WIOA STATE PLAN FOR THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA FY-2018

CONTENTS

WIOA State Plan for the State of North Carolina FY-2018 1
Overview 3
Options for Submitting a State Plan 3
How State Plan Requirements Are Organized 4
I. WIOA State Plan Type 6
Combined Plan partner program(s) 6
II. Strategic Elements 7
a. Economic, Workforce, and Workforce Development Activities Analysis 7
b. State Strategic Vision and Goals 31
c. State Strategy 35
III. Operational Planning Elements 40
A. State Strategy Implementation 40
b. State Operating Systems and Policies 80
IV. Coordination with State Plan Programs 112
V. Common Assurances (for all core programs) 114
VI. Program-Specific Requirements for Core Programs 116
Program-Specific Requirements for Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities under Title I-B 116
Program-Specific Requirements for Wagner-Peyser Program (Employment Services) 144
Program-Specific Requirements for Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Programs 157
Program-Specific Requirements for Vocational Rehabilitation (General) 171
Program-Specific Requirements for Vocational Rehabilitation (Blind) 282
VII. Program-Specific Requirements For Combined State Plan Partner Programs 382
Appendix 1. Performance Goals for the Core Programs 383
Table 1. Employment (Second Quarter after Exit) 384
Table 2. Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit) 385
Table 3. Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit) 386
Table 4. Credential Attainment Rate 386
Table 5. Measureable Skill Gains 387
Table 6. Effectiveness in Serving Employers 388
Table 7. Additional Indicators of Performance 389
Appendix 2. Other State Attachments (Optional) 390

OVERVIEW

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Governor of each State must submit a Unified or Combined State Plan to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor that outlines a four-year strategy for the State's workforce development system. The publicly-funded workforce development 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 job-seekers 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 Family Literacy Act 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 where such planning requirements exist separately for the 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))

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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.

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. (These requirements are available in a separate supplemental document, Supplement to the Workforce and Innovation Act (WIOA) Unified and Combined State Plan Requirements. The Departments are not seeking comments on these particular requirements).

When responding to Unified or Combined State Plan requirements, States must identify specific strategies for coordinating programs and services for target populations.* States must develop strategies that look beyond strategies for the general population and develop approaches that also address the needs of target populations.

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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. Yes

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

COMBINED PLAN PARTNER PROGRAM(S)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a Strategic Planning Elements section that analyzes the State's current economic environment and identifies the State's overall vision for its workforce development system. The required elements in this section allow the State to develop data-driven goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce and to identify successful strategies for aligning workforce development programs to support economic growth. 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.

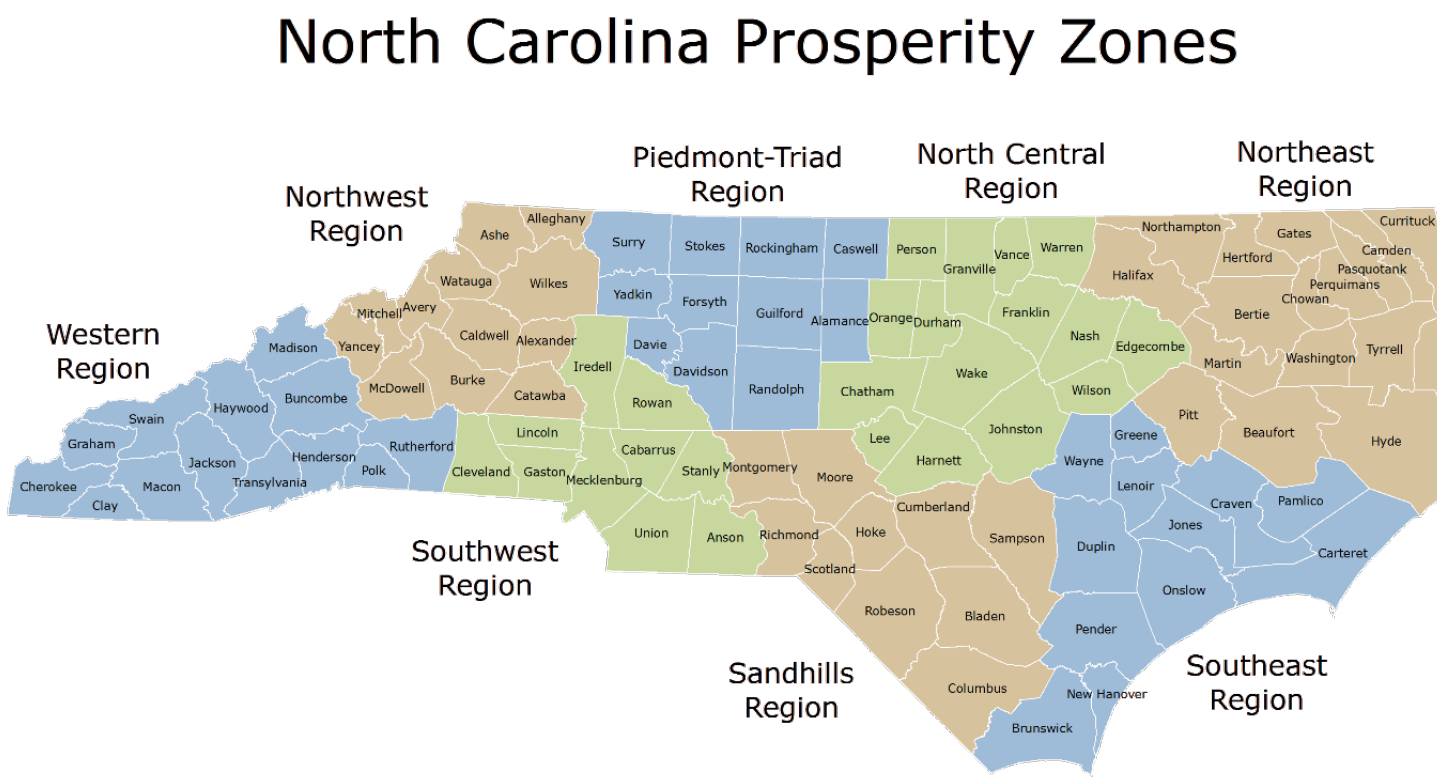
II. EMERGING DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATION

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.

As part of the State's vision for building economic prosperity across all areas of the state, North Carolina established prosperity zones via legislation in 2014. These eight multi county regions implemented in January 2015 are intended to help ensure economic growth across all of North Carolina's 100 counties, by leveraging regional economic, workforce and educational resources. Overlaying the eight prosperity zones are North Carolina's 23 local workforce development board areas. North Carolina has the 9th largest state population, encompasses an area of almost 54,000 square miles ranging from the Blue Ridge Mountains to



the Atlantic Ocean, and had a GDP of $518 billion in 2016, making it about the size of the country of Sweden's economy. [1] Over the previous century, it has transformed from an agricultural state with a manufacturing base in tobacco, textiles, and furniture to an advanced economy with strengths in finance, biotechnology, and advanced manufacturing and the knowledge economy more broadly. Throughout this transformation, the North Carolina economy has in many ways become more like the U.S. economy, while maintaining some key distinctions.

North Carolina has benefitted from Sunbelt migration over the past several decades, particularly during the 1990's and 2000's, which helped to develop several of North Carolina's large metropolitan statistical areas including: Charlotte, Durham, Raleigh, and the Piedmont Triad, as well as the smaller but fast-growing metros of Asheville and Wilmington. This process involved adding people from other parts of the U.S. as well as through international immigration. Still, North Carolina has the second highest rural population in the U.S. and 34 percent of the state's residents live in rural areas.[2] However, the rural population has not benefitted to the same extent from the transformation of the state and its economy. Out-of-county commuting has increased, with only 12 counties having more than 50 percent of their workers living and working in the same county as of 2014 (the latest data available), down from 47 counties in 2002.[3]

Like the U.S. and other developed nations, North Carolina's population faces certain larger structural challenges including a slowing population growth rate, an aging workforce, and issues of inequality and regional disparities. Like the U.S., the state has become less homogenous, with prosperous urban areas (characterized by knowledge-intensive service industries) and less prosperous rural areas still reflective of manufacturing's legacies. In addition, North Carolina is also experiencing larger changes to the economy due to technological advancements, global trade and interdependence, and the slowing of economic growth, new firm formation and productivity. As we seek to understand recent changes in North Carolina's economic performance, it is important to highlight areas in which the state is reflective of general trends as well as areas in which it diverges from these trends.

