with an employment outcome does not meet the performance standard. The employment outcome numbers are influenced by many factors, including the overall economic climate. A key factor that may explain the current lower number is the number of youth in the ACCES–VR caseload population that are preparing for work, rather than being immediately ready to enter employment.

Priority 1: Increase the employment rate and earnings for individuals with disabilities served by ACCES–VR. Goal 1.1: Increase the percentage of individuals exiting the VR program after receiving services that achieve an employment outcome and exceed the national standard of 55.8 percent.

RSA Performance Indicator 1.2: At least 55.8 percent of all cases closed after receiving VR services, will have achieved an employment outcome. Baseline FFY 2010: 45.9 percent achieved an employment outcome Performance FFY 2014: 58.6 percent achieved an employment outcome

Performance FFY 2015: 59.4 percent achieved an employment outcome Performance Target: Meet or exceed the RSA performance standard of 55.8 percent Results: Although there was a decrease in the number of individuals that achieved employment after receiving VR services, the percent that achieved employment increased slightly from FFY 2014 to FFY 2015. The 59.4 percent of individuals who obtained employment exceeds RSA's performance standard.

ACCES–VR established the following additional goals that did not meet the national standard in FFY 2010: Youth: Increase the percentage of youth with disabilities (applicants prior to age 22) exiting the VR program after receiving services that achieve an employment outcome and exceed the national standard of 55.8 percent. The baseline in FFY 2010 was 42.5%. In FFY 2015, 60.6 percent of youth achieved employment after receiving VR services, which exceeds the national standard.

Supported Employment: Increase the percentage of individuals that achieve an employment outcome after receiving supported employment services. The baseline in FFY 2010 was 45.2 percent. This has increased over the years. In FFY 2015, 72.2 percent achieved an employment outcome, which exceeds the RSA performance standard of 55.8 percent.

Social Security Participants: Increase the percentage of individuals that are recipients of Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) or SSI/SSDI and achieve an employment outcome that exceeds the national standard of 55.8 percent. The baseline in FFY 2010 was 39.4 percent.

In FFY 2015, 52.6 percent achieved an employment outcome, which is just below RSA's performance standard.

RSA Performance Indicator 1.4: The percentage of individuals who have significant disabilities that achieve an employment outcome with earnings of at least minimum wage will be 62.4 percent or greater.

Baseline FFY 2010: 98.2 percent earned at least minimum wage Performance FFY 2014: 98.6 percent earned at least minimum wage Performance FFY 2015: 98.9 percent earned at least minimum wage Performance Target: Meet or exceed the RSA performance standard of 62.4 percent

Results: ACCES–VR has exceeded the RSA performance standard each year since the baseline data was established. Individuals are considered to have a significant disability when they have a physical or mental impairment which seriously limits one or two functional capacities, such as mobility, communication, self–care, self–direction, interpersonal skills, cognition, work tolerance, or work skills, and whose vocational rehabilitation will require multiple supported employment services over an extended period of time. ACCES–VR assisted a substantially greater percentage of individuals with significant disabilities to achieve competitive employment compared with to the national standard.

In FFY 2015, 98.9 percent of individuals with significant disabilities that obtained employment through ACCES–VR earned at least minimum wage.

Goal 1.2: Improve earnings of individuals achieving an employment outcome by increasing the percentage that earn at least 200 percent of the federal poverty level at closure.

Baseline FFY 2010: 23 percent (2,710 individuals) of all individuals achieving an employment outcome earned above 200 percent of the federal poverty level ($416/week)

Performance FFY 2014: 22 percent (2,578 individuals) of all individuals achieving an employment outcome earned above 200 percent of the federal poverty level ($442/week)

Performance FFY 2015: 23 percent (2,576) of all individuals achieving an employment outcome earned above 200 percent of the federal poverty level ($449/week)

Performance Target: 28 percent of all individuals achieving an employment outcome will earn above 200 percent of the federal poverty level

Results: In FFY 2015, the percentage of individuals that earned at least 200 percent of the federal poverty level was 23 percent, the same as in 2010, and a very slight increase from 2014.

Related Measures: RSA Performance Indicator 1.3: The percentage of individuals that achieve an employment outcome with earnings equivalent to at least minimum wage will be 72.6 percent or greater. Baseline FFY 2010: 95.4 percent of individuals achieved this employment outcome

Performance FFY 2014: 96.9 percent of individuals achieved this employment outcome

Performance FFY 2015: 97.6 percent of individuals achieved this employment outcome

Performance Target: 97.5 percent of individuals will achieve this employment outcome

Results: ACCES–VR's performance on this measure exceeds the RSA performance measure, and in 2015 also met the targeted 97.5 percent. RSA Performance Indicator 1.6: Increase the percentage of individuals that report earned income as the largest single source of economic support at the time they exit the VR program; the national standard is 53 percent or greater.

Baseline FFY 2010: 59.8 percent

Performance FFY 2014: 59.6 percent; exceeds the RSA performance standard

Performance FFY 2015: 57.9 percent; exceeds the RSA performance standard Performance Target: 64.8 percent

Results: ACCES–VR's performance on this measure exceeds the RSA performance measure. ACCES–VR strives to increase the number of individuals who report earned income as the largest single source of economic support at the time they exit the VR program.

Goal 1.3: Increase the average hourly earnings of individuals employed after participating in postsecondary training when compared to the average hourly earnings of all employed individuals in the State and approach the national benchmark ratio of .52 (variation on RSA Performance Indicator 1.5 – see Related Measures below).

Baseline FFY 2010: Average wage of individuals with postsecondary training is $11.42 per hour; .40 of the State Average Wage

Performance FFY 2014: Average wage of individuals with postsecondary training is $12.56 per hour; .41 of the State Average Wage

Performance FFY 2015: Average wage of individuals with postsecondary training is $12.65; .40 of the State Average Wage Performance Target: The long term target is to meet the national benchmark of .52. The short term target is to increase the level of earnings closer to the national benchmark of .52

Results: Performance on this indicator has improved slightly. In NYS the average hourly wage is $31.91. In FFY 2015 the average wage for all ACCES–VR consumers was $11.47. As would be expected, individuals who participate in postsecondary training are earning higher wages ($12.65) on average when compared to all ACCES–VR participants. Although the average wage for ACCES–VR consumers who participate in postsecondary training has improved slightly each year since the baseline FFY 2010 was established, these individuals are still securing jobs, on average, at wages below the .52 threshold established by RSA. ACCES–VR will continue to use the strategy of supporting higher education and workforce credentials as a means to higher wage employment and careers by developing strategies to address postsecondary work experiences. ACCES–VR increased its level of funding for postsecondary training programs, and increased the economic need threshold to 500 percent of federal poverty level. These increases allow ACCES–VR to contribute more money to the costs of training program (lessening the burden on consumers) and allow more individuals to meet economic need for services dependent on economic need, such as college training, that can lead to increased earnings. Related Measures: RSA Performance Indicator 1.5: Average hourly earnings of individuals employed after receiving VR services will be equivalent to at least the minimum wage as a ratio to the State's average hourly earnings for all individuals in NYS who are employed; ratio equals .52 or more.

Baseline FFY 2010: The average VR wage of $10.70 per hour is .37 of the State Average Wage ($28.84).

Performance FFY 2014: The average VR wage of $11.10 per hour is .35 of the State Average Wage ($31.35).

Performance FFY 2015: The average VR wage of $11.47 per hour is .36 of the State Average Wage ($31.91). Performance Target: $16.59 per hour would equal .52 of the State Average Wage. Results: Although the FFY 2015 average wage increased from the FFY 2010 baseline of $10.70 to $11.47, the average VR wage in FFY 2015 would need to be $16.59 in order for NYS to meet the standard for this indicator. ACCES–VR results for this standard remain below the national benchmark. This ratio reflects the relationship of hourly wages earned by individuals at the time of closure (typically 90 days after attaining employment) to the average hourly wage for all workers in the State. The benchmark ratio of .52 is set at just above half of the overall State hourly wage. There are many structural forces in the NYS economy that make it challenging for individuals participating in VR to earn a livable wage. Many of the individuals served by ACCES–VR, given the economic need criteria for many VR services, are low–income individuals. A high percentage of individuals served by the VR program are determined to have significant and most significant disabilities. The wide gap in wage distribution in NYS also makes this performance measure particularly problematic for low–income individuals participating in VR services. The wage gap in NYS is influenced or skewed by the earnings in Manhattan, particularly on Wall Street. ACCES–VR remains committed to improving its performance on this indicator and assisting VR participants in obtaining higher wage outcomes.

Priority 2: Increase services to unserved and underserved groups.

Goal 2.1: The service rate for identified unserved and underserved populations will be commensurate with the NYS population rates for those populations based on race, ethnicity and

disability. RSA Performance Indicator 2.1: The ratio of the percent of individuals with a minority background to the percent of individuals without a minority background exiting the program that received VR services; RSA performance standard > or = .80.

Baseline FFY 2010: .87; exceeds the standard Performance FFY 2014: .85; exceeds the standard

Performance FFY 2015: .82; exceeds the standard Performance Target: Continue to meet or exceed the RSA performance standard. Results: ACCES–VR has continually exceeded RSA's performance standard of >=.80.

Priority 3: Improve the quality of ACCES–VR services.

Goal 3.1: Consumer satisfaction with ACCES–VR services will increase annually toward the target of 90 percent of respondents expressing satisfaction on key questions contained in ACCES–VR consumer satisfaction surveys.

Baseline FFY 2010: 76 percent indicated satisfaction with ACCES–VR services

Performance FFY 2012: 76 percent indicated satisfaction with ACCES–VR services

Performance FFY 2013: 86 percent indicated satisfaction with ACCES–VR services

Performance FFY 2014: not available

Performance FFY 2015: 82 percent indicated satisfaction with ACCES–VR services Performance Target: Meet or exceed 90 percent of respondents to consumer satisfaction surveys expressing satisfaction with VR services. Results: In FFY 2014, ACCES–VR contracted with the Potsdam Institute for Applied Research (PIAR) at SUNY Potsdam to conduct a survey of 5,105 youth ages 18–22 years in a closed status to inquire about their VR services and employment, but not specifically about their satisfaction with VR services. The survey conducted by PIAR in FFY 2015 was focused on individuals who attained an employment outcome at the time of exit from the ACCES–VR program. The survey purpose was to look at job retention and potential need for additional services. Those that were working at the time of the survey had a satisfaction rate of 88%, whereas those no longer working had a satisfaction rate of 76%.

Goal 3.2: Increase collaboration with community partners, particularly the State agency partners who share responsibility for achieving employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Baseline 2010: ACCES–VR is in the process of developing a Memorandum of Understanding with the NYS Department of Labor (DOL) for a cooperative effort through its Disability Employment Initiative to improve service options and results for individuals with disabilities served through the One–Stop centers. Performance Target: NYS DOL and ACCES–VR will implement promising practices that improve service results for individuals with disabilities. Results: ACCES–VR and Office of Special Education worked closely the NYS DOL to qualify as a demonstration site for youth skills training that could lead to increased youth employment. The U.S. DOL Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) and the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) selected NYS as one of the partners to have staff participate in four free full–day trainings in the core competencies that professionals need to have when working with youth. The training includes content–rich materials, resources and pre/post training technical assistance from experts in youth and workforce development, and disability information. New York State received an

award from the U.S. Department of Education to establish and operate model demonstration projects designed to improve the education and employment outcomes of child Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients and their families. The Promoting the Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income (PROMISE) initiative is intended to improve the provision and coordination of services for these children and their families. The services will help child recipients achieve better outcomes, including graduating from high school ready for college and a career, completing postsecondary education and job training, and obtaining competitive employment in an integrated setting. ACCES–VR is an active partner in this initiative and joins other NYS agencies, non–profit organizations and Cornell University to improve the education and employment outcomes for children with disabilities receiving SSI in Western New York, Capital Region and New York City. ACCES–VR is a partner in the NYS Partnerships in Employment Systems Change, a five year project to develop and sustain activities that improve opportunities for integrated, competitive employment. ACCES–VR is also an active partner collaborating with the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities and NYS DOL to ensure access to integrated employment opportunities.

Goal 3.3: Increase collaboration with businesses that may lead to employment outcomes.

Baseline 2011: The ACCES–VR Business Relations Unit is continuing to establish business relationships and develop business accounts. Collaborative projects with the National Employment Team (NET) and other national, State and regional resources, including local One–Stops that have yielded quality employment outcomes. Performance Target: ACCES–VR will continue to develop collaborative business relationships to increase employment outcomes. Results: ACCES–VR continues to develop and maintain several business partnerships at the federal, State, and regional levels, such as Net partnerships with United Health Group, with MandT Bank, Lowe's, Walgreens, JLodge, etc., and Ernst and Young that provides access to job opportunities at several retailers including Macy's, CVS Caremark, Best Buy, and TJX Companies, Inc. (includes TJ Maxx, Marshalls, HomeGoods, and more). Regionally, ACCES–VR's Manhattan District Office enhanced the liaison relationship with City University of New York (CUNY) college offices to facilitate the preparation and referral of professional–level applicants to area businesses. The ACCES–VR District Offices located in the Central New York region have partnered with the National Disability Institute and the NYS Credit Union Association to facilitate training and employment for consumers with middle to professional level skills. Work continues with the Long Island Working Partnership members (a consortium of business and service provider agencies) to enhance important initiatives for the 2013–2014 Summer Internship Program for high school graduates. ACCES–VR is in the process of branding itself to be more easily recognizable, and has started a marketing campaign with signage on public transportation in key metropolitan areas of the State, including NYC and Buffalo. As part of its Strategic Planning process, ACCES–VR surveyed a sampling of businesses from across the state to ascertain their current knowledge of ACCES–VR. The results of this survey helped direct the development of more compelling marketing and outreach materials targeted for business, including brochures on Hiring Good People is Good Business, Worker Retention Services, On the Job Training Program and Work Try–Out Program. This past year ACCES–VR participated in a joint presentation with NYS Department of Labor to discuss financial incentives credits available to business. ACCES–VR is also working to identify federal contractors/subcontractors, and to obtain the most current information regarding the changes in the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) rules, which advance the recruitment of qualified candidates with disabilities. ACCES–VR ensures that key staffs across the state are prepared to provide customized training to the business community on the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities, through their participation in the American Disabilities Act (ADA) Trainer Network. This no–cost service is a valuable resource to businesses as they strive to diversify their workforces with qualified candidates with disabilities.

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

Employment outcome numbers are influenced by many factors. One important factor that may partially explain the current lower number is the number of youth in the ACCES–VR caseload population that are preparing for work, rather than being immediately ready to enter employment. In addition to this fact, there are many structural forces in the NYS economy that make it challenging for individuals participating in VR to earn a livable wage. Many of the individuals served by ACCES–VR, given the economic need criteria for many VR services, are low–income individuals. A high percentage of individuals served by the VR program are determined to have significant and most significant disabilities. The wide gap in wage distribution in NYS also impacts the performance measures. For example, the wage gap in NYS is influenced or skewed by the earnings in Manhattan, particularly on Wall Street

## 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.

Supported Employment: Increase the percentage of individuals that achieve an employment outcome after receiving supported employment services. The baseline in FFY 2010 was 45.2 percent. This has increased over the years. In FFY 2015, 72.2 percent achieved an employment outcome, which exceeds the RSA performance standard of 55.8 percent.

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

Employment outcome numbers are influenced by many factors. One important factor that may partially explain the current lower number is the number of youth in the ACCES–VR caseload population that are preparing for work, rather than being immediately ready to enter employment. In addition to this fact, there are many structural forces in the NYS economy that make it challenging for individuals participating in VR to earn a livable wage. Many of the individuals served by ACCES–VR, given the economic need criteria for many VR services, are low–income individuals. A high percentage of individuals served by the VR program are determined to have significant and most significant disabilities. The wide gap in wage distribution in NYS also impacts the performance measures. For example, the wage gap in NYS is influenced or skewed by the earnings in Manhattan, particularly on Wall Street

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

ACCES–VR did not collect data for the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA in FFY 15 and will report this performance in the next State Plan.

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

ACCES–VR currently uses innovation and expansion funds for the State Rehabilitation Council activities and initiatives.

## 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.

Individuals with most significant disabilities who participate in ACCES–VR supported employment programs engage in assessment, job planning, counseling, job development, job placement, intensive job–site training and extended job retention services. Training is provided to direct service personnel, such as job coaches and job coaching supervisors. New York State's Chapter 515 of the Laws of 1992 on integrated employment, including supported employment, is implemented through a collaborative interagency process in New York State. ACCES–VR is responsible for competitive integrated employment, including intensive supported employment services, except for those services provided by the Office for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). State agencies responsible for the extended phase of supported employment work collaboratively with ACCES–VR to ensure the provision of comprehensive supported employment services in New York State. ACCES–VR contracts with providers for the provision of supported employment services through Core Rehabilitation Services (CRS) contracts. Services include orientation, assessment, work readiness, job placement, services to youth, supported employment intensive and extended, assistive technology/rehabilitation technology, driver rehabilitation and adjunct services.