Furthermore, North Carolina's economy, while expanding, must be viewed in the context of the Great Recession and the slow recovery which followed, which accelerated existing structural changes already underway. Following a peak in late 2007, North Carolina's number of jobs fell by 400,000 (almost 10 percent) and it took seven years to return to pre-recession levels.[4] In 2016, the state had only 5 percent more jobs than during its 2007 peak.[5] Recent changes in the North Carolina economy must be understood in the context of the long shadow of this transformative event.

Industry Projections

North Carolina is projected to add more than 550,000 jobs by 2024, with the Service-Providing sector projected to contribute nearly 90 percent of all net new jobs created.[6] Health Care and Social Assistance, the state's largest industry by employment, is projected to add 135,000 jobs. Construction is projected to be one of the fastest growing industries in the state, growing 20.6 percent and adding nearly 37,000 jobs. Projections for the Manufacturing industry show a very modest increase of 0.7 percent, adding 2,900 jobs.

NC Industry Employment Projections, 2014 - 2024			
Industry Group	**Employment Est. 2014**	**Employment Est. 2024**	**Net Chang**
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	*21,832*	*20,680*	*-1,1*
Mining	*2,833*	*2,755*	*-*
Utilities	*13,662*	*12,826*	*-8*
Construction	*179,131*	*216,103*	*36,9*
Manufacturing	*449,132*	*452,055*	*2,9*
Wholesale Trade	*176,934*	*194,433*	*17,4*
Retail Trade	*472,161*	*522,793*	*50,6*
Transportation and Warehousing	*132,469*	*140,285*	*7,8*
Information	*72,571*	*75,157*	*2,5*
Finance and Insurance	*153,490*	*180,950*	*27,4*
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	*52,324*	*60,024*	*7,7*
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	*207,838*	*247,708*	*39,8*
Management of Companies and Enterprises	*80,446*	*103,353*	*22,9*
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	*282,767*	*326,758*	*43,9*
Educational Services	*369,701*	*403,675*	*33,9*
Health Care and Social Assistance	*554,651*	*689,872*	*135,2*
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	*61,315*	*74,856*	*13,5*
Accommodation and Food Services	*382,048*	*446,790*	*64,7*
Other Services (except Government)	*167,997*	*179,311*	*11,3*
Government	*290,358*	*300,768*	*10,4*
Self Employed and Unpaid Family Workers, All Jobs	*280,354*	*306,032*	*25,6*
TOTAL	*4,404,014*	*4,957,184*	*553,1*
Source: Industry Projections, Labor & Economic Analysis Division, North Carolina Department of Commerce			

As part of a collaborative effort among the state's workforce partners and the state's Labor and Economic Analysis Division, North Carolina established the prosperity zone sub regions. These multi county regions were established to facilitate and encourage regional planning. Counties were grouped into sub-regions within the eight prosperity zones based on analysis of commuting patterns and other economic factors which reflect how people and employers interact geographically.

The total projected job growth provides a measure of the relative strength of the regional economies, changes in the underlying industrial sectors will continue to lead the economic transformation within each of the 16 prosperity zone sub-regions. For example, by the year 2024 total industrial employment in the Charlotte prosperity zone sub-region is projected to have nearly 1.3 million jobs, more than 186,500 jobs over the region's 2014 employment level. However, the manufacturing sector is only expected to add a little over 3,500 jobs to that total. All 16 prosperity zone sub-regions are projected to experience either little growth or slight declines in manufacturing employment, while at the same time 15 of the sub-regions are expected to experience significant growth in both the Construction and Professional and Business service industry sectors. Thirteen sub-regions are expected to experience growth within the Education and Health Services sector with growth rates ranging from a low of 3.87% in the Greensboro sub-region to 30.89% in the Wilmington sub-region.

Occupational projections

A diverse set of industrial sectors are expected to contribute to the state and regional economic transformation in the coming years. The demand for these 550,000 workers will also be distributed among a diverse group of occupations. Over 74% of the net job growth is expected to come from eight broad occupational groupings: Food Preparation and Serving Related, Healthcare Practitioners and Technical, Sales and Related, Office and Administrative Support, Healthcare Support, Business and Financial Operations, Transportation and Material Moving, and Construction and Extraction. The only major occupational group expected to experience overall job decline is Farming, Fishing and Forestry.

A majority of projected job openings are expected to come from replacement needs rather than new growth. Eighty-six percent of all classified occupations are expected to grow; only 14 percent are projected to lose employment. Jobs with low educational requirements (occupations requiring no post-secondary or college experience) are projected to produce the most job openings (mostly due to replacements); however, they are also projected to have the slowest rate of growth. Occupations requiring a Master's Degree or higher are projected to experience the greatest percentage increase in employment.

Jobs in occupations that paid over $75,000 are projected to grow faster than those that paid under $30,000; however, the increased number of net new jobs from today's low-paying occupations are projected to outnumber the increase in high-paying ones by a ratio of nearly 3 to 1, since there are far more jobs at the bottom end of the pay scale.

NC Occupational Employment Projections, 2014-2024			
Occupational Group	**Employment Est. 2014**	**Employment Est. 2024**	**Net Change**
Management	246,799	273,336	26,537
Business and Financial Operations	202,910	237,366	34,456
Computer and Mathematical	115,212	138,773	23,561
Architecture and Engineering	59,638	64,658	5,020
Life, Physical, and Social Science	38,410	42,942	4,532
Community and Social Service	74,588	83,981	9,393
Legal	29,889	33,044	3,155
Education, Training, and Library	250,115	276,757	26,642
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	56,773	62,266	5,493
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	261,091	317,095	56,004
Healthcare Support	154,005	200,777	46,772
Protective Service	105,774	114,660	8,886
Food Preparation and Serving Related	392,606	460,803	68,197
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	152,506	170,624	18,118
Personal Care and Service	135,607	156,361	20,754
Sales and Related	484,429	537,911	53,482
Office and Administrative Support	633,846	687,124	53,278
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	17,768	16,985	-783
Construction and Extraction	165,735	193,910	28,175
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	178,579	200,841	22,262
Production	346,096	356,274	10,178
Transportation and Material Moving	301,638	330,696	29,058
TOTAL	4,404,014	4,957,184	553,170
Source: Occupational Projections, Labor & Economic Analysis Division, NC Department of Commerce			

Across the sixteen prosperity zones sub-regions several occupational groups will experience demands related to employment growth. Health care related occupations, Computer and Mathematical Occupations and Construction and Extraction Related Occupations will be among the fastest growing occupational groups in each of the prosperity zones sub-regions. Three of the prosperity zones sub-regions; Wilmington, Charlotte, Raleigh-Durham are expected to experience over 26% growth in Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations, three sub-regions will experience a growth of over 20%, while Rocky Mount-Wilson and Elizabeth City are projected to experience declines, 5.5% and 6.9% respectively. Growth rates across the prosperity zones for

Healthcare support occupations range from a high of 37.7% in the Wilmington to a low of 1.2%% in the Greenville.

EMPLOYER NEEDS

North Carolina's Workforce Development partners are committed to working with the state's employers in order to understand their business needs and assist in providing a skilled workforce. Part of this collaboration has included the implementation of an employer needs survey. The first survey was implemented in 2014 and has been an ongoing effort. Since 2014, as part of this commitment the partners have carried out a large-scale employer needs survey every other year. The survey focuses on assessing employer hiring plans, recruitment strategies, hiring experiences and workforce challenges. The 2017 survey data collection was completed late in the year and results will be published in a report which will be released in the second quarter of 2018.

However, the preliminary analysis of the survey indicate:

o Higher percentage (50%) of NC employers claimed hiring difficulties than previous years (roughly 40% in 2014 & '16)

o Higher for manufacturers (58%)

o Increase in difficulty may be due, at least in part by, a very tight labor market & structural economic changes

- Low of applicants is cited as a reason by roughly 60% of employers who have had hiring difficulties

o Employers are bullish on adding jobs in 2018 — 43% plan to grow employment

- Employers in rural areas expect to grow employment at a slower rate (24%)

o Hiring Difficulties are highest in mid-size metro areas (not Charlotte & Triangle)

o Difference in reasons for difficulty vary by position seniority of position ? Employability/Personal Issues are high — particularly for entry-level positions

- Lack of Relevant Experience is high for Mid- & Senior Positions

o Greatest Workforce Challenges Finding Job Candidates & Turnover (40% each overall)

- In Manufacturing, Finding Job Candidates is the overwhelming 1 challenge (60%) followed by Turnover (22%)

o Employers are expanding use of Internet resources for finding talent — including NCWorks Online (which is used by 43% of Manufacturers)

o Opportunities exist for Workforce System to better market & match services

[1] U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, BUREAU OF ECONOMIC ANALYSIS, INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND.