The framework for supported employment is established in Chapter 515, CRS and the following policies and procedural documents:

• The October 1999 Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Supported Employment;

• CRS 2013 Program Guide which includes definitions, deliverables, staffing, rates, and performance indicators;

• Supported Employment Guidelines 2014; and,

• Guidance document with Office of Mental Health (OMH) and Personalized Recovery Oriented Services (PROS).

Supported employment providers, in cooperation with the State agencies, have the following responsibilities:

• Actively involve consumers, and their families, in assessment, planning and decision making throughout the service delivery process. • Consider the individual's and business's needs with the nature and frequency of provider's services and with the job placement itself;

• Through a consumer–centered decision–making process, pursue the goals detailed in the ACCES–VR Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) by using supported employment resources to the best advantage of the individual;

• Report as outlined in the supported employment guidelines on programmatic and fiscal details;

• Deliver supported employment services in accordance with federal and State standards and the contractual obligations for the service; and, • Strive continuously to evaluate the effectiveness of the services and make improvements to the services and the results.

Eligibility for Supported Employment

Supported employment services may be provided to any individual, including youth, who is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services and who meets the criteria stated below, as documented in the record of service:

1. Has a most significant disability, as defined in Section 205.00 of ACCES–VR Policy on Individuals with Significant Disabilities and Section 1310.00 Supported Employment Policy and Procedure;

2. Has not traditionally participated in competitive employment or whose employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a most significant disability;

3. Who, because of the nature and severity of their disability, need intensive supported employment services and extended services after the transition from support provided by ACCES–VR; and

4. Has had a comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs, including an evaluation of rehabilitation, career and job needs which identifies supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome and has:

a) The ability to engage in a vocational program leading to supported employment;

b) A need for ongoing support services in order to perform and sustain competitive work;

c) The ability to work in a supported employment setting; and

d) Met the criteria for extended service funding.

An Individual with a Most Significant Disability:

a) Has one or more physical or mental disabilities, determined by an assessment of eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs which constitute or results in a substantial impediment to employment; and

b) Has a severe physical or mental impairment which seriously limits three or more functional capacities (such as mobility, communication, self–care, self–direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) impacting an employment outcome; and

c) Whose vocational rehabilitation will require multiple vocational rehabilitation services over an extended period of time.

## Supported Employment Program Standards

The current guidelines (posted on the ACCES-VR website) incorporate language changes consistent with the Rehabilitation Act Amendments and corresponding federal regulations. The contracts are performance based, and include the language about the provision and quality of services, and provider incentives for individuals achieving certain milestones. These contracts will end early, in 2016, and the new contracts will contain language that corresponds to federal regulations under WIOA.

Youth with significant disabilities will be given every opportunity to receive the services necessary to ensure the maximum potential to achieve competitive integrated employment.

Supported employment outcomes will need to be in competitive integrated employment or, if in an integrated setting that is not competitive integrated employment, then in an integrated setting in which the individual is working on a short–term basis (less than six months) toward competitive integrated employment.

As ACCES–VR has a very large supported employment program, it expects to exceed the minimum 50 percent required allotment for the provision of supported employment, including the provision of extended services for a period of up to four years, to youth with the most significant disabilities. ACCES–VR will also provide a non–Federal share of at least 10 percent of the funds reserved for the provision of supported employment services to youth with the most significant disabilities.

## Supported Employment Program Reporting

Provider reporting requirements, including outcomes, monthly progress reports, career development in extended services, consumer satisfaction and quality outcome bonuses for providers due to increased wages and hours for consumers are clearly outlined in the web-posted program guide. The monthly reporting format requires the provider to assess the person's progress in relation to the IPE, indicating any assessment, job development/placement and intensive training services.

In addition, ACCES–VR conducts provider onsite reviews. The fiscal reporting requirements are consistent with New York's State Financial System (SFS).

## Scope of Supported Employment Services

Supported Employment services are comprised of on–going services, including customized employment, needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability in supported employment, that:

• Are provided singly or in combination to assist an eligible individual to achieve a competitive integrated employment;

• Are based on a determination of the needs of the individual and as specified in the IPE; and

• Are provided by ACCES–VR for up to 24 months, unless an extension necessary to achieve the employment outcome identified in the IPE.

Supported employment services provide all the services necessary to assist the person with:

• Learning specific work duties and performance standards;

• Learning formal and informal site–related expectations (e.g., time and attendance, dress, communication protocol);

• Acquiring site–appropriate work–related behaviors when dealing with supervisors and co–workers;

• Acquiring the sense of belonging to the work force;

• Understanding and using the benefits of employment (e.g., spending pay, using leave, participating in employee programs, working under direction from the supervisor, socializing with co–workers); and

• Developing a community support system that accommodates and positively reinforces the employee's role as a worker. The strategies are customized to the needs of the individual and business to assist the individual in meeting business expectations and improving interpersonal skills. Job coaches use any available community resources in meeting consumer needs as a means of assisting the individual in maintaining employment.

Supported Employment Data

ACCES–VR, the NYS Commission for the Blind (NYSCB), OPWDD, and the Office of Mental Health (OMH) track participation of individuals in their respective supported employment programs.

The New York State Employment Services System (NYESS) collects data on individuals with disabilities in supported employment programs. This interagency system integrates data from the respective State agencies coordinating supported employment.

The NYESS database includes:

• Pre–employment services, including screening and assessment, job development, job placement and advocacy;

• Extended services funding source;

• Average weekly work hours and wages paid; and

• Semi–annual review of individuals in extended employment for two years. Discussions are underway to identify if and how data collected by NYESS can be used to measure performance standards across the required core partners for the combined state plan.

## 2. THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES.

Extended services are provided after an individual has achieved job retention. Rehabilitation occurs when the individual is employed for a length of time adequate to ensure the stability of the employment outcome (a minimum of 90 days).

# CERTIFICATIONS

Name of designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate **NYSED, Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services**

Name of designated State agency **New York State Education Department**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Kevin G. Smith**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Deputy Commissioner, Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services**

**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 **New York State Education Department**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Kevin G. Smith**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Deputy Commissioner, Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services**

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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Applicant's Organization **New York State Education Department**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Kevin G. Smith**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Deputy Commissioner, Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services**

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 **Yes**

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;

NYSCB holds in–person public forums and statewide teleconferences in order to gather input into the development of both the New York State Combined State Plan and the VR Portion of the Combined State Plan. Notification of the in–person public forums and statewide teleconferences is distributed to all active consumers, in their preferred format. Other individuals and entities receiving the notice include: private agencies for individuals who are blind; Independent Living Centers; members of the NYSCB State Rehabilitation Council (SRC); and consumer advocacy group representatives.

The proposed VR Portion of the Combined State Plan and the notification announcement of the in person public forums and statewide teleconferences are also posted on NYSCB's web page. These documents are also available in alternative formats including: audio; Braille; electronic; and large print, upon request. Public forums are held in two locations in the State in conjunction with the American Council of the Blind (ACB) and the National Federation of the Blind (NFB), New York State Chapter conventions. The forums and teleconferences provide opportunities for statewide public participation. After the public comment period, the proposed plan and comments received at the forums and teleconferences are reviewed by the SRC. The SRC also provides input into the goals and strategies set by the State Plan during one of their quarterly meetings.

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) met on September 17, 2015 to review and provide input into the 2016 Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Supported Employment Services. Members of the SRC received copies of the proposed State Plan prior to and during that meeting. NYSCB did not receive written comments from the SRC, comments reflected below are NYSCB's summary of concerns that SRC members orally expresses at the September 17th meeting.

## State Rehabilitation Council Goals and Objectives

The SRC and NYSCB comprise a collaborative partnership. SRC members include current and former participants in the NYSCB vocational rehabilitation program, representation from: SUNY/CUNY, Native American VR Programs, the National Federation of the Blind, Client Assistance Program, Independent Living Centers, parents of children with disabilities, and representatives from business, industry and labor. The SRC assists NYSCB in developing and reviewing the State Plan, including NYSCB's goals and strategies. The SRC provides policy advice and reviews consumer needs and satisfaction with services.

**1. Comment:** In Attachment 4.8(b) Coordination with Education Officials, the SRC would like to see an increase in the emphasis on Braille and large print training for transition age youth, to prepare for VR job placement and post–secondary services.

**2. Comment:** In Attachment 4.8(b) Coordination with Education Officials, the SRC would like to see an increased emphasis on the accountability of schools (K–12 and Higher Education) to provide Assistive Technology (AT) training and better collaboration on the part of NYSCB and schools for workforce preparedness.

**3. Comment:** In Attachment 4.8(b) Coordination with Education Officials, language should indicate that the IEP developed can include training on adaptive equipment and assistive technology (hardware/software) to those school staff, care providers and parents/guardians to use in a capacity outside of school.

**4. Comment:** In Attachment 4.8(b) Coordination with Education Officials, the SRC would like to see stronger language supporting "Acceptability of Use" in the student's IEP when the student uses Assistive Technology and to increase the partnership within the schools on behalf of NYSCB.

**5. Comment:** In Attachment 4.10 Comprehensive System of Personnel Development, NYSCB should indicate the understanding of the importance of encouraging counselors to attend conferences held by blindness support agencies and state plan public forums in order to obtain the consumer perspective.

**6. Comment:** In Attachment 4.10 Comprehensive System of Personnel Development, increase the training opportunities for those counselors working with consumers with multiple disabilities and supported employment candidates, to encourage and impress the importance of using a multi–disciplinary team approach on these cases.

**7. Comment:** In Attachment 4.11(d) State's Strategies, under Goal 3, add a strategy to provide targeted, personalized outreach to eye care professionals and health care offices including participation in statewide and regional events they hold.

**8. Comment:** In Attachment 4.11(d) State's Strategies, under Goal 3, add a strategy for promoting awareness by soliciting and compiling success stories to include on webpages or handouts.

**9. Comment:** In Attachment 4.11(d) State's Strategies, where collaboration with partners is indicated in a goal or strategy, include the titles of the four core partners.

**10. Comment:** Add the following strategies in Attachment 4.11(d) State's Strategies:

a. Address the needs of consumers with multiple disabilities, including specialists and mental health concerns on a case–by–case basis.

b. Include families in the evaluation, planning of and training sessions for school and home based services.

c. Provide ongoing and continued training for ATC providers and consider having a baseline competency certification for approved providers.

d. Request that Expanded Core Curriculum further enhances skill sets not currently contained within the core curriculum.

e. Develop Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE's) that are flexible and allow the revision of goals and services for youth, understanding the process is to learn and grow and determine the best outcomes.

f. Work to increase skill level of consumers, specifically in the areas of math and English prior to post–secondary engagement.

g. Continue and strengthen collaboration with ACCES–VR.

**11. Comment:** In Attachment 4.11(d) State's Strategies, under Goal 4, add strategies 5, 6 and 7:

a. Work with private agencies to better utilize work incentives, employment tax credits and ticket to work.

b. Invest in the creation of a subsection of outreach within each district office that is responsible for promoting NYSCB to community employers.

c. Invest in the provision of Specialized Support Providers to deaf–blind job seekers.

**12. Comment:** In Attachment 4.11(e)(2) Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Identified Goals and Priorities and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion, report more details on the use of the HKNC iCanConnect equipment distribution program for consumers who are deaf–blind as well as identify the close collaboration and documentation of referrals for this program, using community resources for equipment procurement prior to the use of VR dollars.

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

**1. Comment:** In Attachment 4.8(b) Coordination with Education Officials, the SRC would like to see an increase in the emphasis on Braille and large print training for transition age youth, to prepare for VR job placement and post-secondary services.

**Response:** The New York State Education Department (SED) is responsible for all elementary, middle and secondary school educational programs in New York State. SED is required to provide an educational program for each student based upon the needs, ages and interests of the student.

NYSCB staff work to empower students and parents by providing information and teaching them to advocate for an appropriate educational program that meets the child's needs. NYSCB counselors work closely with Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI) to encourage the training of Braille when it is appropriate for the student.

**2. Comment:** In Attachment 4.8(b) Coordination with Education Officials, the SRC would like to see an increased emphasis on the accountability of schools (K-12 and Higher Education) to provide Assistive Technology (AT) training and better collaboration on the part of NYSCB and schools for workforce preparedness.

**Response:** NYSCB counselors work closely with school staff and private agencies for individuals who are blind to coordinate work experience opportunities. In many cases the NYSCB counselor develops the work experience and the school assumes the responsibility for job coaching and transportation. It is expected that NYSCB staff will increase involvement with school staff as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires state vocational rehabilitation agencies to make "pre-employment transition services" available to all students with disabilities and coordinate those services with transition services provided under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

**3. Comment:** In Attachment 4.8(b) Coordination with Education Officials, language should indicate that the IEP developed can include training on adaptive equipment and assistive technology (hardware/software) to those school staff, care providers and parents/guardians to use in a capacity outside of school.

**Response:** See above response for Comment 1.

**4. Comment:** In Attachment 4.8(b) Coordination with Education Officials, the SRC would like to see stronger language supporting "Acceptability of Use" in the student's IEP when the student uses Assistive Technology and to increase the partnership within the schools on behalf of NYSCB.

**Response:** See above response for Comment 1.

**5. Comment:** In Attachment 4.10 Comprehensive System of Personnel Development, NYSCB should indicate the understanding of the importance of encouraging counselors to attend conferences held by blindness support agencies and state plan public forums in order to obtain the consumer perspective.

**Response:** NYSCB has added language to Attachment 4.10 in response to the SRC's recommendation.

**6. Comment:** In Attachment 4.10 Comprehensive System of Personnel Development, increase the training opportunities for those counselors working with consumers with multiple disabilities and supported employment candidates, to encourage and impress the importance of using a multi-disciplinary team approach on these cases.

**Response:** NYSCB has added language to Attachment 4.10 in response to the SRC's recommendation.

**7. Comment:** In Attachment 4.11(d) State's Strategies, under Goal 3, add a strategy to provide targeted, personalized outreach to eye care professionals and health care offices including participation in statewide and regional events they hold.

**Response:** NYSCB has added language to Strategy 7 under Goal 3 to incorporate the personalized outreach and inclusion of regional in addition to statewide events.

**8. Comment:** In Attachment 4.11(d) State's Strategies, under Goal 3, add a strategy for promoting awareness by soliciting and compiling success stories to include on webpages or handouts.

**Response:** NYSCB has added a new strategy to address this recommendation.

**9. Comment:** In Attachment 4.11(d) State's Strategies, where collaboration with partners is indicated in a goal or strategy, include the titles of the four core partners.

**Response:** NYSCB has added the term "four core partners" in the appropriate strategies.

**10. Comment:** Add the following strategies in Attachment 4.11(d) State's Strategies:

a. Address the needs of consumers with multiple disabilities, including specialists and mental health concerns on a case-by-case basis.

b. Include families in the evaluation, planning of and training sessions for school and home based services.

c. Provide ongoing and continued training for ATC providers and consider having a baseline competency certification for approved providers.

d. Request that Expanded Core Curriculum further enhances skill sets not currently contained within the core curriculum.

e. Develop Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE's) that are flexible and allow the revision of goals and services for youth, understanding the process is to learn and grow and determine the best outcomes.

f. Work to increase skill level of consumers, specifically in the areas of math and English prior to post-secondary engagement.

g. Continue and strengthen collaboration with ACCES-VR.

**Response:**

a. NYSCB had added this strategy to Goal 1.

b. NYSCB had added this strategy to Goal 1.

c. NYSCB had added this strategy to Goal 4.

d. NYSCB has not made this recommended change. The Expanded Core Curriculum is the body of knowledge and skills needed by students with vision loss in order to be successful in school and in post-graduate pursuits as a result of unique, disability specific needs. TVIs are generally the lead professional in assessment and goal development of Expanded Core Curriculum skills.

e. NYSCB has not made this recommended change. NYSCB's IPE policy indicates that the IPE can be reviewed as often as determined necessary, and must be reviewed annually. During the IPE review meeting, the consumer and counselor jointly review the entire plan and redevelop the IPE as needed.

f. NYSCB has not made this recommended change. The New York State Education Department is responsible for the education of students. However, NYSCB does provide college bound students with the opportunity to attend one of two pre-college programs where a condensed English course is offered via distance learning. NYSCB also will sponsor a college student for one semester of remediation courses when necessary for the student to effectively participate in a college program.

g. NYSCB had included this strategy and has included mention of collaboration with the four core partners in appropriate and applicable strategies.

**11. Comment:** In Attachment 4.11(d) State's Strategies, under Goal 4, add strategies 5, 6 and 7:

a. Work with private agencies to better utilize work incentives, employment tax credits and ticket to work.

b. Invest in the creation of a subsection of outreach within each district office that is responsible for promoting NYSCB to community employers.

c. Invest in the provision of Specialized Support Providers to deaf-blind job seekers.

**Response:**

a. NYSCB has made changes to the State Plan in response to this recommendation.

b. NYSCB has made changes to the State Plan in response to this recommendation.

c. NYSCB encourages all efforts to increase access to Support Service Providers (SSPs). NYSCB has reported in a prior state plan that District Office staff comfort with using and accessing the service of Support Service Providers as well as agencies employing interpreters with tactile signing skills has increased. NYSCB increased the number of deaf- blind coordinators to include one in both upstate and down state locations.

**12. Comment:** In Attachment 4.11(e)(2) Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Identified Goals and Priorities and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion, report more details on the use of the HKNC iCanConnect equipment distribution program for consumers who are deaf-blind as well as identify the close collaboration and documentation of referrals for this program, using community resources for equipment procurement prior to the use of VR dollars.

**Response:** NYSCB understands the importance of capturing these referrals and subsequent results and will work to gather this information in the future. However, as this was not a strategy in the FY 15 State Plan, reporting on this is not included in this State Plan.

### 3. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S EXPLANATIONS FOR REJECTING ANY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT OR RECOMMENDATIONS.

Responses in a. 2 above address alternate options, where applicable.

## 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;

NYSCB has not requested a waiver of statewideness.

### 2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL APPROVE EACH PROPOSED SERVICE BEFORE IT IS PUT INTO EFFECT; AND

NYSCB has not requested a waiver of statewideness.

### 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.

NYSCB has not requested a waiver of statewideness.

## C. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH AGENCIES NOT CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES UNDER THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM.

Describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the servivces 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;

**Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR)**

CSAVR's National Employment Team (NET) provides a coordinated approach to serving business customers through business development, business consulting and corporate relations. By establishing partnerships with businesses, NYSCB can better match business staffing needs with

the skills and interests of consumers seeking employment, as well as help business to retain employees who experience disability. The NET provides:

- Businesses with direct access to qualified applicants and support services from the public VR system;
- VR consumers with access to national employment opportunities and career development resources; and
- VR agencies with a national system for sharing employment resources, best practices and business connections.

A designated point of contact serves as the primary contact for businesses seeking to partner with NYSCB. In the past year, through the NET partnership, NYSCB has shared information and job postings from federal and corporate partners with NYSCB staff and placement partners. In addition, NYSCB has distributed NET–shared information on a number of internship and skill camp opportunities for high school and college students.

An exciting development with the NET is the development of a Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP) through which businesses can identify qualified job candidates with disabilities. The portal that went live in August 2014 has provided consumers and counselors the opportunity to create individualized job searches, post resumes, and communicate with businesses through the system. Counselors are able to track individual job seekers efforts and success, and VR managers are also be able to see how the system is assisting with job placements. Businesses with national footprints including Key Bank, Walgreens, Pfizer, BJC Healthcare, ch2m, Raytheon, Quest Diagnostics and Wells Fargo, have begun to sign on, to use the TAP system to allocate employees for various positions. Priority is given to increasing the number of nationwide businesses participating in the use of the TAP to develop their workforce.

### Working with Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP)

NYSCB works closely with its community rehabilitation partners to create opportunities for successful careers for its consumers who are legally blind. This partnership is most visible in the annual Vision Rehabilitation Institute, which is planned jointly by NYSCB and CRP staff together for training and networking on issues related to workforce development.

NYSCB implemented a new 5–year vocational evaluation and placement contract which began January 1, 2015. Thirty–Four awardees were selected around the state. The awardees include agencies for individuals who are blind, agencies that provide services to individuals with disabilities, independent living centers, and individually owned businesses, affording consumers greater choice in selecting an appropriate provider. New guidelines for these services were developed and distributed and joint training sessions for NYSCB staff and providers were held in Spring 2015.

As the current Assistive Technology Services contract enters its fourth year, NYSCB will review its assessment and training protocols with providers so that the training provided is in line with current practice and continuing advances in assistive technology. NYSCB continues to provide assistive technology services and devices to individuals through six assistive technology center (ATC) contracts, covering seven areas. Consumers who are deaf blind can receive assessment and training at the adaptive technology center located at Helen Keller National Center in Sands Point. Consumers who are unable to access technology services at an assistive technology center may receive services through private vendors located throughout the state. All approved assistive

technology contractors and vendors and the services they offer are listed on the NYSCB website, visionloss.ny.gov.

Adaptive technology centers are required to have an array of equipment available for the consumer to review during the assessment process. Training is then customized to the consumer's need both in terms of hardware and software.

Two NYSCB loan closets also provide statewide access to loaner equipment while a consumer is awaiting delivery of equipment purchased for them for school or employment.

NYSCB continues to encourage development of vocational training programs that meet the requirements of business and will work with providers to create and approve curricula, especially in fields with jobs in demand where vocational training has not previously been available. NYSCB continues to support community rehabilitation providers in the development of pre–vocational programs beginning with youth at age ten and continuing through the transition years. These programs will provide both variety and increasing complexity so that youth are well prepared for post–secondary education and training.

### Partnership Plus

In Spring 2014, NYSCB entered into a Partnership Plus agreement with the Research Foundation for Mental Health. Partnership Plus assures that consumers with a Social Security Ticket to Work are able to obtain the services they need from NYSCB and that as they complete their services with NYSCB, they are given access to broad network of community providers from whom they can select to coordinate issues related to Social Security payments and other benefits and services.

### NYS PROMISE Initiative

NYSCB is on the steering committee for New York State PROMISE (Promoting the Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income), a research project developed to improve transition–to–adulthood outcomes for eligible youth who receive supplemental security income (SSI). This five–year initiative strives to increase access to services for eligible youth and their families to improve academic and employment outcomes, increase financial stability, and reduce reliance on SSI. The priority for the steering committee is to engage local and state partners in defining a broad strategic approach that starts to describe a system of person and family centered intervention. NYSCB actively participates in the steering committee to assess services that are provided to legally blind students through other New York State organizations.

### Meeting the Needs of Special Populations

NYSCB staff participates in educational webinars and networking events presented by the New York Deaf–Blind Collaborative. The Collaborative serves as a resource to deaf–blind youth, families and professionals, providing technical assistance (program development and support) to improve services for children and youth who are deaf–blind (ages 0–21).

NYSCB remains a member of the Interagency Council for Services to Persons who are Deaf, Deaf–Blind, or Hard of Hearing formed to coordinate the collection of information on population needs, engage in comprehensive strategic planning and prepare legislative and policy recommendations to the Governor and the State Legislature.

### Cooperation with National Industries for the Blind

NYSCB has designated the New York State Preferred Source Program for People who are Blind, a subsidiary of the National Industries for the Blind (NIB), as its designee for New York State Preferred–Source products. The creation of service sector jobs is highlighted as a priority in the Letter of Designation (LOD).

NYSCB encourages NIB associated agencies to provide needed work experience and skill training to enable individuals to seek competitive employment in an integrated setting.

### Cooperative Agreement with Recipients of Grants for Services to American Indians

NYSCB continues to act as a partner with the Seneca Nation of Indians Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (SNI TVR) Program. The partnership represents both parties' commitment to mutual cooperation, coordination and collaboration to increase vocational opportunities for members of the Seneca Nation of Indians who are legally blind. It establishes shared values, outlines how services will be coordinated and how members of both organizations will participate in cross–training activities. The collaborative relationship between the NYSCB Buffalo District Office and the SNI TVR Program has increased awareness, acceptance, and utilization of NYSCB services. NYSCB maintains a relationship in which referrals are handled in a timely and culturally sensitive manner. NYSCB staff conducts in–service training with agencies on the Cattaraugus Reservation, and works closely with staff of the Salamanca satellite of the Section 121 program and with the Area Office for the Aging on the reservation. NYSCB staff serves on the Section 121 Project Advisory Board, which meets monthly. NYSCB further supports the activities of the Section 121 Tribal VR Program through the delivery of state–funded services to children and elderly individuals, allowing them to better focus resources on tribal members seeking employment.

## 2. STATE PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

NYSCB equipment loan closets are a collaborative effort with the TRAID program managed by the New York State Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs. The loan closets provide short and long term equipment loans to NYSCB consumers who need equipment quickly while waiting to receive their purchased equipment or who need equipment for a specific time limited period. The Director of the NYS TRAID program is a member of the NYSCB State Rehabilitation Council and provides a valuable link between the TRAID programs and NYSCB.

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

NYSCB has not had an active working relationship with programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development and will look into opportunities for future collaboration to determine whether opportunities for New Yorkers who are blind are available.

## 4. NONEDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH; AND

Placement services continue to be a priority for NYSCB. A workgroup consisting of both NYSCB and provider staff developed new expectations and requirements for delivery of placement assistance which will enhance delivery of job seeking, job development, and other employment services.

NYSCB and a workgroup representing its major community rehabilitation partners continue to meet periodically throughout the year to discuss how to deliver quality programming to consumers. NYSCB and community provider staff continues to meet annually at the Vision Rehabilitation Institute to learn and discuss issues related to blindness and employment.

NYSCB works closely with the Chapter 515 programs to provide supported employment services to consumers including out-of-school youth. NYSCB district office staff have relationships with local social service agencies that provide essential services to out-of-school youth. This relationship provides an opportunity for referrals of individuals who are legally blind to NYSCB for vocational services and a reciprocal referral opportunity when out-of-school youth involved with NYSCB need the services provided through the state social service network. NYSCB will continue to work to develop relationships with other non-educational agencies serving out-of-school youth so that youth who are legally blind who are eligible for VR services can receive those services.

### 5. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS.

NYSCB accesses goods and services through the New York State Preferred Source Program (NYSPSP) for People Who Are Blind. NYSPSP for People who are Blind is a state-mandated initiative to create and sustain employment opportunities for New Yorkers who are blind or visually impaired. State and local agencies are required to purchase products and services that appear on the Preferred Source List through NYSPSP. These commodities are produced by affiliated nonprofit agencies in New York State that employ people who are blind or visually impaired. Agencies are required to purchase from the preferred source program if the products and services meet their needs and are comparatively priced.

## 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 NYSCB transition policy states that as a participant in the school’s transition planning process, NYSCB staff should contribute knowledge of rehabilitation services and outcomes, and identify the need for involvement by other state agencies, adult service programs, independent living centers, and community based services whose resources can assist students who are legally blind, their families, and education personnel during the transition process. It also states that NYSCB is responsible only for services written into the IEP by the Committee on Special Education with the direct knowledge and agreement of the NYSCB counselor. Financial responsibility for services, other than those which are mandated for school districts by federal or state statute or regulation, may be shared by other agencies, including NYSCB.

Cooperative efforts between the schools and NYSCB take place on a daily basis at the district office level. NYSCB Children’s Consultants provide schools with technical support, help parents learn to advocate effectively for their children, and purchase services to supplement those that school

districts are required to provide. As the student nears transition age, the NYSCB Children's Consultants' familiarity with particular students allows for a more effective transition to the vocational rehabilitation program. In cooperation with the school and community agencies, NYSCB vocational rehabilitation counselors encourage and help individuals to live more independently and develop meaningful employment plans.

During school years, NYSCB counselors can provide vocational guidance and counseling, resource information, and the preparation of post high school service plans. In addition, NYSCB counselors may be able to provide job related occupational tools, purchase low vision aids, assist in obtaining employment and facilitate summer employment.

NYSCB currently employs eight vocational rehabilitation counselors who work exclusively with transition age youth. The transition counselors provide educational guidance to NYSCB vocational rehabilitation counselors and encourage student and parent involvement in the transition process. Brochures describing NYSCB services have been widely distributed. The brochures are available in regular print, large print and Braille (upon request) and electronically. A publication called "Transition: A Guide for Parents and Students" has been developed and distributed to families and school personnel. NYSCB staff frequently visit transition career fairs and attend high school open houses and present information about NYSCB at college programs held on college campuses. In addition, staff participates in transition conferences and works closely with many staff from local school districts to reinforce the mission of VR, explain the role VR plays in the transition process, and discuss VR policies and procedures.

The NYSCB Transition Policy requires that the student's Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) be completed within 90 days of eligibility determination. Information on the IPE should be consistent with the content of the IEP, including vocational goals, educational and rehabilitation objectives, projected dates and responsibilities for participation in the transition process. NYSCB transition counselors have received training on this policy requirement and on the requirements of coordinating the IPE with the IEP. All NYSCB transition counselors have been actively developing employment plans for youth.

NYSCB Transition Counselors also work closely with New York State Education Department Transition Specialists who work at one of ten Regional Special Education Technical Assistance Support Centers (RSE-TASC) throughout the state. The RSE-TASC was established to act as a coordinated statewide network of special education technical assistance centers. RSE-TASC provides training targeted for parents, school districts and other agency providers on topics such as transition and the IEP, measurable post-secondary goals and work-based learning.

The New York Deaf-Blind Collaborative (NYDBC) is a five-year (10/1/2013 to 9/30/2018) federally funded project which provides technical assistance to improve services for children and youth who are deafblind (ages 0-21). The NYDBC is housed at Queens College in Flushing, New York and is funded by the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). NYSCB has agreed to collaborate on specific initiatives with NYDBC. Specifically, NYSCB assisted NYDBC in disseminating a state-wide needs assessment to increase the early identification of children who are deaf-blind in New York State. NYSCB staff also receive considerable technical assistance and training from NYDBC that will increase knowledge and skills in addressing the developmental and educational needs of children who are deaf-blind. NYSCB will also be involved in collaborative relationships with local, regional and statewide teams (as necessary) to support and improve systems to better serve children and youth.

## 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;

NYSCB staff is required to consult with school personnel to assist in recommending assessment practices and interpreting results in relation to employment. NYSCB counselors assist the school by identifying resources in the community that are familiar with blindness and that offer comprehensive assessments.

As a participant in the school's transition process, NYSCB staff is encouraged to contribute knowledge of rehabilitation services and outcomes, and to discuss post-school plans with the youth, family and school personnel.

### B. TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS;

The New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) works with students, families and school districts to facilitate the coordination of transition services for students who are legally blind and transitioning from school to the world of adult responsibilities and work. NYSCB recognizes that these efforts are critical to enable students to achieve maximum success in employment, post-secondary education, independent living, and community participation and is committed to being an active partner in the transition process. Making the transition from school to the adult world requires careful planning and a cooperative effort among families, school staff and community service providers. Planning helps students, their families and school districts design services to maximize the student's years in school to prepare for full inclusion and integration into society, employment, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency.

The NYSCB vocational rehabilitation (VR) program serves eligible transition aged students ages ten years and older by providing an array of services that give students the tools necessary to enable them to make informed decisions about their future goals. The youth and his or her parents work with the NYSCB counselor to set academic and career goals and put a plan in motion to meet those goals. This often includes gaining work experience before graduating from high school, as well as learning self-advocacy and independent living skills that help lead to future success.

The Transition Policy was recently revised. The policy provides information about the requirements, roles and responsibilities of VR in preparing students with disabilities for eventual employment. It also outlines the role of the vocational rehabilitation counselor as an active participant in the transition planning process. NYSCB's responsibilities lie primarily in providing technical consultation to schools and preparing students for permanent employment. NYSCB staff use their knowledge and experience to influence schools to provide services needed to prepare students to participate in postsecondary, employment and community living outcomes.

Some of the ways NYSCB works with school personnel in the transition process include:

1. Sharing knowledge of rehabilitation services and outcomes;

2. Identifying the need for involvement by other state agencies, adult service programs, independent living centers, and community based services whose resources can assist students who are legally blind, their families, and education personnel during the transition planning and service delivery process;

3. Providing information to assist in the selection of vocational goals that are consistent with labor market needs and integrated community living opportunities, including information about:

a. Work site accommodations;

b. Business expectations;

c. Labor trends and occupational outlooks;

d. Job entry qualifications;

e. Job placement analysis;

f. Work opportunities;

g. And other vocationally-related issues.

NYSCB supports the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) from the National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairments which includes skills that are not part of the core curriculum of reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies. The ECC is the body of knowledge and skills needed by students with vision loss in order to be successful in schools and in post-graduate pursuits as a result of unique, disability-related needs.

NYSCB Children's Consultants and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors will continue to emphasize to school district personnel, the importance of integrating the ECC into standard academic instruction and routine daily tasks, and encourage school staff to work closely with itinerant vision teachers and staff from local private agencies for individuals who are blind to provide the comprehensive services needed by students.

## C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, OF EACH AGENCY, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR DETERMINING STATE LEAD AGENCIES AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES;

NYSCB has revised the State Education Agency (SEA) Agreement. The Joint Agreement Between the P– 12 Office of Special Education and NYSCB provides the overview of purpose, objectives and joint responsibilities of each party in the provision of transition services for students who are legally blind.

Specifically, the new agreement:

- Delineates that the responsibilities of NYSCB include providing consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of youth from school to post–school activities;
- Delineates the responsibilities of each party with respect to transition planning in order to facilitate the development of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) for each student;
- Articulates the financial responsibilities of each agency invovled in the transition process;
- Includes the procedures for outreach to, and identification of, students with disabilities in need of transition services.