[2] U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, 2010 CENSUS.

[3] U.S. CENSUS BUREAU. 2016. ONTHEMAP APPLICATION. LONGITUDINAL-EMPLOYER HOUSEHOLD DYNAMICS PROGRAM. HTTP://ONTHEMAP.CES.CENSUS.GOV/

[4] QUARTERLY CENSUS OF EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES, NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE.

[5] IBID.

[6] ALL PROJECTION DATA FROM EMPLOYMENT AND OCCUPATIONAL PROJECTIONS, NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE.

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'.

Population

Since 2010, the state's population growth has continued to outpace the nation, having grown 6 percent compared to the nation's 4 percent.[7] Between 2015 and 2016, North Carolina's population grew by 1.1 percent, adding 112,000 people. The state grew faster than the nation (0.7%) and at a similar rate to the South as a region (1.1%).

Looking back at the past several years, the state's population growth rate has been consistently higher than the U.S. North Carolina's growth rate peaked at 2.4 percent prior to the Recession,

followed by a slowing growth rate which leveled out at about 1 percent from 2011 to 2014. The past two years have seen an uptick in growth, diverging from the mostly flat U.S. rate.

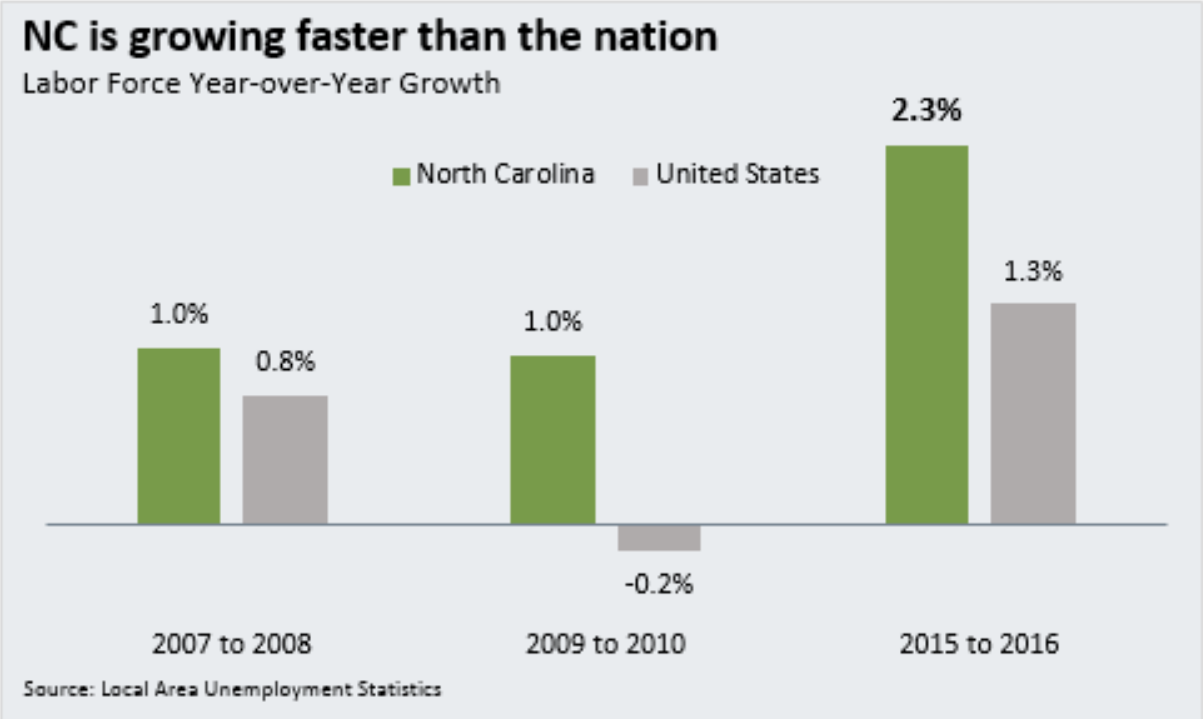
From 2015 to 2016, the combined populations of Mecklenburg and Wake Counties grew by over 46,000 people, accounting for about 42 percent of the state's net population increase. The Charlotte, Raleigh, and Durham Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) accounted for 72 percent of the state's total growth between 2010 and 2016.[8] Nevertheless, many North Carolinians still live in rural areas. As of 2010, 34 percent of the state's residents live in rural Census tracts, giving North Carolina the second largest statewide rural population in the country.[9]

The composition of the state's population growth has been changing over time. In 2016, net migration accounted for nearly three of every four new residents to the state, while natural growth declined to the lowest level since 1970.

The aging of the state's population as well as lower fertility rates have contributed to this gradual decline in natural increase. In 2010, 13 percent of the state's population was 65 or older. In 2016, the 65+ age group had increased to 15 percent of the total population, matching the U.S. proportion. This age group is projected to reach 21 percent of the state's population by 2034.[10]

Labor Force

The labor force, as defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, is the civilian, non-institutionalized population aged 16 or above that is either employed or actively seeking employment. From 2007 through 2016, labor force growth in North Carolina (8%) has outpaced the U.S. (4%), reaching nearly 4.9 million people.[11] North Carolina ranked 6th out of the 50 states for labor force growth rate since the recession.



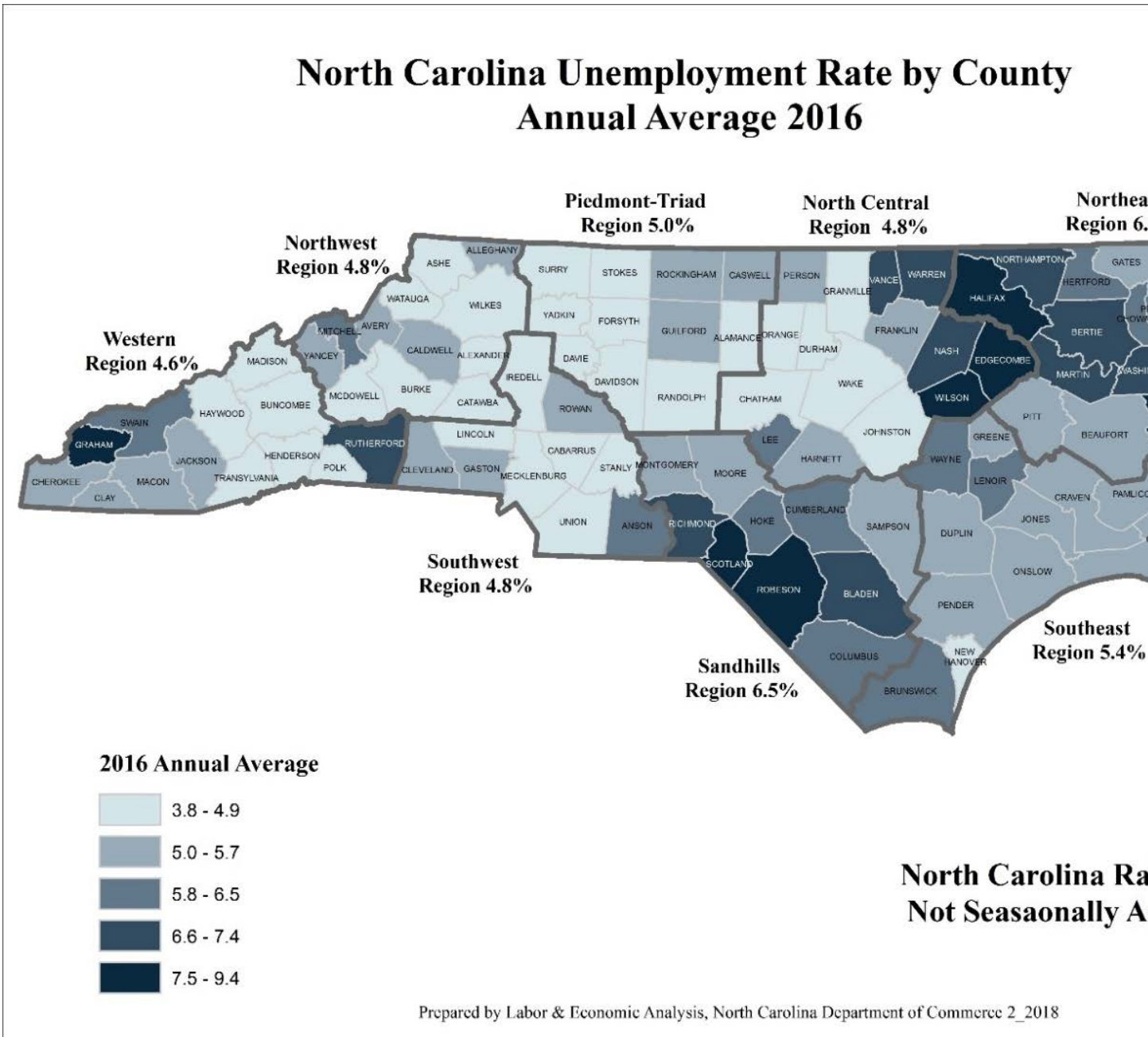
North Carolina, like the nation, has an aging population, which has pulled down the labor force participation rate.[12] In addition to this longer-term structural trend, changes in the business