### Roles and Responsibilities

The joint agreement clarifies that school districts have the primary planning and programmatic responsibilities for the provision of transition services for their students in school. School districts are financially responsible for transition services mandated for school districts by federal or state statutes and regulations. NYSCB personnel currently consult with schools to see that adult services are part of the planning and decision–making process for students with disabilities in transition. NYSCB is responsible only for services written into the IEP by the Committee on Special Education with the direct knowledge and agreement of the NYSCB counselor. Transition services for youth are to be aligned with labor market needs, integrated community living opportunities, and coordinated with the adult world to facilitate employment, post–secondary education, and community living outcomes. NYSCB may be consulted for vocational evaluation interpretation, occupational opportunities, decision making with the Committee on Special Education, coordination with adult services, peer counseling, role modeling and job placement analysis. NYSCB will provide transition services if they are beyond the scope of the special education program and within the scope of VR services. Assessments for in–school youth may be purchased by NYSCB when existing assessments fail to provide adequate information for the counselor to determine NYSCB eligibility or to develop plans for NYSCB services. In addition, if the student needs specific vocational services to prepare for employment upon exiting school, NYSCB will fund these services.

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

A standardized process has been implemented for school district referrals. NYSCB collaborates with school districts and other state agencies to facilitate a coordinated approach for the provision of transition services and to eliminate the duplication of assessment, services and reporting. The agreement specifically states that schools are responsible for the coordination of educational programs, including transition planning, programs and services that prepare students who are legally blind for adult living, learning and earning. NYSCB can provide transition services that involve preparing for the students' future employment.

## 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.

The New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) establishes cooperative agreements primarily with private non-profit vocational rehabilitation service providers for assessment and training services through three types of outcomes-based contracts: comprehensive services, assistive technology services, and vocational evaluation/placement services. Contractors provide

agreed upon assessment and training services within a specific geographic area. Where an individual's needs call for specialized services outside the scope of these contracts, or where there is no service available in a particular geographic area, NYSCB district offices seek out additional providers and develop local agreements to obtain the services.

Comprehensive contract services are designed to assist consumers with a goal of employment to develop or improve the basic skills they need to successfully seek and maintain employment. For some, this may begin with a referral for low vision services. Providers assess each consumer to determine their unique needs. The assessment is followed by services which may include comprehensive and integrated training in basic life skills for preparation for competitive or supported employment, along with pre-vocational (for transition age youth) and vocational training services to prepare consumers to seek employment and enter the workforce.

NYSCB initiated new five-year contracts for comprehensive services for individuals who are blind on January 1, 2014. Changes recommended by the workgroup were incorporated into new contract guidelines and were released to contractors and made available on NYSCB's website. Training on the new guidelines was held NYSCB regions. Updated guidelines were posted to the NYSCB website, www.visionloss.ny.gov, and are revised as needed.

New vocational evaluation/job placement contracts were implemented January 1, 2015. Thirty-four providers were approved statewide.

Assistive technology contract services provide consumers with computer and/or computer-related technical training leading to employment. In Fall 2012, assistive technology center contracts were awarded, through an Request for Proposal (RFP) process, in seven areas of the state: Buffalo, Rochester, Central New York, Capital District, Hudson Valley, New York City, and Hempstead, Long Island for the period January 2013-December 2017. Consumers referred for computer technology services participate in assessment and training to prepare them for post-secondary education, vocational training, and employment. Consumers have an opportunity to view a wide selection of appropriate hardware and adaptive software, and have input into the development of an equipment recommendation that will meet their individual needs.

NYSCB and Helen Keller National Center have entered into discussions designed to enhance their current outcome-based contract and improve services to individuals who are deaf blind in the areas of basic skills, technology, and vocational services.

In 2012 NYSCB began entering into agreements with nonprofit organizations for the provision of benefits advisement services. Fifteen vendors have been approved for the provision of benefits advisement services throughout New York State. Providers of these services include agencies chartered primarily for provision of services to individuals who are blind, independent living centers, and other agencies that have engaged staff who are trained and certified by the Social Security Administration, by the Cornell Institute of Labor Relations, or by Virginia Commonwealth University. Many of these providers offer advisement not only on Social Security benefits, but also on a host of other benefits which may be affected by entering employment.

## 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.

From approved Fiscal Year 2015 State Plan:

Individuals who are legally blind often have needs that require a variety of services and supports. NYSCB has designed programs to educate the public concerning issues of blindness, to identify individuals who may need NYSCB services and to integrate people who are legally blind into local community activities. NYSCB regularly collaborates with other agencies providing vocational services to all individuals including individuals with disabilities in order to access necessary individual, family and other community based supports. Memorandums of Agreement provide a framework for building a service delivery system which integrates vocational rehabilitation services with necessary community supports.

Collaborative activities with respect to supported employment are focused on achieving the following goals:

1. Having an array of supported employment services available for clients to access in a timely manner.

2. Coordinating services and eligibility requirements between agencies.

3. Identifying responsibility for funding and administration of intensive and extended supported employment services.

4. Enabling individuals whose placements have been interrupted to re-enter the supported employment system without difficulty.

Chapter 515 of the Laws of 1992 requires State agencies to coordinate their efforts on competitive employment for individuals with disabilities through a State Integrated Employment Plan. This legislation reduces duplication of services and increases quality, efficiency and effectiveness of services focusing on the needs and expectations of both consumers and employers.

As part of the legislation, a Memorandum of Interagency Understanding Regarding Supported Employment was developed among ACCES-VR (formerly VESID), NYSCB, the Office of Persons with Developmental Disabilities (formerly OMRDD) and the Office of Mental Health (OMH). The Chapter 515 Committee, composed of representatives of these agencies, has been meeting regularly to refine the MOU to provide a clear mission and framework for collaboration which will support individual agreements defining more specific policy, procedure and funding issues. Discussions have focused on understanding the impact of recent policy changes among member agencies and the need to maximize the use of natural supports for those individuals who are not eligible.

The Committee prepares an Annual Report on Integrated Employment and has refined the report to more clearly explain data presented, and to share “next steps” to increase collaboration and increase integrated employment outcomes.

In addition, NYSCB served on the Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council (MISCC) which includes the four agencies above as well as other state and not-for-profit organizations involved with the employment of people with disabilities. NYSCB serves on the MISCC Employment Committee which established guiding principles, and through its subcommittees addressed ways to better utilize employment data for planning, decrease duplicative efforts, create “no wrong door” access to services, market to employers, and find ways to better access public employment opportunities for all individuals with disabilities, including those in supported employment. NYSCB also served on the Transportation Committee which was created to promote and advocate for the accessibility, reliability and affordability of transportation alternatives for individuals with disabilities.

As State Vocational Rehabilitation partners, NYSCB and ACCES-VR work together to distribute Title VI-C funds and make decisions regarding supported employment services. A representative of NYSCB participated in an ACCES-VR workgroup to develop new guidelines for providers of supported employment services, and new policy for VR staff to follow. NYSCB is currently revising its policy to more closely parallel ACCES-VR’s.

NYSCB has also supported and participated in activities being implemented under the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG), and serves on the steering committee to the MIG. Activities under the MIG which will particularly benefit individuals in supported employment are pilots of customized employment approaches, development of a statewide employment data base “New York Employment Services System (NYESS),” and expansion of the availability of work incentives advisement.

NYSCB staff regularly attend the Empire State Association of Persons in Supported Employment (APSE) conference to dialogue with providers, consumers and advocates, and keep abreast of evidence-based practices.

Through ongoing collaboration, NYSCB and partner agencies expect to:

1. Continue to develop, enhance and expand supported employment for persons with severe disabilities.

2. Establish a process that will improve the statewide management of supported employment programs by avoiding duplication of effort and funding, while increasing accountability.

3. Maximize the quality of service delivery through a comprehensive, continuous, efficient and effective referral process, individual program planning, coordination of intensive vocational services with extended services, and information collection, dissemination and technical assistance.

4. Identify issues, policies and practices that present systemic barriers to effective participation of individuals with severe disabilities and develop appropriate resolutions to remove such barriers.

5. Establish a planning process, consistent with the directions of the former State Interagency Council for Vocational Rehabilitation, for budget coordination which defines and projects the numbers of people in need of intensive and extended services for each fiscal year and facilitates program and fiscal planning.

## 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

NYSCB will work to increase outreach to businesses and develop relationships that lead to increased opportunities for individuals who are legally blind. NYSCB is a member of the National Employment Team (NET) through the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). CSAVR's NET provides a coordinated approach to serving business customers through business development, business consulting and corporate relations. By establishing partnerships with businesses, NYSCB will better match business staffing needs with the skills and interests of consumers seeking employment, as well as help business to retain employees who are legally blind. NYSCB will continue to develop the connections between both CSAVR as well as businesses.

NYSCB also connects with businesses on a regional level through direct outreach by district managers and district office staff. Regional and small businesses are best accessed through a regional approach and local NYSCB staff that live and work in the community are often the best resource. District offices will continue to develop relationships with businesses through internships, Work Experience Training opportunities and Work Try-Outs. NYSCB will also continue to collaborate with ACCES-VR Regional Workforce Coordinators to connect with businesses that have interest in working with VR program individuals. NYSCB has held collaborative meetings with local businesses human resources hiring managers, and will continue to foster these relationships through ongoing meetings on a regional basis. NYSCB will use these connections to make matches between consumer's skills and local job openings.

### 2. TRANSITION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, FOR STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES.

NYSCB has established mechanisms to enable transition age youth to access paid work experiences during their teenage years. NYSCB Transition Counselors will continue to work closely with students and businesses to develop appropriate integrated work experiences in local communities. Counselors will also work closely with school staff to coordinate work experiences for students. Job coaching services will be provided when the vocational rehabilitation counselor has determined that the services are necessary for the individual to benefit from the work experience. Many private agencies for individuals who are blind in New York State have developed pre-vocational programs that assist youth in vocational clarification, job seeking skills, the development of appropriate on-the-job behavior, interviewing preparation and resume writing. Most summer work experiences that have been developed through partnerships with NYSCB staff, local businesses, and private agencies for individuals who are blind staff consist of four days of work, followed by a day of role playing and discussion about various work situations. Through work experiences it is expected that transition age youth will be able to experience work life, explore careers and fields of interest, and access spending money.

## 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;

NYSCB collaborates with the Office for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) and Office of Mental Health (OMH) in the provision of employment and supported employment services. NYSCB plans to work to increase collaboration and communications with partner state agencies and will focus on sharing specific knowledge and expertise in the area of vision loss. The encouragement of a multi-disciplinary approach will be promoted at both a regional and state level.

### 2. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES; AND

NYSCB will encourage staff to provide in-service presentations for OPWDD and OMH staff regarding blindness, vision rehabilitation therapy, orientation and mobility, as well as job site accommodations. NYSCB recognizes that collaboration with these partner state agencies is integral to the employment success of individuals served by multiple agencies. These partners are currently collaborating on Governor Cuomo’s Employment First initiative and have already begun to address barriers that currently exist in the provision of services between agencies. NYSCB will continue to participate in these initiatives advocating for individuals who are legally blind receiving NYSCB services and will continue to work to provide seamless services to consumers in conjunction with our partner state agencies.

### 3. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

NYSCB collaborates with the Office for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) and Office of Mental Health (OMH) in the provision of employment and supported employment services. NYSCB plans to work to increase collaboration and communications with partner state agencies and will focus on sharing specific knowledge and expertise in the area of vision loss. The encouragement of a multi-disciplinary approach will be promoted at both a regional and state level.

## 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;

This plan outlines strategies to update staff credentials so that all staff meets the highest academic standards for their profession. The in-service training unit of NYSCB coordinates and evaluates all training programs attended by staff. All in-service training records are maintained electronically in a Microsoft Access program. A training file is maintained for each staff member containing: name, title, phone number, date hired, district office, college major, highest degree earned, a note section to track courses needed (if necessary), Certification or Certification eligible, and in-service training programs attended. NYSCB can thus easily access data regarding staff credentials and Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) eligibility or status.

**Number of Personnel Employed**

As of October 2015, NYSCB employees totaled 128 individuals in seven district offices and the home office. There were an additional 29 vacancies. The total number of field staff was 71, with 9 positions vacant. Approximately 3772 legally blind individuals are "active" on Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors' (VRC) caseloads at any given time. The average caseload is 55 consumers per VRC upstate, and 76 consumers per VRC downstate.

Of the 65 Senior VRC and VRCs in field staff positions, 54 are Certified Rehabilitation Counselors (CRC) or CRC eligible. Two VRCs have reached retirement age, and have elected not to upgrade their credentials. They will receive Senior VRC sign-off prior to establishing eligibility, signing the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) (including any amendments and the annual IPE review) and closing cases.

ii. the number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and

NYSCB's current staffing allows NYSCB to effectively provide services to all individuals who apply for and are determined eligible for VR services. NYSCB is aware that many professional staff intends to retire within the next five years. The result of personnel transactions for calendar year 2014 as they affected each district office is as follows:

- Buffalo -No vacancies.
- Syracuse -No vacancies.
- Albany - One District Manager position is vacant.
- White Plains - One Mobility Instructor position is vacant
- Manhattan - One District Manager position, one Senior VR Counselor and one VR Counselor position are vacant
- Hempstead - One District Manager position is vacant
- Harlem -One VR Counselor position is vacant

NYSCB is requesting budgetary approval to fill all of the vacant positions. NYSCB must seek NYS Division of the Budget approval for a waiver from the ongoing state hiring freeze in order to hire any personnel.

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.

Staff Five Year Projections

NYSCB estimates that by the year 2020, 31 current VRCs and Senior VRCs will be age 55 or older and eligible to retire. Many of those within retirement age, however, will not have enough time in service to retire at age 55 and will retire at a later time. In using age 57 as a likely retirement age, we estimate that some employees who are older than 57 will remain employed by NYSCB, and other VRCs, under age 57, may be promoted or leave for other reasons. Using this analysis of potential retirees and staff leaving for other reasons, an estimated 28 VRCs and Senior VRCs will leave NYSCB in the next five years. All 31 VRCs and Senior VRCs expected to remain will be CRC or CRC eligible.

Using the same formula, it is estimated that four of the eight Orientation & Mobility (O&M) instructors and Rehabilitation Therapists (RT) will retire or leave for other reasons. All vacancies in the O&M and RT disciplines are expected to be replaced.

**Job Title:** Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

**Total Positions:** 40

**Current Vacancies:**4

**Projected Vacancies Over the Next 5 Years:** 24

**Job Title:** Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

**Total Positions:** 5

**Current Vacancies:** 4

**Projected Vacancies Over the Next 5 Years:** 4

**Job Title:** Orientation and Mobility Instructor

**Total Positions:** 6

**Current Vacancies:**1

**Projected Vacancies Over the Next 5 Years:** 3

**Job Title:** Vision Rehabilitation Therapist

**Total Positions:** 3

**Current Vacancies:** 0

**Projected Vacancies Over the Next 5 Years:** 0

NYSCB maintains contact with the three colleges and universities in the state that prepare vocational rehabilitation counselors as a source for staff positions. In addition, NYSCB continues to work closely with the colleges to develop a process for the recruitment of students from diverse populations, and to establish a curriculum based on best practices, research, and development trends.

## 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;

For the calendar year beginning January 2014 and ending December 2014, the colleges reported the enrollment outlined in the table below.

*Hunter College of CUNY is the only university preparation program in New York State graduating O&M instructors and VRTs. Graduates from this program are eligible for certification by the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP).

**Institutions:** Hofstra University, State University of New York at Buffalo, Hunter College CUNY O&M/RT*, * Eligible for Academy Certification of Vision

ii. the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and

For the calendar year beginning January 2014 and ending December 2014, the colleges reported the enrollment outlined in the table below.

*Hunter College of CUNY is the only university preparation program in New York State graduating O&M instructors and VRTs. Graduates from this program are eligible for certification by the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP).

**Institution:** Hofstra University

**Students Enrolled**: 41

**Institution:** Hunter College of the City of New York

**Students Enrolled**: 63

**Institution**: State University of New York at Buffalo

**Students Enrolled**: 111

**Institution**: Hunter College CUNY O&M/RT*

**Students Enrolled**: 27

**Institution**: * Eligible for Academy Certification of Vision

**Students Enrolled**: 0

iii. the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of theose 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.

For the calendar year beginning January 2014 and ending December 2014, the colleges reported the enrollment outlined in the table below.

*Hunter College of CUNY is the only university preparation program in New York State graduating O&M instructors and VRTs. Graduates from this program are eligible for certification by the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP).

**Institution**: Hofstra University

**Graduates from the Previous Year:** 13

**Institution:** Hunter College of the City of New York

**Graduates from the Previous Year**: 15

**Institution**: State University of New York at Buffalo

**Graduates from the Previous Year**: 11

**Institution**: Hunter College CUNY O&M/RT*

**Graduates from the Previous Year**: 11

**Institution**: * Eligible for Academy Certification of Vision

**Graduates from the Previous Year**: 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.

The following steps describe the ongoing activities to enable NYSCB to continue the long-term CSPD plan and develop resources needed to recruit, prepare and retain qualified personnel in New York State:

1. Maintain the VR counseling pre-service preparation programs in NYS, pre-service O&M and RT programs, and long distance learning pre-service programs from other states.

2. Continue to track the number of students who graduate from pre-service programs statewide and the percentage of diverse populations (e.g. severely disabled, Latino) within those programs.

3. Continue to develop relationships with distance learning programs to locate curricula that meet the learning styles and needs of NYSCB staff. These include video conferencing, videotapes, and/or computer technology.

4. Increase opportunities for staff in-service training.

5. Maintain a training database for all NYSCB staff that includes the following information: CRC status, educational history, proficiency areas (sign language, foreign language), training priority requests, graduate course work.

6. Continue to recruit qualified VRCs, O&Ms, and RTs including those from diverse backgrounds or who have foreign language skills.

7. Continue to partner with Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) with regard to the CSPD and the long term training of employees.

8. Provide financial stipends to masters level students who complete an internship program at NYSCB as part of their Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor program.

9. Provide financial reimbursement to VRC’s maintaining their CRC Certification upon renewal every five years, and for eligible NYSCB staff opting to sit for the CRCC examination to obtain certification upon verification of required recertification or initial certification documents.

10. Collaborate with colleges and universities to train Orientation and Mobility Specialists and Vision Rehabilitation Therapists. Graduates will qualify for national certification through the ACVREP or the National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NBPCB). NYSCB and stakeholders continue to meet with officials from the University at Buffalo to establish a certificate training program in Orientation and Mobility. The certificate program would be the first of its kind and graduates would be eligible for certification by the ACVREP.

## 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

### Highest Standard for VRCs

NYSCB hires only individuals who meet the New York State Department of Civil Service's personnel standard for vocational rehabilitation counselors. The standard is:

- A current Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC certificate); OR
- A Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, including a supervised internship, from a Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) accredited program; OR
- A Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or Counseling and notice of academic eligibility for the CRCC certificate examination.

### Plans to Retrain Staff Who Do Not Meet the Highest Requirements

Staff who do not meet the highest academic standards will either have a training plan in place or they will require supervisory approval prior to establishing eligibility, signing the IPE or determining case closure. The New York State Department of Civil Service does not permit NYSCB to hire new staff in VR Counselor positions who do not meet the personnel standard.

## 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.

NYSCB understands the importance of maintaining a well-trained and current workforce. NYSCB continues to work to increase training opportunities for counseling staff in identified areas of need as well as integrating a multi-disciplinary approach. Obtaining consumer perspective, by participating in events and public forums offered by blindness support agencies, is encouraged when workload and fiscal considerations allow.

## 4. STAFF DEVELOPMENT.

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

## A. SYSTEM OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT

a system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated State unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and

The NYSCB in-service training program funds attendance at workshops, conferences, formal course work, and agency developed training sessions Training has been offered in counseling, rehabilitation, medical aspects of disability, job placement, rehabilitation technology, cultural diversity, informed choice, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and other topics related to vocational rehabilitation. NYSCB contracts with six Adaptive Technology Centers with seven sites throughout the state. Upon request,the centers provide training to NYSCB staff on new access technology for individuals with disabilities.

### 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.

Information gained by staff attending conferences or training is shared at staff meetings with local staff. District managers share the information with senior staff at bi-weekly conference calls and quarterly meeting of district managers and information is disseminated to all staff as appropriate.

## 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.

NYSCB continues to obtain the services of individuals able to communicate in the native language of individuals who have limited English speaking ability or require American Sign Language. Qualified interpreters are hired for services for individuals who are deaf-blind or who require in-person language interpretation. NYSCB staff with the required qualifications may be used for this purpose, or subcontractors with specialty skills may be used.

NYSCB also uses the Language Line telephone interpretation services program that offers interpretation services in over 250 languages.

## 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.

NYSCB coordinates policy and services relating to transition services for students who are legally blind from school to adult services and begins planning VR services for individuals with disabilities prior to their exiting high school. The coordination of meaningful transition services for students with disabilities from school-age to postsecondary settings is a priority for NYSCB and may begin as early as age 10.

NYSCB designates VR liaisons to school districts to inform educators on NYSCB services and application processes; participates in regional trainings, annual kick-off meetings and/or teacher in-service trainings with school districts; provides informational pamphlets on NYSCB services; and participates in local job fairs where youth with disabilities are seeking employment opportunities.

NYSCB and the New York State Education Department collaborate on a regular basis to provide guidance to educational agencies and vocational rehabilitation personnel responsible for facilitating transition services, and to provide information about consultation and technical assistance resources to assist schools and related community support entities in planning for transition of students who are legally blind. At the state level, both agencies have designated personnel that provide oversight and leadership for the development of policies, procedures, interagency training and other state-level partnership activities for transition services. At the local level, VR counselors work closely with school district staff and local school districts have transition to work specialists that collaborate together. NYSCB will continue to work closely with schools to enable the smooth transition of students who are legally blind from school to work.

## 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;

**From Fiscal Year 2015 State Plan**

**Attachment 4.11(a) Statewide Assessment**

**Findings from the Comprehensive Needs Assessment for**

**The New York State Commission for the Blind**

January 13, 2014

Arun Karpur

Employment and Disability Institute

ILR School

Cornell University

New York, NY

**<u>Scope of Analysis</u>**

The New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) provides vocational and rehabilitation services to about 4,000 consumers with blindness and visual impairment through their seven district offices throughout New York State. Cornell University's Employment and Disability Institute, at the request of the NYSCB, conducted a needs assessment through: (a) the analysis of NYSCB

Consumer Information System (CIS) administrative data to identify needs for improvement in services and supports, program practices, and policies; and (b) primary data collection survey of NYSCB staff to understand their needs in improvement of programs and policies facilitating attainment of employment goals for their consumers. This initial report summarizes findings from these activities.

## Secondary Data Analysis of Consumer Information System

The primary purpose of analyzing NYSCB's Consumer Information System is to identify factors related to successful case closures and employment outcomes for NYSCB clients. Specifically this analysis explored the following research questions:

a. What are the demographic and services-related factors that predict successful employment outcomes for NYSCB consumers? How do these vary by NYSCB district offices? How do local labor market conditions (e.g., county-level employment rate for people with disabilities) impact employment outcomes for NYSCB consumers?
b. How do these differ between transition-age youth and adult population?
c. How do these factors impact successful outcomes for NYSCB consumers who receive public benefits compared with their non-beneficiary peers?

### *Analytical Data Set:*

NYSCB consumers in the age group of 14 - 65 years, whose cases were opened in the years 2009 - 2012, were included into the analytical data set. Cases opened prior to 2009 were not included in the analysis. Closed cases without closure dates were deleted from the analytical sample. The final analytical data consisted of 4,445 records, with 1,846 closed and 2,599 open cases.Percentage of successful closed cases peaks in 2010 to 67 percent with a steady decline to 60 percent in 2012.

### *Results:*

Overall, about 46 percent of the consumers were Caucasians, with 30 percent blacks and 17 percent Hispanics. Most cases included individuals in the prime-age (i.e., ages 25 - 54 years). (Footnote in original document: According to 2011 American Community Survey Data - 41 percent of visually impaired people in NYS were Caucasians, 17 percent blacks and 22 percent Hispanics. In comparison with this distribution, the racial/ethnic distribution of NYSCB clients indicate that more proportions of minorities are being served by the system compared to the actual prevalence). Nearly one fourth of all clients worked at the time of their application. About half did not have any secondary impairment, whereas 25 percent had physical impairment as a secondary condition, followed by mental health, and intellectual disabilities (10 percent and 8.5 percent respectively). Fifty five used sighted guide as primary mode of travel, nearly a third used cane and a minor proportions used service dogs, wheelchairs or assistive devices. The top five commonly received services included - assessment services, assistive devices, vision rehabilitation, orientation & mobility, and social work/counseling.

In order to study the impact of demographic variables and services received, a multivariate regression model was constructed. It was observed that NYSCB consumers who had mental health impairments as secondary conditions were 7 percent less likely to be successfully closed compared to their peers without any secondary conditions. Prime-age and pre-retirees were advantaged with higher likelihood of successful case closures compared to transition-age youth. Individuals on public benefits were 3 percent less likely to be successfully closed compared to their counterparts. Working

at application for services contributed to 34 percent higher probability of case closures and living in a private residence contributed to 20 percent higher probability of successful case closure. Men were 6 percent less likely to be successfully closed compared to women consumers. Non-Hispanic blacks and Hispanic consumers were significantly less likely to be successfully closed compared to Caucasian consumers (12 percent and 8 percent respectively less likely to be successfully closed).

Individuals who received high-tech devices were 19 percent more likely to be successfully closed; those who received computer training were 8 percent more likely; those who received job-related services were 18 percent more likely; those who received job placement were 47 percent more likely and those who received orientation and mobility training were 9 percent more likely to be successfully closed compared to their counterparts who did not receive such services. Despite the potential likelihood of impacting positive outcomes, only up to 20 percent of consumers receive these services. It is possible that only a select group of consumers with high likelihood for success are determined eligible for services and such individuals participate in these services leading to higher employment outcomes. It is difficult to respond to this question in the context of the analysis. Further, individuals who received pre-employment services were 13 percent less likely to be successfully closed compared to their counterpart who did not receive these services. Again, the selection factors could play a role in diverting individuals with less likelihood of success to this group and this finding may not be directly reflective of the nature or value of the service.

Wide variations were observed in terms of the successful case closure rates by New York State regions as identified by New York State Economic Development Council. In comparison with the NYSCB consumers residing in New York City (NYC) region, most regions across the state had lower likelihood of successful case closures. However, consumers residing in central New York and western New York were more likely (5 percent and 2 percent respectively) to be successfully closed compared to those living in the NYC region. Macroeconomic factors such as county unemployment rate at the time of consumer's exit from NYSCB were included in the model and this variable was found to be statistically non-significant.

Further, modeling likelihood of successful case closures for NYSCB consumers receiving public benefits, it was observed that mental health impairments continues to negatively predict successful case closures for this group of individuals. Receipt of vocational training, high tech devices, computer training, job-related services and job placement services were all positively related to successful employment outcomes for individuals receiving public benefits. Despite these positive relationships between the specific services and outcomes, overall only 6-10 percent of consumers receiving public benefits access these services. Other factors identified in the overall model, also continue to predict positive outcomes for NYSCB consumers receiving public benefits.

**Impressions:**

Overall these analyses confirm that factors that continue to be important in predicting vocational rehabilitation outcomes in other research and evaluation studies continue to be the same factors predicting successful employment outcomes for NYSCB consumers. These indicate that current efforts that are being implemented at national and state levels to improve vocational rehabilitation outcomes can easily inform the process program and policy development for improving outcomes for NYSCB clients.

Racial/ethnic and gender disparities are substantial. Understanding and tracking such disparities provides ways for developing policies and practices to address such disparities. Understanding perspective of consumers belonging to racial/ethnic minorities could potentially provide useful

information in understanding the impact of race/ethnic background on their labor market engagement. It is crucial to study if people with disabilities who are minorities face a dual burden of discrimination at work. Prior studies of VR systems have also identified gender disparities in outcomes, which continue to persist in the current analysis. Again, consumer perspective could help inform on potential reasons for such variations and provide useful information to help improve VR practices.

Working at application continues to be a strong predictor of successful case closure. This finding indicates that working at application is not only an attribute providing incoming consumers an advantage of prior/current work, but also possibly describes individuals who are more motivated to work and are already prepared to seek advantage from services. Tracking individual-level motivation to engage in work could provide additional insights for unmet service needs in the area of counseling for work.

Variations of outcomes by service types help in identifying those key services that have a potential to improve employment outcomes. Further, it is also likely that some of processes of NYSCB - e.g., counselor's determination of specific services - could lead to self-selection of a group of consumers who are bound to be successful given their unobserved characteristics. The process through which these individuals achieve higher likelihood of employment outcomes remains to be studied.

It is also important to study reasons for wide variations in outcomes across New York State regions. More importantly, increased sharing of effective practices across district offices could potentially mitigate these variations and overall enhance employment outcomes for NYSCB consumers.

Interestingly, county unemployment rate was not statistically related to the observed employment outcomes. This finding indicates that contemporary labor market conditions do not substantially impact employment outcomes for consumers. This raises a further question, about the type of labor market in which NYSCB clients currently work. From this perspective, it is not only sufficient to understand the occurrence of employment outcomes, but it is also important to understand and document the qualitative aspect of work to predict sustained impact of services received in NYSCB. Conducting a survey of consumers who have exited NYSCB could provide such information.

Further, challenges continue to persist for achieving employment outcomes for clients who receive public benefits. Though many services (e.g., high-tech devices) appear to positively impact outcomes, only small proportions receive such services. It is likely that efforts such as New York State PROMISE initiative will be helpful in highlighting leading practices and service delivery models to inform program and policy development across various service systems.

Having mental health illness as a secondary condition continues to jeopardize the likelihood of success in the current system. This variable impacts both consumers receiving and those not receiving public benefits. This finding indicates a need to build capacity of practitioners in providing services to people with mental health illnesses.

Transition-age youth are less likely to achieve employment outcomes compared to their adult peers. It is likely that the window of our analysis ranging from 2009-12 could be too narrow to observe outcomes for transition-age youth. Further, challenges of achieving postsecondary employment outcomes for this age-group could be pervasive across all youth serving systems and requires closer attention including capacity building to achieve better outcomes. More importantly, it is likely that this group of consumers have a lower motivation to work and have higher needs in other areas of life -

e.g., building meaningful social relationships - and the process of rehabilitation should be directed to identifying needs not only in the area of work, but also in overall community living.

## Survey of Vocational Rehabilitation Professionals in NYSCB System

As planned, following the secondary data analysis, NYSCB and Cornell conducted a survey of all NYSCB vocational rehabilitation counseling personnel using an online survey tool to understand their perspective on some of the observed trends in consumer outcomes from the secondary data analysis that need additional explanations. This survey was also intended to explore their perceived barriers in providing services and collaborating with other providers of rehabilitation services for people with disabilities in NYS, as well as their satisfaction with the information systems and their needs for improving case management systems for adopting data-driven decision-making.

The online survey was administered to 58 VR personnel across seven district offices. Valid response was obtained from only 39 individuals. The analysis of this component of the needs assessment is done in light of validating and identifying contrasts and similarity to some of the results obtained from analysis of Consumer Information System (CIS).

### Consumer Factors Predicting Employment Outcomes

Strongest agreement between factors that VR personnel believed to impact employment outcomes and those observed in secondary data analysis occurred with:

1. Motivation to engage in work (not addressed in data analysis)
2. Health status
3. Previous work experience
4. Family support
5. Severity of Impairment
6. Previous successful case closure with NYSCB

Lowest agreement that factor affected outcomes occurred with:

1. Age
2. Race
3. Gender

Yet secondary data analysis showed these were strong factors affecting success.

Implications:

1. Consider how to track and monitor motivation, starting with initial intake

2. Identify interventions, see if motivation begins to decrease

3. Consider how to enhance CIS to include variables indicating formal and informal supports, especially for transition age consumers

4. Study, through consumer survey, how age, race and gender could impact outcomes based on consumer inputs

5. Track disparities in outcomes across these parameters and develop reporting mechanisms to study them periodically to identify areas of support and technical assistance (TA) for improving VR practices

**Most Challenging Client Characteristics**

1. Once again, motivation rises as an important factor.

2. The response for receipt of SSI/SSDI (22 percent) was surprising low.

3. Racial/ethnic minorities were rated low (5 percent), yet from data analysis one would have predicted it would have been a characteristic in the top three.

4. Staff did not see transition age as a challenge, yet outcomes for this group were low.

Implications:

1. This may be an opportunity to provide training and technical assistance to increase counselors' sensitivity that SSI/SSDI is an issue. This will be explored more in the PROMISE grant recently awarded to New York State.

2. Staff appear to need more TA/training to increase their sensitivity to race and minority status being an issue.

3. PROMISE grant may help identify ways to increase staff understanding of factors related to transition.

**Environmental Factors**

1. All factors were seen as predicting employment outcomes (availability of accessible public transportation the most).

2. Macro-economic factors were not identified as strong predictors in secondary data analysis.

3. Community Rehabilitation Programs and their services were confirmed as a factor.

Implications:

It is important to study why macro-level factors might not have much impact on employment outcome contrary to the prevailing belief of tighter job-markets impacting outcomes. One possibility is that people with disabilities are not being employed in the traditional labor markets or are being employed more in transitional jobs so that large economic shocks might not be impacting their employment. From this perspective studying employment outcome as a binary variable may limit abilities of the system to consistently track the quality of its outcomes. The quality of employment should be tracked to understand the impact of NYSCB services.