cycle such as recessions as well as increased higher education enrollment can lower the labor force participation rate. Previous research has estimated that about half the decline in the state's rate is attributable to an aging population. North Carolina's labor force participation rate fell by 3.8 percent from 2007 to 2016, during which the U.S. fell by 3.2 percent. While North Carolina's rate has been lower than the U.S. since 2007, the state's rate increased by 0.8 percent from 2014 to 2016 and is now 1 percent below the U.S. rate.

Unemployed

Historically, North Carolina's unemployment rate has trended below the U.S. level. However, since the turn of the century, North Carolina's rate has exceeded that of the nation, particularly during the two most recent recessions. North Carolina's unemployment rate reached 10.9 percent in 2010, far surpassing the previous high recorded during the early 1980s[13] The state also saw a record number of Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants in 2009. Job losses during the recession were concentrated in the Goods-Producing sectors and non-metro counties of our state. In 2016, the number of jobs in these sectors and regions remained 16 percent and 5 percent below 2006 levels, respectively.

Since 2013 the state's unemployment rate has more closely tracked the U.S. rate, although remaining at a slightly elevated level. In 2016, North Carolina had an annual unemployment rate of 5.1 percent versus the national rate of 4.9 percent. Between 2015 and 2016, North Carolina's rate fell by 0.7 percent versus a national decline of 0.4 percent. Within the state, large differences in unemployment rates exist between urban and rural counties, between metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas, and among metropolitan areas as well. (See the following table.)



In addition to the differences in county unemployment rates, unemployment rates across the prosperity zones have also reflected differential patterns of economic improvement. In 2016, the not seasonally adjusted unemployment rates across the eight prosperity zones ranged from a low of 4.6 in the Western Region to a high of 6.5 in the Sandhills Region. While all regions experienced a decline in the number of unemployed workers of at least 9%, only one region, the North Central Region experienced an increase in the number of employed workers that exceeded 4%.

The population of long-term unemployed are of interest to the workforce development system and policymakers. The share of unemployed without work 27 or more weeks reached 49 percent in 2010, nearly double the highs seen in the early 1980s, and remained historically high through 2016. Research carried out by LEAD has shown that long-term unemployment was a widespread

phenomenon that affected workers in all industries, demographic groups, and regions of North Carolina, despite the concentrated impact that the recession had on sectors of the state's economy. The long-term unemployed tended to be older than the short-term unemployed, although other differences in composition between the two groups were generally small. Workers from Goods-Producing sectors were as prevalent among the short-term unemployed as among the long-term. The aggregate increase in long-term unemployment in North Carolina can be explained by prolonged jobless durations within all demographic groups, rather than by a compositional shift in the unemployed population.

North Carolina has been undergoing a period of economic expansion including expansion and diversity of its population and labor force. Over the last five years, North Carolina's Civilian Non-institutionalized Population has grown from nearly 7.5 million in 2012 to almost 8.0 million in 2017 while the state's civilian labor force has grown from nearly 4.7 million to 4.9 million an increase over 208,000 individuals over the same time period. Growth in the labor force has been driven by an increase of 142,000 more women (a 6.4% increase) and an increase of 65,000 more men (a 6.6% increase). Among other labor force demographic groups there has been significant growth among several subpopulations including a 36.6% increase in the Hispanic and Latino labor force. This includes the addition of 71,000 Hispanic females and 54,000 Hispanic males. North Carolina's labor force has experienced an increase of 17,000 African American's in the labor force. The State has also experienced significant changes in the age distribution of its labor force. This includes an increase of 78,000 individuals aged 65 years and over (a growth of 54%), as well as the addition of 96,000 more individuals aged 45 to 54.

North Carolina's participation rate has trended downward since 2001 due primarily to demographic-related factors such as the aging of the Baby Boomer generation and the increasing prevalence of school enrollment among young adults. However, the 2016 data revisions showed a surprising and welcome increase in the participation rate of 1.1 percentage points between December 2014 and December 2016. This is the largest 2-year increase that North Carolina has seen since March 2001, before the participation rate began its 13-year decline. North Carolina saw increasing participation rates among all age groups over the past two years, along with relative growth in the number of prime working age (25-to-54) residents, who tend to participate in the labor force at high rates.

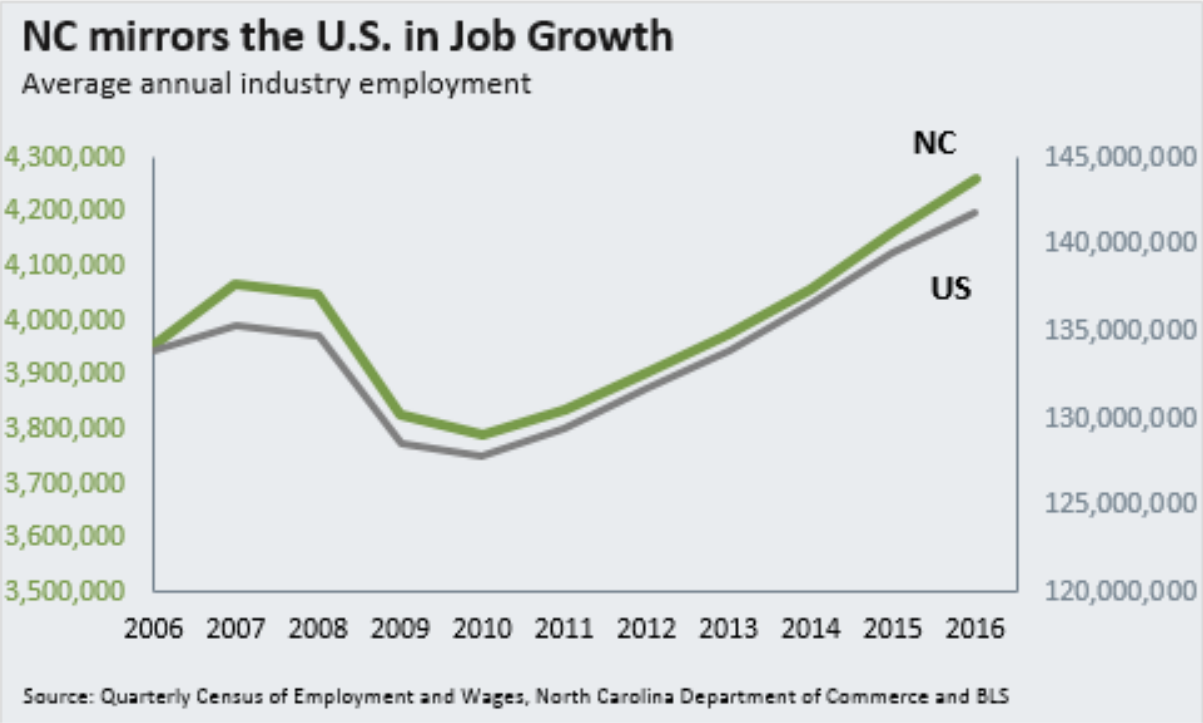
North Carolina's labor force statistics also reveal significant variations with respect to several sub populations including individuals with disabilities as well as to the state's veteran's population. Based on information from the American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, there were nearly 1.29 million individuals aged 16 years and older of these 22.9% were employed and 73.7% were reported as not being in the labor force in 2016. As a comparison, amongst individuals 16 years and older with no disability almost 65.5% were employed and only 30.5% were not in the labor force.