**Services Likely to Improve Employment Outcomes**

1. All factors were seen as improving employment outcomes.

2. Strongest agreement occurred with:

a. Services that enhance financial literacy and understanding of entitlement programs (yet analysis shows that few receive this service)

b. Services that enhance communication skills

c. Services that enhance technical skills (yet analysis shows not equally available to all groups)

3. Soft skills were ranked the lowest, but still seen as important

4. Services to enhance health and well-being are seen as important, yet data analysis showed these services were less likely to be provided

Implications:

1. Need to look at how well training needs of consumers are addressed in relation to financial literacy and entitlement programs2. Need to look at how to increase availability of technical training to all consumers

3. Need to understand the reasons for differences in perception and actual offer of services

**Primary Drivers of Decision-Making for Specific VR Activities**

1. “Eligibility” - equally driven by counselor and state-wide NYSCB policies.

2. “Need for Evaluation” - primarily driven by counselor, very little role for consumer.

3. “Amount of Vocational Evaluation” - again primarily driven by counselor, with more influence (22 percent) from NYSCB policy; very little role for consumer.

4. “Closure Status” - 45 percent see NYSCB policy as being largest driver; counselor rated second greatest; little role for consumer.

5. “PES” is highly controlled by the consumer (over 50 percent).

6. “Vocational Goals” - was reported as being the highest consumer driven activity.

7. Counselors were more involved in “Determining intermediate objectives”, with an equal amount of input from consumers.

8. “Types of service” nearly equally determined by counselor and consumer.

9. “Amount of services” was primarily driven by NYSCB policy, with the consumer taking almost as much of a role.

10. “Provider of Services” was primarily driven by consumers.

11. “Frequency of communication” was highly driven by consumers.

12. “Time in VR” was predominately determined by the consumer, but was noticeably affected by both NYSCB and district office policy; this activity had the lowest rating for counselor driven activity.

13. “Type of job placement” was driven primarily by the consumer with a fairly high influence from NYSCB policy.

Implications:

1. Need to increase consumer role in discussing need for and deciding on amount of vocational evaluation

2. Need to explore counselors’ perceptions of the role of policy in restricting the amount of vocational evaluation

3. Consider an administrative tool to track the impact of service

4. Need to see greater consumer participation in decisions around closure status, agreement that services are no longer needed

5. NYSCB may want to look at how policies determine: amount of services, time in VR and type of placement; and whether there is a perceived rather than actual effect.

**Frequency of Lack of Time Reported Across VR Activities**

In descending order, counselors reported that the lack of time frequently affected their ability to perform these activities:

1. Manage case service records data (80 percent)

2. Monitor client progress (80 percent)

3. Network with businesses and employers (70 percent)

4. Networking with community-based service providers (50 percent)

5. Networking with institution of higher education (45 percent)

Implications:

Though reports of burn-out continue to influence economically-limited service systems such as VR, it is important to continually track how VR professionals perceive the availability of their time for various VR-related activities and identify ways to ensure that time-management issues are continually addressed in training and TA. Lack of time with respect to networking with community-based partners could be a reflection of the lack of skills and tools for such networking activities. It is important the future training and TA address these needs within the framework of existing VR responsibilities.

**Experiences with Service Providers**

1. Over 60 percent of counselors reported having time to work with service providers:

a. 30 percent reported they have time “all the time”

b. 34 percent reported “most of the time”

c. 30 percent reported “sometimes”

d. 5 percent reported “rarely”

2. Significantly more counselors reported having insufficient time for on-site visits with providers:

a. 50 percent reported “sometimes”

b. 18 percent reported “rarely or never”

c. 14 percent reported “most of the time”

d. 18 percent reported “all the time”

3. Regarding ability to find providers of services likely to be needed based on the consumer’s IPE:

a. Over 65 percent of counselors reported that they could find providers “most of the time”.

b. Less than 10 percent could do so “all the time”.

c. 25 percent could find providers some of the time

4. Able to receive updates from service providers:

a. This item received the highest ranking with over 60 percent stating they were able to receive updates most or all of the time

b. Only 9 percent reported receiving updates sometimes

c. 3 percent reported rarely receiving updates

Implications:

About one-fifth to one-third respondents indicated that they have little or no time to work with service providers or be able to visit provider sites in-person to assess the quality of services and engage with service providers to understand other unmet service needs. This is an important area for quality control. Future training and TA should address the need for increasing engagement with service providers. Further, about 12 percent indicated that they receive very few updates on client progress. Tools and electronic systems must be considered to ensure periodic updates for purposes of case management.

**Training Received by Counseling Staff on Topical Areas during the Past Year**

1. Counselors reported receiving the most training on the Business Enterprise Program (70 percent).

2. Caseload management (40 percent), Supported Employment (28 percent), Americans with Disabilities Act (26 percent), and Serving clients receiving SSI/SSDI (26 percent) were the next most frequent topics.

3. Few received training on job placement, Independent Living (IL), placement services from other agencies, how to target business outreach, and benefits and work incentives counseling. These are also topics on which staff reported needing training.

**High-Priority Topics for Needed Training**

Staff reported a need for training in the following areas:

1. IL centers and their programs and services (50 percent)

2. Business Enterprise Program (40 percent) - despite high number having just received training

3. 1992 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act (38 percent)

4. Helping consumers access post-secondary education (38 percent)

5. Employment services from other agencies (35 percent)

6. Self-Employment (32 percent)

7. Functional Aspects of Disability (30 percent)

8. Serving clients receiving SSI/SSDI (28 percent)

9. Serving transition-age youth with disabilities (22 percent)

10. Job placement (18 percent)

11. Targeted outreach to businesses (14 percent)

**Client Information System**

About half of the respondents reported Good to Fair experiences with CIS; quite a few reported poor experiences.

65 percent stated they can access client level information, but can’t track or see client level summary.

Implications:

Future training and TA must be directed to meet the expressed needs of the VR staff. Besides the traditional topical areas of VR processes and services, training and TA should also focus on increasing knowledge regarding the CIS system, public benefits and knowledge of other agency

services to help better leverage resources from the community to supplement the existing services. The PROMISE initiative is expected to generate information on leading practices in providing VR services to transition-age youth. It is likely that some of these practices can be transported for the adult group of NYSCB clients. With increasing desire for accessing institutions of higher education, bridge programs could be considered to improve connection between NYSCB and community colleges to achieve better outcomes for referred consumers.

***Conclusion***

The combination of secondary data analysis and the VR survey provided valuable insights to provide guidance for planning training and TA for systems and quality improvement. However, some observed disparities across demographic groups could be better studied using the consumer survey. Continual tracking of outcomes to study disparities in outcomes and services received must be included into the policy and practices for the purposes of systems improvement and strategic planning.

## B. WHO ARE MINORITIES;

Racial/ethnic and gender disparities are substantial. Understanding and tracking such disparities provides ways for developing policies and practices to address such disparities. Understanding perspective of consumers belonging to racial/ethnic minorities could potentially provide useful information in understanding the impact of race/ethnic background on their labor market engagement. It is crucial to study if people with disabilities who are minorities face a dual burden of discrimination at work. Prior studies of VR systems have also identified gender disparities in outcomes, which continue to persist in the current analysis. Again, consumer perspective could help inform on potential reasons for such variations and provide useful information to help improve VR practices.

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

In order to study the impact of demographic variables and services received, a multivariate regression model was constructed. It was observed that NYSCB consumers who had mental health impairments as secondary conditions were 7 percent less likely to be successfully closed compared to their peers without any secondary conditions. Prime-age and pre-retirees were advantaged with higher likelihood of successful case closures compared to transition-age youth. Individuals on public benefits were 3 percent less likely to be successfully closed compared to their counterparts. Working at application for services contributed to 34 percent higher probability of case closures and living in a private residence contributed to 20 percent higher probability of successful case closure. Men were 6 percent less likely to be successfully closed compared to women consumers. Non-Hispanic blacks and Hispanic consumers were significantly less likely to be successfully closed compared to Caucasian consumers (12 percent and 8 percent respectively less likely to be successfully closed).

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

Wide variations were observed in terms of the successful case closure rates by New York State regions as identified by New York State Economic Development Council. In comparison with the NYSCB consumers residing in New York City (NYC) region, most regions across the state had lower likelihood of successful case closures. However, consumers residing in central New York and

western New York were more likely (5 percent and 2 percent respectively) to be successfully closed compared to those living in the NYC region. Macroeconomic factors such as county unemployment rate at the time of consumer's exit from NYSCB were included in the model and this variable was found to be statistically non–significant.

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

Transition-age youth are less likely to achieve employment outcomes compared to their adult peers. It is likely that the window of our analysis ranging from 2009-12 could be too narrow to observe outcomes for transition-age youth. Further, challenges of achieving postsecondary employment outcomes for this age-group could be pervasive across all youth serving systems and requires closer attention including capacity building to achieve better outcomes. More importantly, it is likely that this group of consumers have a lower motivation to work and have higher needs in other areas of life - e.g., building meaningful social relationships - and the process of rehabilitation should be directed to identifying needs not only in the area of work, but also in overall community living.

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

**Experiences with Service Providers**

1. Over 60 percent of counselors reported having time to work with service providers:

a. 30 percent reported they have time "all the time"

b. 34 percent reported "most of the time"

c. 30 percent reported "sometimes"

d. 5 percent reported "rarely"

2. Significantly more counselors reported having insufficient time for on-site visits with providers:

a. 50 percent reported "sometimes"

b. 18 percent reported "rarely or never"

c. 14 percent reported "most of the time"

d. 18 percent reported "all the time"

3. Regarding ability to find providers of services likely to be needed based on the consumer's IPE:

a. Over 65 percent of counselors reported that they could find providers "most of the time".

b. Less than 10 percent could do so "all the time".

c. 25 percent could find providers some of the time

4. Able to receive updates from service providers:

a. This item received the highest ranking with over 60 percent stating they were able to receive updates most or all of the time

b. Only 9 percent reported receiving updates sometimes

c. 3 percent reported rarely receiving updates

Implications:

About one-fifth to one-third respondents indicated that they have little or no time to work with service providers or be able to visit provider sites in-person to assess the quality of services and engage with service providers to understand other unmet service needs. This is an important area for quality control. Future training and TA should address the need for increasing engagement with service providers. Further, about 12 percent indicated that they receive very few updates on client progress. Tools and electronic systems must be considered to ensure periodic updates for purposes of case management.

### 3. INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES FOR TRANSITION CAREER SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH SUCH SERVICES ARE COORDINATED WITH TRANSITION SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT .

Transition-age youth are less likely to achieve employment outcomes compared to their adult peers. It is likely that the window of our analysis ranging from 2009-12 could be too narrow to observe outcomes for transition-age youth. Further, challenges of achieving postsecondary employment outcomes for this age-group could be pervasive across all youth serving systems and requires closer attention including capacity building to achieve better outcomes. More importantly, it is likely that this group of consumers have a lower motivation to work and have higher needs in other areas of life - e.g., building meaningful social relationships - and the process of rehabilitation should be directed to identifying needs not only in the area of work, but also in overall community living.

## K. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.11(b)). Describe:

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

There are numerous factors that impact an individual’s choice to seek vocational rehabilitation services to obtain employment. There is currently no method to accurately assess how many of the legally blind individuals in New York State would apply for New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) services and be found eligible for services. According to the American Community Survey, there are 19,342,600 individuals in New York State. The prevalence rate of visual impairment is

1.8% which results in an estimated 356,700 individuals reporting a visual disability. For individuals between the ages of 16 and 64, there is an estimated 176,000 individuals reporting a visual disability. Since the data includes individuals who are visually impaired and not only individuals who are legally blind, it can provide some useful information to estimate the number of individuals who would be eligible for services from NYSCB, however, it cannot be used as a benchmark since NYSCB only serves individuals who are legally blind. Therefore, the best estimate of the number of individuals in the state who are eligible for VR services is based on historical data as noted below. NYSCB provides a full range of vocational rehabilitation services to eligible individuals. NYSCB has evaluated data on the number of individuals who applied for services, the number of people found eligible for VR services and the number of individuals served in the past three years. Based on this evaluation, NYSCB estimates that during Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2016, 1,400 individuals will be found eligible for NYSCB services. As needed and with permission of both ACCES-VR and NYSCB, expenditures may be transferred to and from either organization to align the needs of NYSCB and ACCES-VR with the available funding.

## 2. THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL RECEIVE SERVICES UNDER:

### A. THE VR PROGRAM;

NYSCB anticipates serving 5,000 individuals during FFY 2016. Of the 5,000 individuals expected to receive services, NYSCB expects that 4,950 individuals will be served using Title I Vocational Rehabilitation funds at a total estimated cost of $24,000,000 and an average cost of services of $4,848.

### B. THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM; AND

NYSCB expects that the remaining 50 individuals will be served using Title VI, Part B Supported Employment funds at a total estimated cost of $250,000 and an average cost of services of 5,000.

### C. EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION;

NYSCB is not implementing an Order of Selection.

## 3. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR VR SERVICES, BUT ARE NOT RECEIVING SUCH SERVICES DUE TO AN ORDER OF SELECTION; AND

NYSCB is not implementing an Order of Selection.

## 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.

Vocational Rehabilitation - Title I

Estimated Funds: $24,000,000

Estimated Number to be Served: 4,950

Average Cost of Services: 4,848

Supported Employment - Title VI

Estimated Funds: $250,000

Estimated Number to be Served: 50

Average Cost of Services: 4,924

## 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.

From approved Fiscal Year 2015 State Plan:

These goals and priorities have been developed using feedback from NYSCB workgroups, the Executive Board, the State Rehabilitation Council, participant input from NYSCB open forums, the results of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment, the Executive Board and NYSCB administrative priorities.

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

Goal 1: Improve and expand consumer services.

Goal 2:Increase the number of competitive employment outcomes using Fiscal Year 2014 data on the number of competitive employment outcomes as a baseline.

Goal 3: Promote awareness of NYSCB services for individuals who are blind throughout New York State.

Goal 4: Increase staff capacity to deliver quality services to consumers.

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

The New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) has updated the goals and priorities that were developed for the 2014 State Plan. These goals and priorities have been developed in accordance with the results of the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment, recommendations from Rehabilitation Administration Services (RSA) and NYSCB administrative priorities. The SRC has provided input into these goals and priorities.

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

The New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) has updated the goals and priorities that were developed for the 2014 State Plan. These goals and priorities have been developed in accordance with the results of the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment, recommendations from Rehabilitation Administration Services (RSA) and NYSCB administrative priorities. The SRC has provided input into these goals and priorities.

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

NYSCB did not collect data for the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA in FY 15 however, the goals in this section are in line with the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA. These goals will be re-evaluated and adjusted as needed after performance data is obtained.

### 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.

The New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) has updated the goals and priorities that were developed for the 2014 State Plan. These goals and priorities have been developed in accordance with the results of the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment, recommendations from Rehabilitation Administration Services (RSA) and NYSCB administrative priorities. The SRC has provided input into these goals and priorities.

## 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.

NYSCB is not implementing an Order of Selection.

### B. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER.

NYSCB is not implementing an Order of Selection.

### C. THE SERVICE AND OUTCOME GOALS.

NYSCB is not implementing an Order of Selection.

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

NYSCB is not implementing an Order of Selection.

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

NYSCB is not implementing an Order of Selection.

### 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.

NYSCB is not implementing an Order of Selection.

## N. GOALS AND PLANS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS.

### 1. SPECIFY THE STATE'S GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR FUNDS RECEIVED UNDER SECTION 603 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES.

The purpose of the New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB)'s supported employment program is to enable individuals with the most significant disabilities to achieve and maintain competitive employment in their communities. NYSCB continues to serve all eligible individuals who need supported employment services, with a goal of placing as many individuals as possible in employment. In Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2015, 29 individuals received supported employment services. A total of four consumers were successfully placed in supported competitive employment and transitioned to extended supported employment services (a decrease of two from FFY 2014).The average hourly wage slightly increased from $8.86/hr. to $8.87/hr., and the average number of hours worked per week slightly decreased from 22.2 to 18 Referrals increased from 15 to 24.

NYSCB has four primary goals for FFY 2016: the first is to increase the number of individuals placed in supported employment to at least the level of 2012 (20); the second is to increase hourly wages to at least $8.95/hr.; the third is to maintain the average number of hours worked at a minimum of 23 hrs./week; and the fourth is to increase referrals. In New York State, the administrative responsibility for supported employment programs is consolidated in the Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES-VR), as established in accordance with Section 3, Chapter 515 of the Laws of New York of 1992. ACCES-VR incorporated supported employment into its new Core Rehabilitation Services Contract effective January 1, 2014. Supported Employment is now an outcome based-funded model. NYSCB works cooperatively with ACCES-VR to provide opportunities for supported employment across the state. NYSCB and ACCES-VR will be having quarterly meetings to review the new model. NYSCB staff have been trained on the new outcome contracts, and additional training will be implemented as needed.

## 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

NYSCB does not currently provide extended supported employment services. If extended services are provided to youth with the most significant disabilities in the future, they would be provided for a period not to exceed four years. NYSCB currently works directly with OPWDD and OMH to transition to extended supported employment services prior to the 24-month limitation of supported employment intensive services.

NYSCB continues to maintain case management, program monitoring and oversight responsibilities for the supported employment services provided to NYSCB consumers. Service providers regularly provide NYSCB with individual consumer reports, and NYSCB staff meets regularly with providers and consumers.