NC Employment Status for Population Age 16 & Up			
Employment Status	**Total Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population**	**With a Disability**	
Population Age 16 and Over	7,928,881	1,287,604	
Employed	58.6%	22.9%	
Not in Labor Force	37.5%	73.7%	
Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates for North Carolina, Table S1811			

North Carolina's labor force composition is significantly impacted by the presence of several large military bases as well as the number of veterans who call North Carolina home. Based on recent information from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2017 there were over 364,900 veterans in North Carolina's civilian labor force aged 18 and over. As a group, their annual average unemployment rate was 4.7%, however differences exist in veteran sub populations. Among Gulf War I era veteran's the unemployment rate was 1.4% but among the Gulf War II era veterans the unemployment rate was 9.2%.

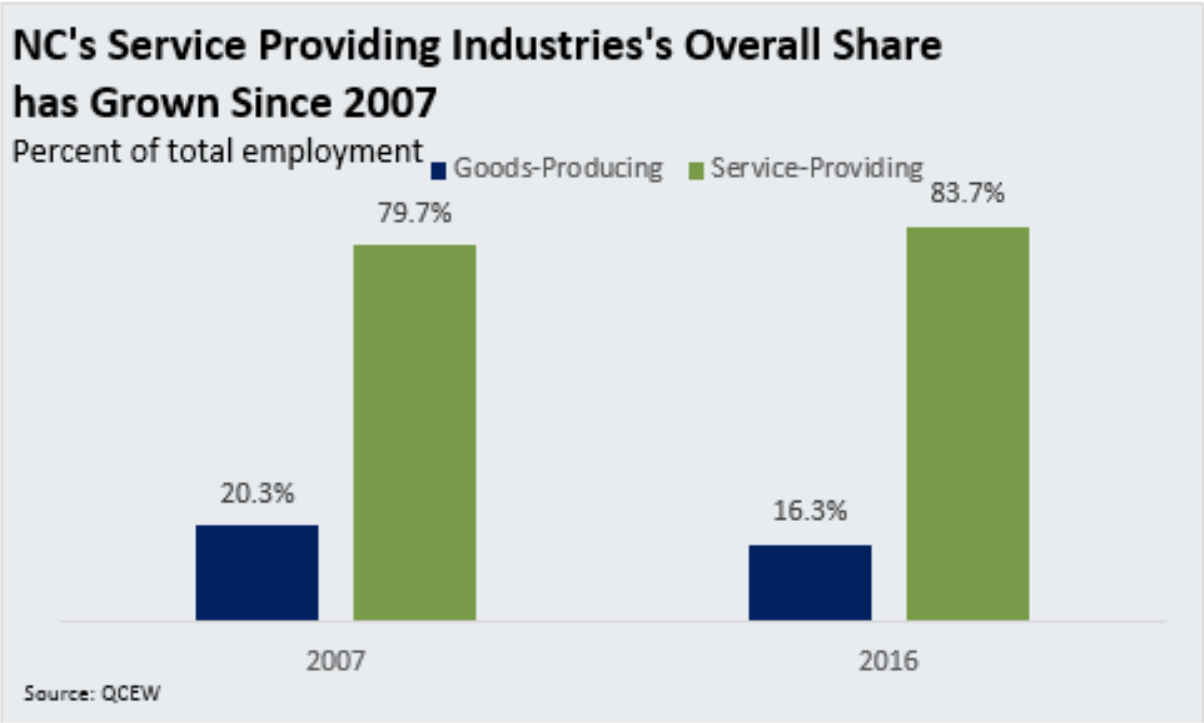
Labor Market Trends

Since 2007, both North Carolina and the U.S. have experienced 4.8 percent growth in the number of jobs.[14]



However, this growth followed large job losses due to the recession and the recovery has varied by industry as well as by geography. Overall, metropolitan areas of the state and Service-Providing industries have grown, while non-metro and Goods-Producing industries have not recovered to their pre-recession levels.

North Carolina's economy, like the U.S., has been transitioning from a Goods-Producing to a Service-Providing economy over the past several decades. The largest sector by employment is Health Care and Social Assistance at over 600,000 jobs, followed by Retail Trade at over 500,000 jobs. Manufacturing is third at about 465,000 jobs, showing its ongoing importance to the state. Accommodation and Food Services (412,000 jobs) and Educational Services (372,000 jobs) round out the top 5 industries.



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(See industries above)

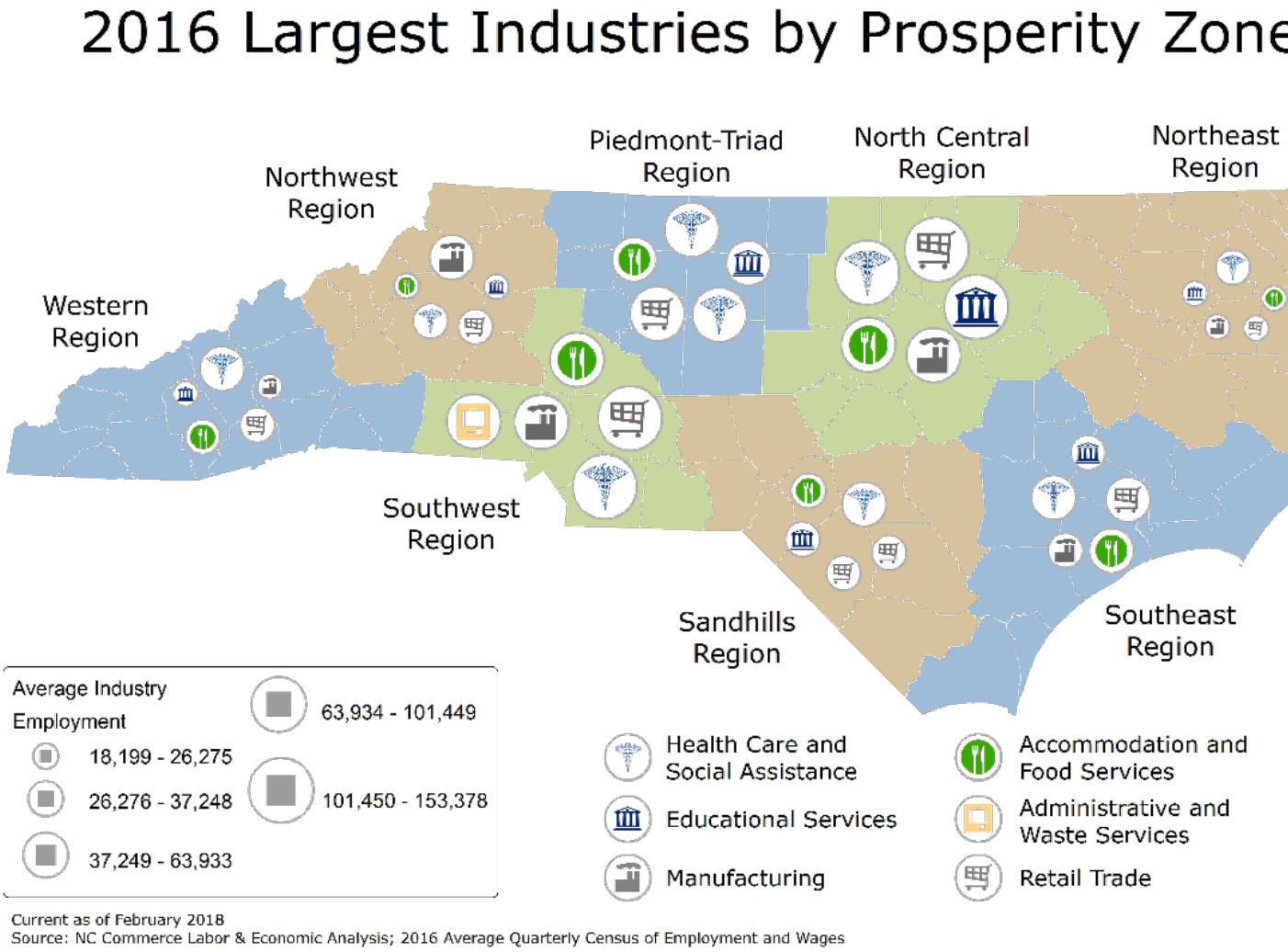
Between 2015 to 2016, North Carolina added about 99,000 net new jobs to the state to reach an annual average employment of over 4.26 million jobs, an increase of 2.4 percent. The U.S. grew by 1.7 percent during this time. Goods-Producing industries only added 14,000 jobs while Service-Providing industries added close to 85,000.

Of the top 5 industries, Health Care and Social Assistance added 12,000 jobs (2.0%), Retail added 11,000 jobs (2.3%), Manufacturing added 3,500 (0.8%), Accommodation and Food Services added 15,500 jobs (3.9%) and Educational Services added less than 1,500 jobs (0.4%). Construction employment increased by 11,000 jobs following gains over the past two years (5.7% from 14-15 and 6.0% 15-16) Manufacturing gained less year-over-year, adding 3,493 between 2015-16 versus 12,384 jobs between 2014-15.

Industry employment by prosperity zone provides a more refined view of local trends. Based on annual average information for 2016, the eight prosperity zones ranged in total employment size

from over 1 million in the North Central zone to below 230,000 in the Northeast zone. Three of the zones, the North Central, Southwest and the Piedmont-Triad region accounted for over two-thirds of all employment in the state, 61% of all employment establishments, and over 71% of all wages paid. Not surprisingly these three regions are home to several of the state's large metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) which include the Charlotte/Concord/Gastonia in the Southwest region, the Burlington, Greensboro-High Point and Winston Salem MSAs in the Piedmont Triad Zone and the Raleigh; Durham-Chapel Hill and Rocky Mount MSAs in the North Central Zone. In addition, these three regions rank the highest in average weekly wage.

The four smallest prosperity zones in terms of total employment, the Northeast, Northwest, Western, and Sandhills zones as a group account for less than a quarter of the state's total employment and employment establishments. These regions together account for only 18% of the states total wages and their 2016 average weekly wages were less than 80% of the state's average weekly wage. While there are significant geographic and economic differences across the eight prosperity zones, each of the regions are dominated in employment by four major industrial groups. These include Health Care and Social Assistance; Educational Services, Retail Trade and Accommodations and Food Services. However, Manufacturing remains a key sector in six of the prosperity zones.



North Carolina's existing workforce is spread across a diverse group of occupations. Nearly 15% of the state's occupational mix is centered in Office and Administrative Support Occupations, 10.7% are in Sales and Related Occupations, 9.7% in Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations, 8.1% in Production Occupations and 7.3% in Transportation and Material Moving Occupations. Over the next several years employment in Health related occupations is anticipated to continue to expand, current employment levels reveal that 6.3% of all occupational employment is in Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations and an additional 3.6% are in Healthcare Support Occupations. An additional 6.3% of the state's occupational employment is concentrated in Education, Training and Library occupations.

Wages

North Carolina's average wage for all industries was $47,260 in 2016, rising 0.4 percent from 2015 after adjusting for inflation.[15] The U.S. average wage was $53,611 in 2016, rising 0.2 percent from 2015. North Carolina has closely tracked the U.S. in wage growth—the state grew by 5.5 percent in real terms since 2010 while the U.S. grew by 5.3 percent. North Carolina's average wage has remained at around 88 percent of the U.S. average since 2000. Per the Bureau of Economic Analysis, North Carolina's regional price parity was 91.2 percent of the U.S., meaning North Carolina's average wage was still about 3 percentage points below the U.S. after adjusting for differences in regional prices.

Because industry average wage is only calculated as the *mean* wage, it is also useful to look to another source which calculates a *median* wage. Estimates from the Occupational Employment Statistics program show North Carolina had a median annual wage of $33,920 in 2016. Therefore, half of North Carolina's jobs paid less than $33,920 per year in 2016. The U.S. median annual wage was $37,045 in 2016.

Education and Skill Levels

North Carolina's possesses a world class system of higher education which is comprised of two public systems of higher education, the North Carolina Community College System and the University of North Carolina System. The Community College System is comprised of 58 colleges and the UNC system has 16 post-secondary institutions. In addition, the state has over 40 private 2-year and 4-year institutions of higher education. While the combined efforts of these institutions help to produce a skilled workforce for the state, challenges still exist. In 2016 almost 14% of the labor force 25 years and over had less than a high school diploma, 26.4% had a high school diploma, 21.8% had some college, 9.1% had an Associate's degree and 29% had a Bachelor's degree or higher.

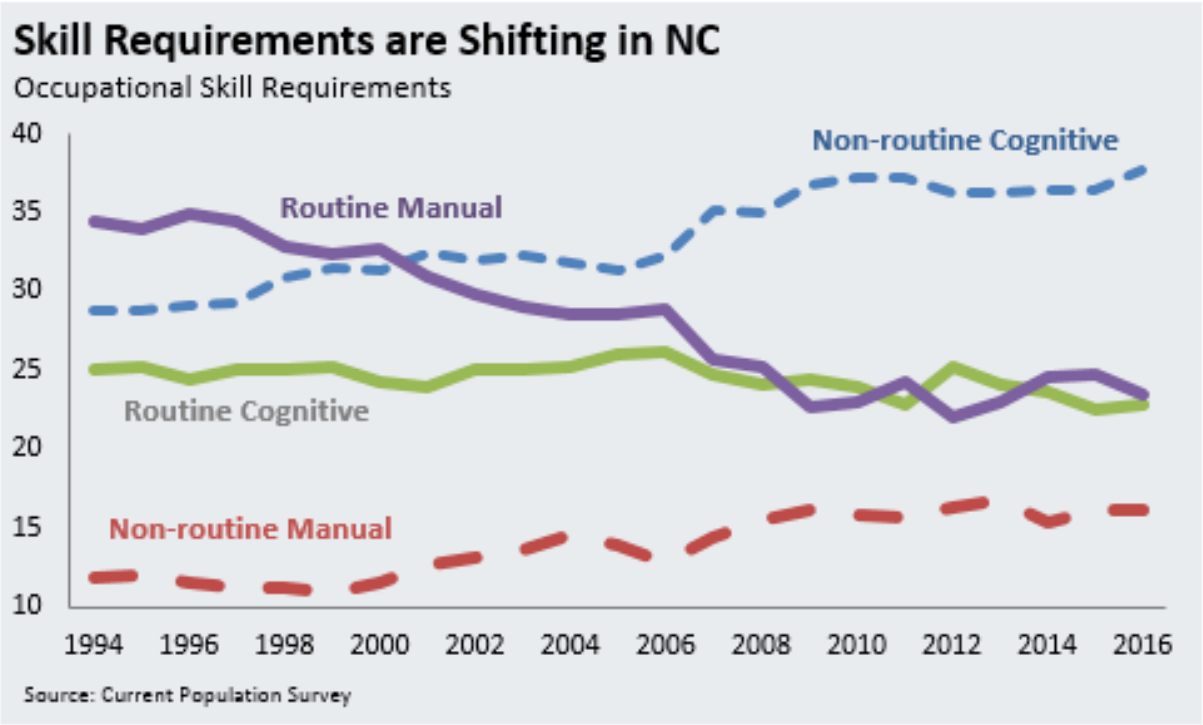
In addition, to the educational attainment of the state's labor force, North Carolina faces challenges in addressing the education and training needs of those individuals with disabilities. Based on information from U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey 5-year estimates there are over 1.17 million individuals with a disability in North Carolina who are 25 years of age or older. Of these 25.4% have less than a high school diploma, 32.4% are high school graduates, 28.1% have some college or associate's degree and 14.1% have a bachelor's degree or higher. When compared to the population 25 and older without a disability, only 10.9% of those without a disability have less than high school diploma, 25.0% are high school graduates, 31.4% are have some college or associate's degree and 32.7% have a Bachelor's degree or higher.

Skills Gap

In 2016, North Carolina's labor force exceeded 4.6 million workers. Of these, 39% had a high school diploma or less, 30% had some college or an associate's degree, 21% had a Bachelor's degree and 11% had a master's degree or higher. The state will be faced with ensuring that its workforce has the necessary education, training and jobs skills to meet both industry and occupational demands. Governor Roy Cooper has set a goal for North Carolina to be a "Top 10 Educated State," which includes the goal of increasing the percentage of North Carolinians with a post-secondary degree or credential. In addition, the recent research completed by Georgetown University's Public Policy Institute estimates that by the year 2020, employment in North Carolina will exceed 5 million and that 67% of those jobs will require some form of post-secondary education.