NYSCB will continue to work with ACCES–VR to assess performance on an ongoing basis, participate in on–site reviews, and provide technical assistance or recommend adjustments to contracts as needed.

NYSCB, with ACCES–VR, continues to take a close look at supported employment caseloads to utilize Title VI–B funds in the most effective manner to assist individuals with most significant disabilities in obtaining competitive employment.

Counselors have been instructed to:

- Conduct comprehensive assessments, including situational assessments, prior to referral for supported employment services in order to increase the likelihood that individuals referred for supported employment will benefit from it. This also allows intensive service dollars to be focused more on job development, placement and training and should allow individuals to complete the intensive phase more quickly.
- Consider the use of natural supports following employment and start to establish eligibility for extended services at the beginning of the planning process. This will maximize the use of limited ACCES–VR funding for extended services.

Provider agencies have been instructed to regularly review cases to determine which consumers no longer require extended services due to their increased experience and confidence, and the availability of natural supports.

During the past year, NYSCB has worked with other members of the Chapter 515 Implementation Team to improve the delivery of supported employment services. Specifically, the team has:

- Shared information about program revisions within each agency’s service delivery system; and
- Reviewed data to monitor the effectiveness of supported employment services.

### 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.

Because blindness is a low incidence disability, NYSCB continues to be challenged in anticipating service needs and distributing the limited funds available. The lack of extended services funds further limits the number of individuals who can enter intensive supported employment services. NYSCB plans to work more closely with ACCES-VR in the future to determine the distribution of funds available for intensive and extended services, while providing information and training to enable staff to better access extended services through the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) or Office of Mental Health (OMH), as appropriate.

## 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 and priorities have been developed using feedback from NYSCB workgroups, the Executive Board, the State Rehabilitation Council, participant input from NYSCB open forums, the results of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment, the Executive Board and NYSCB administrative priorities.

**Goal 1**: Improve and expand consumer services.

**Strategies**

1. Expand services and increase awareness of services available to individuals who are deaf–blind by encouraging staff to participate in training, events and programs offered by the New York Deaf–Blind Collaborative.

2. Support teaching Braille to adults for daily living and employment activities by encouraging counselors to discuss the value and benefit of learning functional Braille.

3. Identify ways to improve services for the populations identified in the current Comprehensive Needs Assessment Report.

4. Develop additional vocational training programs that meet the needs of consumers and businesses.

5. Continue to foster the current working relationships with Office of Mental Health and the Office for Persons with Developmental Disabilities on both the local and state level.

6. Improve consumer access to English as a Second Language training programs, literacy and the high school equivalency test prep programs and educational services.

7. Develop and implement plans to increase training opportunities in technical trades and middle skill jobs for transition–age consumers who will not be participating in post–secondary education.

8. Continue to hold summer pre–college programs on college campuses to prepare high school students who are legally blind for college life.

9. Continue to support work experience opportunities that meet individual needs and allow students who are legally blind to participate in paid work experiences in integrated community settings.

10. Continue to expand pre–vocational services for youth ages 10–13 years.

11. Increase the inclusion of specialists, mental health providers and other pertinent professionals to address the needs of consumers with multiple disabilities on a case–by–case basis.

12. Include families in the evaluation and training sessions for school and home based services.

**Goal 2**: Increase the number of competitive employment outcomes using Fiscal Year 2014 data on the number of competitive employment outcomes as a baseline.

**Strategies**

1. Increase collaborative efforts with community rehabilitation providers in regards to business development efforts, increase partnerships and regional relationships with businesses to increase their awareness of the skills and abilities of individuals who are blind.

2. Enhance information and resources for businesses on the NYSCB website.

3. Promote business awareness of NYSCB workforce programs and business services through print, broadcast and electronic media to include social media, and continue to promote awareness of NYSCB through personal face–to–face contacts with businesses.

4. Continue to work with the National Employment Team (NET) of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and other employment networks to improve employment options for NYSCB consumers.

5. Work to build partnerships with America's Job Centers as well as the four core partners, to increase access to services needed by NYSCB consumers.

6. Expand working relationships with agencies that typically serve individuals with disabilities other than blindness and offer vocational training and placement services.

7. Support and promote the Business Enterprise Program in order to increase employment opportunities and successful outcomes.

8. Increase provision of work incentives advisement to consumers by training counselors on the impact of work on SSI and SSDI and the importance of benefits advisement and financial literacy;

and requiring documentation of the provision of work incentives advisement in consumers' case records.

9. Work with National Industries for the Blind to develop competitive integrated employment opportunities in the Service sector; and assist NIB in developing a business leadership program for consumers seeking to advance in their employment.

10. Promote opportunities for individuals who are blind to become self–employed.

**Goal 3**: Promote awareness of NYSCB services for individuals who are blind throughout New York State.

### Strategies

1. Continue to promote NYSCB services to the populations identified in the 2013 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) as underserved. Expand outreach efforts to specific underserved populations identified by each NYSCB district.

2. Increase the awareness of services among minority populations by providing access to information in different languages.

3. Continue to develop working relationships with culturally specific community–based organizations such as literacy programs, faith based organizations, service groups and community action programs.

4. Create public awareness of NYSCB services by participating in job fairs, health fairs, street fairs consumer based organizations conventions, conferences and other community events.

5. Target distribution of marketing materials to libraries, Independent Living Centers (ILCs), healthcare providers, pre–service secondary education providers, parent centers and hospitals with follow up efforts by each NYSCB district.

6. Enhance NYSCB exposure through development and distribution of print, social media including Facebook and YouTube, audio and video materials.

7. Promote awareness of NYSCB services through personal outreach to eye care providers and at their respective statewide and regional conferences.

8. Compile success stories from current and past consumers and post on the NYSCB website, and include in dissemination and marketing materials.

**Goal 4**: Increase staff capacity to deliver quality services to consumers.

### Strategies

1. Continue efforts to diversify NYSCB staff and provide cultural competency to new staff.

2. Encourage staff to attend supervision and management training in connection with succession planning.

3. Continue new employee orientation programming in all regional offices to include training on visual impairment and low vision.

4. Provide ongoing and continued training for ATC providers and consider having a baseline competency certification for approved providers.

5. Continue to work with providers of employment services in understanding and utilizing employment tax credits, federal and local hiring authorities and the ticket to work system.

6. Increase the regional workforce development conducted at a regional, district office level, including the promoting NYSCB with community businesses.

## 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.

NYSCB provides assistive technology services and devices to individuals during each stage of the rehabilitation process through assistive technology center (ATC) contracts and through private vendors. The outcome–based services of ATC Readiness Evaluation, ATC Assessment and ATC Training provide a comprehensive and rigorous array of assessments and training with the goal of preparing students for success in school and employment. ATC Centers as well as a network of more than 30 private assistive technology trainers provide onsite needs evaluation and training for individuals who are unable to travel to a center or whose needs require intervention at their education or employment site.

A list of approved private vendors is posted on the NYSCB website.

Two NYSCB loan closets also provide statewide access to loaner equipment while a consumer is awaiting delivery of equipment purchased for them for school or employment.

In addition, NYSCB provides assistive technology devices and training to current managers and manager trainees in the Randolph–Sheppard Business Enterprise Program to enable them to manage their newsstands and food service operations in accordance with industry standard.

## 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.

NYSCB has developed contract guidelines for a new Outreach/Case Finding component that establishes a reimbursable outcome for outreach to underserved communities. The new contract component was implemented in June 2015.

NYSCB will review its activities and develop a new structure for its participation in the Designated State Agency Racial Equity and Cultural Competence priority.

## 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).

Develop and implement plans to increase training opportunities in technical trades and middle skills jobs for transition–age consumers who will not be participating in post–secondary education.

Continue to hold summer pre–college programs on college campuses to prepare high school students who are legally blind for college life.

Continue to support work experience opportunities that meet individual needs and allow students who are legally blind to participate in paid work experiences in integrated community settings.

Continue to expand pre–vocational services for youth ages 10–13 years.

Include families in the evaluation and training sessions for school and home based services.

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

NYSCB continues to work closely with community rehabilitation providers to create new pre-vocational and vocational training programs for both adults and transition-age youth. In addition, NYSCB district offices engage new providers when specialized training is required for a consumer to reach their vocational goal. NYSCB also conducts both quality assurance and curriculum reviews so that existing programs continue to provide quality programming that prepares consumers to enter the 21st century workforce.

NYSCB has begun to survey documentation submitted at the end of the Readiness Assessment and the AT Assessment and Training to ensure that AT centers are conducting assessments and services in accordance with the AT Guidelines manual.

NYSCB continues to encourage development of vocational training programs that meet the requirements of business and will work with providers to create and approve curricula, especially in fields with jobs in demand where vocational training has not previously been available.

NYSCB continues to support community rehabilitation providers in the development of pre-vocational programs beginning with youth at age ten and continuing through the transition years. These programs will provide both variety and increasing complexity so that youth are well prepared for post-secondary education and training.

New placement contracts reflecting the expectations and requirements for service delivery were implemented on January 1, 2015 for a five-year period.

NYSCB conducts meetings with directors of rehabilitation and agency administrators throughout its service regions to discuss quality of service delivery and new programming needs on a regular basis.

NYSCB and community provider staff continues to meet annually at the Vision Rehabilitation Institute to learn and discuss issues related to blindness and employment.

## 6. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE STATE WITH RESPECT TO THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA.

Many of the strategies identified in this State Plan align with the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA. In particular, the strategies associated with improving employment outcomes, preparing youth for employment and engaging the business community will support improving performance on the performance accountability measures.

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

1. Efforts to connect with Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs) in America's JobCenters and to participate in Local Workforce Development Boards serve multiple purposes: connecting NYSCB to businesses, promoting knowledge about NYSCB and its services, and connecting job seekers to services at the job centers which may lead to more competitive outcomes. NYSCB will work with the core State Plan partners to implement the WIOA related strategies outlined in the Combined State Plan.

2. Participation by NYSCB staff in Chapter 515 meetings allows discussions among NYSCB, ACCES-VR, the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), and the Office of Mental Health (OMH) about the challenges facing mutual consumers including minorities and individuals who are deaf-blind and those in more isolated communities. The group works to achieve more effective transition from pre-employment programs to employment, identify barriers to participation in employment and distribute services to achieve equitable access. In planning and coordinating activities, including training, the group will help staff to increase skills needed to help consumers achieve integrated employment while increasing knowledge and access to each other's services.

3. By supporting increased use of benefits planning through Independent Living Centers, DRC's and other qualified resources, NYSCB anticipates that more consumers will choose careers, and work hours, which will allow them to go off SSA benefits and achieve economic self-sufficiency. In addition, NYSCB has signed a Partnership Plus agreement with the OMH Administrative Employment Network. This will increase opportunities for consumers to obtain continued support to maintain their jobs after case closure. NYSCB works with ACCES-VR to allocate contract capacity for Supported Employment services to try to assure the services are available to individuals with the most significant disabilites seeking those services.

## 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 strategies are consistent with addressing needs identified in the comprehensive needs assessment.

## B. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES; AND

The strategies identified in the State Plan directly apply to the innovation and expansion activities planned for this State Plan year.

NYSCB plans to use Innovation and Expansion funds for the following projects in FY 2016.

1. Outreach/Case Finding- Innovation and expansion funds will be used for a contract service component for successful outreach/case finding to individuals of working age (generally 18-55) who are legally blind who may be unaware of the vocational rehabilitation services available to them through the New York State Commission for the Blind. Specific criteria have been developed that will need to be met in order for the agency to receive payment for finding and referring an individual for NYSCB services. The goal is to promote the availability of VR services to New Yorkers who are legally blind who are not yet known to NYSCB.

2. Pre-College Programs - NYSCB will continue to use innovation and expansion funds to support the two pre-college programs that began in the summer of 2013. NYSCB has contracted with two private agencies for individuals who are blind to provide pre-college programs for NYSCB consumers entering their senior year of high school. The goal of the program is to provide these students the opportunity to refine their academic, social and independent living skills before beginning college. The four week programs began in the summer of 2013 and will continue through the summer of 2017. The students are housed on a college campus and participate in two non-credit courses: an “Introduction to College” course which focuses on adaptive academic and college “survival” skills such as acquiring books in alternative formats, requesting accommodations and identifying important resources on a college campus; and a “Developmental Writing/Technology Seminar” where students receive individual and group writing instruction using an online webinar format and are introduced to web conferencing and discussion forums. Thirty-three students attended the program this past summer. Overall the program was a success and students evaluated the programs highly. There has been a significant amount of follow-up since the program ended to assess what may need to be changed in order to improve the program next summer.

3. NYSCB will also use innovation and expansion funds to develop vocational training programs for adults and pre-vocational programs specifically for youth ages 10-14. Newly developed training programs for adults will be targeted to careers with strong business growth potential. The programs for 10-14 year olds will focus on job exploration and job shadowing.

## 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.

Several of the strategies identified in the State Plan are geared toward overcoming barriers to equitable access to and participation in VR and supported employment services including strategies to develop additional training programs, improve access to English as a Second Language training programs, the expansion of pre-vocational services for youth and to increase the awareness of services among minority populations by providing information in different languages.

## 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.

The New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) evaluates progress toward the achievement of goals and priorities on an ongoing basis. NYSCB is reporting on the goals and objectives identified in the 2015 Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) State Plan. Employment outcomes increased during fiscal year 2015. NYSCB placed 472 individuals in competitive employment. This was an almost six (5.7) percent increase over FY 14 when 445 individuals were placed in competitive employment. The average hourly wage for FY 15 was $19.71, an almost two percent increase from FY 14 when the average hourly wage was $19.37.

**Goal 1**: Improve and expand consumer services

1. NYSCB continues to successfully meet the requirements set forth in vocational rehabilitation standards and indicators successfully passing all of the standards and indicators in FY 15.

2. NYSCB Upstate and Downstate deaf-blind coordinators receive information about webinars and training provided by the New York Deaf-Blind Collaborative and distributes to counselor and agency staff and encourages their participation. Information about the Deaf-Blind Collaborative is provided to outside providers when NYSCB is contacted in regards to working with deaf-blind individuals in capacities outside of Vocational Rehabilitation.

3. NYSCB staff continues to refer for Braille instruction as well as counsel consumers on the importance of learning functional Braille.

4. Mental health impairment as a secondary condition was identified by the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment CSNA) as in indicator for unsuccessful closure. NYSCB increased relationships with Office of Mental Health (OMH) and the Office for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) on both the local and state level. The receipt of public assistance benefits was also identified as an indicator for unsuccessful case closure. Benefits advisement service referrals and providers were increased and are expected to reduce this gap. The Needs Assessment also found that individuals who received high-tech devices were more likely to be successfully closed. A new adaptive technology center (ATC) contract was implemented. The contract guidelines set high standards for the delivery of ATC evaluation and training services.

5. NYSCB consumers participated in an employment based medical records program at Baruch College. District Offices have conducted outreach on their own and collaborated with ACCES-VR to expand vocational training opportunities for NYSCB consumers. Both core partners met with Human

Resource hiring managers interested in matching consumers with hard to fill positions in their local businesses.

6. NYSCB reviewed the vocational training programs currently delivered through community rehabilitation partners and determined that two types of vocational skills training are needed; one to support consumers in increasing employability and a second to meet the demands of emerging labor markets. The first type of training is focused on those consumers planning to enter fields such as customer service, office administration, and other clerical occupations and the potential need to acquire advanced skills levels in Braille, keyboarding, note taking, computer applications and other office practices. The second type of vocational skills training is related to meeting the needs of a particular business or business sector and is developed in conjunction with a business or group of businesses representing a sector which is expected to have a high demand for employees over the next five to ten years. NYSCB will continue to develop and explore the need for new programs and training opportunities.

During the past year, Lighthouse Guild, based in New York City, entered into discussions with NYSCB regarding the need for intensive Braille training for individuals who expect to use Braille in work settings. It has become apparent that for consumers planning to enter the workforce in administrative and professional settings, Braille proficiency must exceed the training that can be offered through Vision Rehabilitation Therapy (VRT). Lighthouse Guild is currently testing a pilot program that combines introduction of Braille skills during VRT and continued skill building through Vocational Training.

Two other providers, Visions Services for the Blind and Helen Keller Services for the Blind, received a 3-year grant from the Lavelle Foundation to identify emerging business sectors in the New York City metro area. Awardees of this grant will develop training programs for those in partnership with employers, and provide training for individuals who are blind, leading to employment. It is expected that at the conclusion of the grant, training programs initiated under the grant that have resulted in successful employment for individuals who are blind and consumers will be sponsored by NYSCB through its vocational training and placement programs. NYSCB continues to encourage its providers to develop new vocational training options utilizing a similar business-centered approach.

7. NYSCB's District Offices provide in-service trainings on blindness and related independence issues, as well as training opportunities for their local OPWDD agencies in their residential settings and program locations. Home Office staff met with OPWDD Home Office staff to discuss the current needs of youth at both the state and regional level. Communication continues between the two agencies. Information on local issues has been shared with district office staff.