One way to capture the changing nature of jobs is to divide existing occupations into whether they involve primarily manual or cognitive activities, and whether those activities are primarily routine

or non-routine. Since the mid-1990s, non-routine jobs have been growing as a portion of total jobs, while the share of routine jobs has fallen. In particular, non-routine cognitive jobs (sometimes thought of as "knowledge jobs") have increased from 29% of jobs in 1994 to 38% in 2016, while routine manual jobs ("blue collar jobs") have fallen from 34% to 23%.[16]



Based on employment projections through 2024, non-routine jobs are expected to continue their growth as a portion of the job market. Again, showing that North Carolina needs to increase the number of individuals with some post-secondary education so that they can compete in the job market and supply employers with the skills required.

[7] Population data in this section from U.S. Census Bureau population estimates.

[8] Carolina Demography analysis of U.S. Census Bureau population estimates.

[9] U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census.

[10] North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management.

[11] All labor force data from Local Area Unemployment Statistics, North Carolina Department of Commerce and Current Population Survey, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

[12] The percent of the civilian, non-institutionalized population aged 16+ in the labor force.

[13] All unemployment data from Local Area Unemployment Statistics, North Carolina Department of Commerce and Current Population Survey, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

[14] All industry data from Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, North Carolina Department of Commerce and Bureau of Labor Statistics.

[15] All wage data from Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, North Carolina Department of Commerce and Bureau of Labor Statistics.

[16] Occupational data from Current Population Survey and North Carolina Department of Commerce Calucations.

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.

Governor Cooper wants North Carolinians to be better educated, healthier, and have more money in their pockets so that they can live more abundant, purposeful lives. The linchpin to achieving that goal is to help people get good-paying jobs to support themselves and their families.

In February 2018, Governor Cooper laid out the core principles of his job readiness initiative, NC Job Ready NC Job Ready is built on three core principles: skills and education attainment so North Carolinians are ready for the jobs of today and tomorrow, employer leadership to remain relevant to evolving industry needs, and local innovation to take great ideas and apply them statewide.

North Carolina's workforce development system, NCWorks, is a statewide partnership that helps unemployed and underemployed people find new or better employment, and helps businesses connect with the talented workers they need. The NCWorks system is essential to NC Job Ready. The system consists of programs and networks designed to help individuals succeed in the workplace by providing skill development, training and employment services to employees and by helping businesses obtain a skilled workforce by providing employment services, training programs, and subsidized employment.

The NCWorks system provides workforce development activities that increase occupational skill attainment, employment, retention, and earnings by participants. These programs are designed to improve the quality of the workforce, reduce welfare dependency, link talent to jobs, and enhance the state's productivity and competitiveness.

The NCWorks system also works closely with employers throughout the state, helping them find the right candidates and develop training programs that can improve the skills of their current workforce. Workforce development services for businesses include recruiting, assessing, screening, and referring candidates; work-based learning and customized training opportunities; assistive technology and other support for companies that hire people with disabilities; and labor market information to connect employers to a steady pipeline of talented citizens who have the skills to help their businesses thrive.

In 2014, the NCWorks Commission (North Carolina's state workforce investment board) completed a review of 20 workforce development program plans, policies and services across five agencies in North Carolina. This review included an analysis of core programs, as well as other one-stop delivery system partners. The commission reviewed workforce program funding levels and sources, service provision types, special populations served and business outreach initiatives. Appendix 2B includes a summary of the workforce programs offered in North Carolina.

Through its assessment of the workforce development system, the NCWorks Commission found North Carolina's programs to be service-driven with a focus on mission and target populations. Overall, the programs prioritize employment, career counseling, and assessment for the adult population. The commission also found that many programs also provide services to employers.

B. THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

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

Strengths

North Carolina is well situated to have a strong and seamless workforce development system. Overall, North Carolina has strong workforce development programs that offer a wide variety of services to a broad range of individuals with the goal of helping job-seekers and students obtain and maintain employment through training, education, and support and helping businesses find the qualified workers they need to be successful. North Carolina has are four key mechanisms currently in place to ensure the state continues to have a strong workforce development system and continuously improve.

First, NCWorks is a statewide partnership that brings together and aligns the state's workforce development programs to create a more efficient and effective system. In addition to focusing on aligning the state's workforce programs the partners also work closely with businesses throughout the state, helping them find the right candidates and develop training programs that can improve the skills of their current workers. By offering these services, North Carolina's system is connecting employers to a steady pipeline of talented individuals who have the skills to make their businesses thrive. The partnership was launched to better serve North Carolina by strengthening our partnerships between business, education, and workforce agencies for more effective programs.

Second, North Carolina has a strong statewide workforce investment board, the NCWorks Commission. This commission was recently reinvigorated to meet the WIOA requirements resulting in a commission that is stronger and more representative of the state's economy and workforce. The NCWorks Commission oversees the workforce development system to ensure it is coordinated and aligned to meet the needs of North Carolina people and businesses. The NCWorks Commission has the authority and responsibility in both state and federal law to ensure that the state's

programs are working together in the most efficient and effective way with an end goal of preparing the state's workforce and meeting the needs of businesses.

In 2014, the NCWorks Commission approved the biennial strategic plan with a shared mission and vision for the workforce development system. This plan was the result of the commission's desire to create a comprehensive workforce development system that is transformable, sustainable, and demand-driven.

The four strategic goals as approved take advantage of the system's current strengths and proposes new strategies for aligning the services in a way that results in high quality workers trained for in-demand occupations. The plan also contains a strategic action plan that clearly identifies the strategies needed to strengthen the state's workforce development system.

The commission is also focusing on using data to drive strategies and hold programs accountable. The commission worked collaboratively with program staff to design and implement universal performance measures. The commission recognized that using common metrics and applying them across a wide range of workforce programs, the performance measures offer a comprehensive program-by-program look at North Carolina's workforce system. In addition, the commission has begun developing state performance measures for local workforce development boards to ensure high performance across the state.

Third, Career pathways are a key area of focus for North Carolina which has been an innovator in developing strategies that support transitions from education to employment. North Carolina's career pathways work brings together three key programs, local workforce boards, community colleges, and the public schools to work with engaged employers. This collaboration identifies and creates clear pathways for in-demand occupations to ensure that the state has the workforce needed for our businesses to succeed.

The NCWorks Commission has developed a certification process for recognizing comprehensive career pathways that at helping to develop a talent pipeline for in-demand occupations. NCWorks Certified Career Pathways are created by regional and local teams that consist of engaged employers, workforce development boards, high schools and community colleges. Following are the criteria for certification as an NCWorks Certified Career Pathway:

- demand-driven and data-informed;
- employer engagement;
- collaborative;
- career awareness;
- articulation and coordination;
- work-based learning;
- multiple entry and exit points; and
- evaluation.

Fourth, N.C. Department of Commerce's Labor and Economic Analysis Division (LEAD) is a strong resource for the NCWorks partners. LEAD provides a multitude of labor market and career information used by the system partners to inform data-driven decisions. Regional ETA staff, during

a recent Workforce Information Grant (WIG) review, identified best practices in the areas of career and labor market information products, financial management and customer responsiveness.

Fifth, in 2014 the N.C. General Assembly created Prosperity Zones that organize the state's 100 counties to provide a consistent regional structure for economic and workforce development activities. These zones have been used for regional planning by the state's local workforce boards and to coordinate workforce development activities. Having this structure already in place is a benefit for WIOA implementation.

Finally, in 2013 the Division of Workforce Solutions in the Department of Commerce implemented the integrated service delivery model in conjunction with the local workforce development boards for our career center system (N.C.'s one-stop system). This model brings together the programs and services provided under Titles I and III in WIOA. Some of the key components of integrated service delivery are:

- integrated customer flow that responds to customer need, not just program requirements;
- staff-assisted services are emphasize and center services will be continuously promoted and provided until the customer's goal has been achieved;
- all career center customers, including unemployment insurance claimants, are provide with the opportunity to know their skills improve their skills, and get the best job possible with their skills; and
- customers have easy access to a wide range of skill development services and the opportunity to improve employment opportunities through skill upgrading, skill validation, and credentialing.

North Carolina has a strong workforce development system that had already begun implementing many of the key activities in WIOA. The NCWorks Commission is focusing on aligning workforce programs and will be holding programs accountable for their performance. In addition, the state is focusing on business engagement and career pathways as two key strategies for helping to prepare students and jobs seekers and to meet the needs of the state's businesses.