8. In conjunction with Cornell University, a consumer satisfaction survey was completed; the goal sample size of 300 participants was achieved. In FY 15 Cornell researchers presented data, trends and findings to NYSCB and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). Program and policy implementation and revision discussions began and are ongoing.

9. NYSCB provides assistive technology services and devices to individuals during each stage of the rehabilitation process through assistive technology center (ATC) contracts and through private vendors. The outcome-based services of ATC Readiness Evaluation, ATC Assessment, and ATC Training provide a comprehensive and rigorous array of assessments and training with the goal of preparing students for success in school and employment. ATC Centers as well as a network of more than 30 private assistive technology trainers provide onsite needs evaluation and training for whose needs require intervention at their education or employment site.

10. NYSCB has increased the number of Community Rehabilitation providers available to provide the service of academic instruction (ESL), and has increased the use of language line statewide, as well as access to services in other languages in an effort to improve access to training programs for individuals for whom English is not a primary language. New forms in alternate languages were also developed and are available on NYSCB's and OCFS's websites.

11. Two Pre-College Programs were held in 2015. Thirty-three students from across New York State attended the programs. Each student received training on using the required assistive technology prior to the program. The programs continue to improve and NYSCB is conducting an evaluation to assess both student satisfaction with the program and to determine what activities previous program participants are involved in.

12. NYSCB Transition Counselors worked closely with students to develop appropriate integrated work experiences in local communities. Counselors worked closely with school staff to coordinate work experiences for students.

13. Private agencies for individuals who are blind have been encouraged to develop additional pre-vocational programs for younger VR consumers. In FY 15, two new programs were developed. Both programs focus on helping youth develop social skills and expand their awareness of themselves and the world around them. This is accomplished through a combination of interactive social and learning activities, career exploration activities and activities that allow participants to use their written, verbal and computer skills. To assist agencies create these similar programs, NYSCB home office staff compiled and shared information describing all prevocational programs available through the private agencies for individuals who are blind in New York State.

14. District Offices comfort with using and accessing the service of Support Service Providers (SSP) as well as agencies employing interpreters with tactile signing skills increased. NYSCB increased the number of deaf- blind coordinators to include one in both upstate and down state locations.

**Goal 2**: Increase the number of competitive employment outcomes using Fiscal Year 2013 data on the number of competitive employment outcomes as a baseline.

1. District Offices held collaborative meetings with local business Human Resource hiring managers in conjunction with ACCES-VR. District Office staff were in attendance to discuss the current consumer base skill level and work to match consumers with jobs hiring managers were having difficulty filling.

District Offices developed relationships with businesses local to their area through internships, Work Experience Training opportunities and Work Try-Outs. The businesses have started contacting counselors when they have job openings and the business representatives and NYSCB staff has developed on-going communication about the job market and skills development.

2. NYSCB improved and updated the existing "for employer" page on the website and additionally created a concise and clearer fact sheet for businesses that is used regionally and distributedthroughout the state.

3. NYSCB utilizes NYS Office of Children and Family Services Twitter and Facebook accounts to announce events, post news as well as share information on an ongoing basis as appropriate.

4. Home office staff participated in the Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) employment related training webinars and events including state widetraining in the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP). District Office staff participated in a TAP webinar to become familiarized with the portal system, how to support consumers in getting their resumes on the portal, as well as how to interact with the other features available in the TAP computer system.

5. NYSCB District Offices have visited and toured many of the America's Job Centers (AJC), counselors in some areas have begun to hold monthly office days at one or more of the AJC's in their territory. Home Office staff continues to reach out to the America's Job Centers in order to have a more active role on their local boards, this effort continues.

6. NYSCB staff members provide outreach and in-service trainings to programs providing employment services for individuals with developmental disabilities. In addition, staff havereached out to agencies providing supported employment services through the OMH and OPWDD service delivery systems to assist in increasing acceptance of NYSCB referrals and increase their knowledge base when working with individuals who are blind.

7. Ongoing communications with state agencies and authorities identified by new state Business Enterprise Program (BEP) legislation yielded multiple opportunities for a presence in locations on SUNY campuses and Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority property including, but not limited to the Buffalo International Airport.

District Offices continue to refer consumers to the BEP program and a new process for determining readiness to participate has been implemented and supported by both BEP staff and Vocational Rehabilitation staff.

8. Referrals for benefits advisement continue to increase. As a result the number of vendors approved to provide this service increased in FY 15. Select Independent Living Centers provide benefits counseling to active consumers on a pro bono basis thus further increasing the availability and use of the service.In New York City, a financial literacy program for college students was conducted in collaboration with Barclay Bank. NYSCB consumers and District Office Staff attended this program which provided useful information for consumers as they move to enter the workforce.

9. Working with the National Industries for the Blind, new call centers and other service sector employment opportunities for NYSCB consumers have been developed this year. A new call center was opened in Brooklyn and actively hired consumers from NYSCB. Management staff at the call centers as well as counselors continually monitor front line staff at these call centers to provide any necessary support to the consumers employed there and to assist them in advancing their employment skills.

NYSCB developed a collaborative relationship with SUNY Small Business Development Center in the Albany area. Self-employment plans submitted to home office for review have increased during FY 15. Staff participated in self-employment training that focused on the contents of a business plan during the Vision Rehabilitation Institute. The training was well attended andreceived positive reviews. In addition, training on the NYSCB Self-Employment policy took place in October 2015 at the Statewide Counselor meeting.

**Goal 3**: Promote awareness of NYSCB services for individuals who are blind throughout New York State

1. NYSCB participated in activities to target the underserved populations, as identified by the CSNA. The NYSCB Outreach Coordinator conducted outreach presentations across the state, in conjunction with NYSCB district offices, at community centers, health fairs, job fairs, ethnic festivals, churches, and senior centers. Recently, outreach to Native Americans was done in the Buffalo and Syracuse area District Offices. Also, the NYSCB Outreach Coordinator broadcasted a monthly public service outreach announcement on a Rochester radio station serving minorities throughout Rochester and Western New York State.

2. NYSCB participated in agency-wide efforts to identify those consumers with limited English proficiency. NYSCB complied with NYS Executive Order 26 by providing both interpreter service (via Language Line Telephone Interpreter Service) and translation of vital agency documents into the most often-needed languages in New York State: Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Haitian Creole, Korean, and Italian.

Each NYSCB district office continually assesses the cultural needs in their region. The primary focus is to identify unique strategies and approaches to promote service delivery reflecting the various communities each office serves.

3. NYSCB developed new marketing materials targeted for distribution at libraries, Independent Living Centers (ILCs), health care providers, pre services secondary education providers, parent centers and hospitals in line with the new NYS branding. Work on this continues into FY 16 in order to coordinate the distribution and outreach in line with the newly developed materials.

NYSCB district offices conduct marketing and public relations activities in their local business areas. A NYSCB Marketing Committee finalized marketing materials in Federal Fiscal Year 2014 that included specific materials to share with businesses. Throughout Fiscal Year 2015, NYSCB district offices have participated in job fairs, Human Resources events, Health and Wellness Events and have distributed these new marketing materials with the goal of increasing awareness of NYSCB services in the larger community. NYSCB maintains active participation in the National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) events. Activities have included nominating businesses with whom collaboration has resulted in the employment of NYSCB consumers; participation in the selection of statewide business award recipients and attendance at local awards ceremonies in each district office region.

4. NYSCB utilizes NYS Office of Children and Family Services Twitter and Facebook accounts to announce events, post news as well as share information on an ongoing basis as appropriate.

5. During the past year, NYSCB district office staff has participated in outreach events sponsored by eye care providers, optometry and ophthalmologic events as well as been in attendance at respective statewide conferences. Participation in these events promotes awareness of NYSCB and the services provided to individuals who are legally blind.

**Goal 4**: Increase staff capacity to deliver quality service to consumers

1. NYSCB continues to assess with each district office cultural needs in their territories. The primary focus is to identify unique strategies and approaches to promote service delivery reflecting the communities each office serves.

2. During the past year, four NYSCB supervisors graduated from the year-long OCFS Supervisory Institute. In addition, staff is encouraged to attend supervisor trainings offered by OCFS.

3. Discussions and planning regarding the new employee orientation are ongoing with the goal of implementing a new orientation protocol during FY 16.

4. On-line and classroom computer training opportunities are offered by OCFS and the computer training calendar is updated monthly and distributed to District Offices statewide. District office training on access technology is offered regularly.

5. In an effort to assist counselors with accurate and complete data entry for the RSA 911 report, Home Office staff functions as a resource for addressing counselor's questions regarding specific data elements. NYSCB continues to assess and discuss implementation and training needs surrounding the changes to the 911 Case Services Report regarding frequency of reporting and data elements being collected in line with WIOA.

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

NYSCB passed all standards and indicators in FY 2014 and will continue to focus efforts on providing training and placement services to enable consumers to achieve their employment goals.

## 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.

In Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2015, 29 individuals received supported employment services. A total of four consumers were successfully placed in supported competitive employment and transitioned to extended supported employment services (a decrease of two from FFY 2014). The average hourly wage slightly increased from $8.86/hr. to $8.87/hr. and the average number of hours worked per week slightly decreased from 22.2 to 18. Referrals increased from 15 to 24.

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

NYSCB has not identified any impediments to the achievement of these goals and priorities.

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

NYSCB did not collect data for the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA in FY 15 and will report this performance in the next State Plan.

**Standards and Indicators**

NYSCB passed all indicators in Standard 1 and passed Standard 2 in FY 14. As an agency serving individuals who are blind, NYSCB's performance on Standard 1, indicators 1.2-1.6 and Indicator 2 is measured using two years of data.

1. Indicator 1.1 measures the increase or decrease in the number of successfully closed consumers from the prior year. In FY 14, there was an increase of 13 successfully employed consumers from FY 13.

2. Indicator 1.2 measures the number of individuals who exit the VR program as successfully employed compared to the number of individuals who exit the VR program without employment after having developed an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). In FY 14, 71.9 percent of VR program participants were closed as successfully employed. The passing level for this indicator is 68.9 percent.

3. Indicator 1.3 measures the number of individuals who leave the VR program competitively employed as a percentage of all employment outcomes. In FY 14, 83.2 percent of individuals closed successfully were competitively employed. The passing level for this indicator is 35.4 percent.

4. Indicator 1.4 measures the number of individuals successfully closed who have a significant disability. In FY 14, 91.9 percent of these individuals were determined to have a significant disability. The passing level for this indicator is 89 percent.

5. Indicator 1.5 measures the hourly earnings of individuals who achieved employment against the average hourly earnings of all New Yorkers. The passing level for this indicator is 59 percent; NYSCB achieved 67.2 percent for this indicator.

6. Indicator 1.6 examines the percentage of clients that report their earnings as their primary source of support at case closure compared to those who report their earnings as their primarysource of support at application. In FY 14, achieved 36.2 percent for this indicator that has a 30.4 percent passing level.

7. Standard 2 evaluates the service rate for all individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds as a ratio to the service rate for all non-minority individuals with disabilities. In FY 14 NYSCB's service rate was 82.5 percent. The passing level for this Standard is 8.0.

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

NYSCB used Innovation and Expansion funds for the following projects in FY 2015.

1. Marketing materials – in FY 15 NYSCB used innovation and expansion funds to translate new marketing brochures that were developed in FY 2013 and FY 2014 into additional languages in order to widely distribute information about NYSCB to employers, ophthalmologists and other entities used for outreach purposes.

2. Pre–College Programs – NYSCB used innovation and expansion funds to support the two precollege programs that began in the summer of 2013. NYSCB contracted with two private agencies for individuals who are blind to provide pre–college programs for NYSCB consumers entering their senior year of high school. The goal of the program is to provide these students the

opportunity to refine their academic, social and independent living skills before beginning college. The four week programs began in the summer of 2013 and will continue through the summer of 2017. The students are housed on a college campus and participate in two non–credit courses: an “Introduction to College” course which focuses on adaptive academic and college “survival” skills such as acquiring books in alternative formats, requesting accommodations and identifying important resources on a college campus; and a “Developmental Writing/Technology Seminar” where students receive individual and group writing instruction using an online webinar format and are introduced to web conferencing and discussion forums. Thirty–three students attended the program this past summer. Overall the program was a success and students evaluated the programs highly. There has been a significant amount of follow–up since the program ended to assess what may need to be changed in order to improve the program next summer.

## 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.

From approved Fiscal Year 2015 State Plan:

The Vocational Rehabilitation division of the Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACESS–VR) continues to have primary responsibility for supported employment programs and other integrated employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities in New York State. A memorandum of understanding is in place covering the respective roles and responsibilities of the New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB), ACCES–VR, the Office for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), and the Office of Mental Health (OMH) in supported employment for consumers who are blind.

Since 1989, the number of community agencies utilizing Supported Employment Grant Funds under Title VI–B of the Rehabilitation Act to provide supported employment services to individuals who are blind has expanded from eight to 59. The grant awards stipulate adherence to all requirements set forth in Title VI–B of the Rehabilitation Act. Targeted populations include individuals with multiple disabilities who are aging out of educational programs, individuals in day treatment and long term extended employment and those who have been unable to maintain employment in integrated community settings. The "individual placement" is the prevailing model; however, this does not preclude consideration of alternatives including the "enclave" and "affirmative business." The 59 agencies are located in major cities and in suburban and rural areas across the State.

When an individual’s work performance is actualized, natural supports maximized, and the services (job coaching, adjustment counseling and advocacy) reach the lowest level necessary for the individual to maintain employment, the individual’s supported employment case is closed. Extended services provide ongoing support and can be provided by a state agency, private organization, employer, co–workers and family members, or any other source available to assist the individual to maintain employment. Under the Memorandum of Interagency Understanding Regarding Supported Employment, OMH and OPWDD provide follow–along services for individuals who meet their respective eligibility criteria. Individuals who do not meet OMH or OPWDD criteria may receive extended services through designated ACCES–VR funds or through natural supports in the work

place. Individuals in extended services may request Post Employment Services or, if necessary, ask to have their cases reopened.

Traditional vocational rehabilitation services continue to be available to supported employment candidates using Vocational Rehabilitation funds in the development as well as the execution of Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). In this regard there is no distinction from other vocational rehabilitation consumers. Quality assurance is a matter of ongoing concern. Providers receive Guidelines for Supported Employment which are updated as needed and convey the expectations for quality services. ACCES–VR quality assurance staff, with input from NYSCB and other partners, established new case review form protocols to gather information that can be used to monitor and improve services. NYSCB district office staff is invited to participate in reviews of agencies in their catchment area; however, they typically participate only in reviews of agencies that are serving consumers who are blind.

The NYSCB supported employment coordinator and staff regularly monitor reports and contract implementation. The coordinator regularly talks with NYSCB district office, staff, contractors and state monitors to address progress and opportunities for program improvement, providing technical assistance and training as needed.

## 2. THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES.

Supported employment services are delivered through the ACCES–VR contracting system, as agreed under Section 3, Chapter 515 of the Laws of New York of 1992. NYSCB transfers its supported employment funds to ACCES–VR, but retains case management responsibility for individuals in the intensive service phase. In January 2014, a new Supported Employment contract methodology was implemented which is expected to result in:

1. Increased time for counselors and providers to plan together and review consumer progress

2. More efficient authorization and reporting processes,

3. More timely movement from referral to job placement and stabilization, and

4. Increased earnings and work hours for successful supported employment consumers

## CERTIFICATIONS

Name of designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate **The Department of Family Assistance/ Office of Children and Family Services**

Name of designated State agency **Department of Family Assistance/Office of Children and Family Services**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Sheila J. Poole**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Acting Commissioner, Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS)**

**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

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### 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 **NYS Office of Children and Family Services**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Sheila J. Poole**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Acting 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.

(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.

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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 **NYS Office of Children and Family Services**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Sheila J. Poole**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Acting 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 **Yes**

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.

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* 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.

## TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE (TAA)

There are no program-specific state planning requirements for TAA. If the state includes TAA in a Combined State Plan, the state must incorporate TAA in its responses to the common planning elements in sections II, III, IV, and V of the WIOA State Plan requirements instrument.

TAA elements have been incorporated into the sections indicated.

Has the state incorporated TAA into the sections indicated above? Yes

# 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 | 64.00 | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline |
| Dislocated Workers | 60.00 | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline |
| Youth | 53.00 | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline |
| Adult Education | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline |
| Wagner-Peyser | 61.00 | 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 | 64.00 | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline |
| Dislocated Workers | 61.00 | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline |
| Youth | 59.00 | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline |
| Adult Education | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline |
| Wagner-Peyser | 62.00 | 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 | 4,418.00 | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline |
| Dislocated Workers | 5,717.00 | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline |
| Youth | 2,006.00 | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline |
| Adult Education | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline |
| Wagner-Peyser | 4,840.00 | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline |
| Vocational Rehabilitation | Baseline | Baseline | Baseline | 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 | 59.00 | 62.00 | 60.00 | 62.00 |
| 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)