Weaknesses

North Carolina has a strong foundation of programs and much work has been done to integrate and develop strategies to collaborate more effectively. However, the workforce system is complicated and more work is needed to continue streamlining and integrating programs for individuals and businesses. Further integrating programs and services will ensure that the system is customer-centered.

In addition to continued work on integrating programs to ensure that all people are provided high quality service regardless of barriers, the following areas have been identified for improvement.

- North Carolina has a lot of information on the labor market, but needs to create more comprehensive communication and training strategies to ensure all staff from state policy makers to workforce board directors to front-line staff have the information needed to advise customers.

- More feedback from businesses and individuals about their experience with the system is needed. This information will help the system and its individual programs understand what is working, and where improvements are most urgently needed.
- North Carolina's workforce programs support several independent case management/data collection systems. Consistent data sharing processes to address referral tracking, common intake, and service delivery would improve the system.
- A closer relationship with economic development organizations across the state to understand the needs of the current and future economy will help the workforce development system prepare the workers that are needed by new and expanding businesses in North Carolina.

The NCWorks Commission is focused on developing an innovative, relevant, effective, and efficient workforce development system and developed a roadmap for how the state workforce programs will achieve the goals and objectives that will address these limitations while creating a more customer-centric system that listens and responds to the needs of businesses, and trains workers to be successful in the current and future economy.

C. STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY

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

North Carolina's capacity to provide workforce development activities is strong. The NCWorks Commission (North Carolina's state workforce investment board) ensures coordination of, oversees, and assesses the performance of, the core programs. In addition, the three agencies responsible for the WIOA core programs are have created a WIOA State Steering Council comprised of leaders from each agency to ensure programs are aligned at the state and local level.

The six WIOA core workforce programs are provided to job seekers and employers via NCWorks Career Centers (one-stop career centers in North Carolina), online at the state's official job matching and labor exchange portal, NCWorks Online, at local vocational rehabilitation offices, and at community colleges. Below is an overview of the capacity of the three agencies.

N.C. Department of Commerce, Division of Workforce Solutions

The Division of Workforce Solutions oversees WIOA Title I and III programs. The division has implemented an integrated services delivery model at local NCWorks Career Centers to ensure an integrated and customer-focused approach to providing services to individuals and business.

North Carolina has 23 local workforce development boards that are working to ensure all communities have the capacity to provide high quality services to individuals and businesses across the state. Local boards have representation from the Division of Workforce Solutions, community colleges, and local vocational rehabilitation programs to ensure coordination and capacity building at the local and regional level.

NCWorks Career Centers are operated by North Carolina's 23 local workforce development boards and are overseen by the NCWorks Commission. 81 career centers, located throughout the state, provide Title I and III services. Staff at NCWorks Career Centers, Community Colleges, and

Vocational Rehabilitation offices all maintain good referral processes among each other when serving customers. Some career centers are co-located with a community college, social services offices, or offices where vocational rehabilitation services are available. In addition there are 28 career center outposts where services are provided.

NCWorks Career Centers provide workforce development services as well as access to other programs and activities carried out by one-stop partners identified in the WIOA. Basic services provided to job seekers and those seeking to upgrade their skills include:

- career assessment and guidance;
- access to training and education programs;
- learn about job fairs and workshops;
- information on the job market;
- assistance with searching for jobs;
- resume and cover letter preparation;
- practice interviewing for jobs;
- free computer and internet access; and
- help registering with and using NCWorks Online.

Services provided to employers include:

- job applicant screening and qualified candidate referrals;
- valuable and up-to-date labor market facts and projections, such as wages;
- information on tax credits for hiring particular groups of workers;
- space to conduct job interviews;
- help arranging job fairs;
- workshops on employer-related subjects;
- employee training resources;
- layoff/closure prevention services for employers; and
- information about federal bonding (insurance for hiring at-risk workers).

N.C. Community College System

The NC Community College System is the pass-through agency for Title II Adult Education Family Literacy Act. Through a competitive request for proposal process, eligible providers will be funded to provide services and activities that improve adult literacy skills and knowledge for postsecondary transition and or employment. NC community colleges are the main partners for adult education providers for developing and implementing activities and services that support transition to postsecondary training and or employment such as Integrated Education and Training, Workplace Preparation Activities, Pre-apprenticeships, and the model that specifically supports English language learners, the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education.

N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

North Carolina has 80 local vocational rehabilitation offices that provide counseling staff, vocational evaluators, human resource placement specialists, and other staff as appropriate to meet the needs of those individuals who require the specialized services offered by Vocational Rehabilitation. Specific arrangements and staffing patterns by Vocational Rehabilitation staff vary from site to site depending on local needs and agreements. Enhanced working relationships with key partners of the workforce development system such as Social Services, N.C. Division of Employment Security, N.C. Community College System, and other local partnerships allow all the agencies to better meet the needs of the individual.

The N.C. Department of Health and Human Services (overseeing Title IV) continues to be an active partner throughout North Carolina to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access core workforce services. Vocational Rehabilitation staff are represented at the state level as well as on local workforce development boards. DHHS remains an active partner with the workforce development system and supports the NCWorks concept to provide more universal access to placement and training services; to integrate programs by offering a common core of information and services; and by offering consumers more choices regarding where and how they get services.

North Carolina's agencies overseeing the six core WIOA programs have enhanced their partnerships, locally, regionally, and at the state level over the last several years to ensure coordination of programs and capacity to serve that state's citizens and businesses. The NCWorks Commission will continue to review and evaluate the capacity of programs to provide high quality customer-focused services across the state.

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.

The NCWorks Commission, North Carolina's state workforce investment board under the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, developed and adopted in February 2015 a strategic plan with interagency input that sets forth a vision and goals for the state's workforce development system. The vision and goal statements below are from this plan and, upon review of current economic conditions, workforce statistics, and workforce development activities, remain relevant and serve as the backbone of the state Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Unified Plan. The vision and goals outlined below align with Governor Cooper's NC Job Ready initiative built on three core principles: skills and education attainment so North Carolinians are ready for the jobs of today and tomorrow, employer leadership to remain relevant to evolving industry needs, and local innovation to take great ideas and apply them statewide.

Vision: To grow the North Carolina economy by strengthening the state's workforce and connecting employers to skilled, high quality employees.

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—

A. Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including preparing youth and individuals with barriers of employment* and other populations.**
B. 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.

The NCWorks Commission developed four strategic goals to achieve the state's vision for the workforce system as part of its strategic plan. As the commission was developing the goals and objectives for the strategic plan, the members realized there were several principles that applied to all goals and objectives. Instead of repeating these common themes with each goal, the task force decided to create guiding principles that apply to all goals and objectives.

- Strategies will be developed locally, regionally, and statewide to address the unique needs of different areas of the state.
- Best practices will be identified and replicated across North Carolina.
- The workforce system will be flexible and adaptable to the changing needs of the economy and the state.
- Strategies will focus on the needs of today's economy and developing talent for tomorrow.
- The workforce system will focus on target industries and career clusters. Below is an overview of each of the commission's goals.

Goal 1: Create an integrated, seamless, and customer-centered workforce system.

The commission recognizes that North Carolina's public workforce development system is a key part of the state's economy. It is comprised of a variety of programs with a broad range of activities that serve a diverse group of people. It includes a group of interactive and

interdependent entities, programs, and services. Activities range from self-service activities online, to staff assisted services in a workforce office, to multi-year training programs at a public school or community college. In addition, programs serve people with varying levels of education, employment experience, and barriers. Individuals may participate in a single program or activity or may be eligible to receive services through a variety of programs and entities. The system exists to help businesses find qualified workers to meet their present and future workforce needs and to help individuals gain the skills and training they need to obtain and maintain employment.

The commission recognized that the state needed to strengthen the system by integrating programs and services and ensuring that the system is seamless and customer-centered. An integrated system will allow all customers to access timely and relevant services from a multitude of entry points. Achievement of this goal will result in a system moving in the same direction with the same goals. Citizens will experience better service while businesses will find a trusted partner to turn to for their workforce development needs. And, workforce development programs will have improved outcomes.

This goal is the foundation for the other goals of the commission's strategic plan. If North Carolina's workforce development system is going to meet the needs of businesses and prepare workers for the jobs that are needed, then the system must be aligned and focused on the customer.

Goal 2: Create a workforce system that is responsive to the changing needs of the economy

North Carolina's workforce system must be flexible, adaptable, and change with the times. The workforce needs of businesses are continuously changing, so it is important that the system remains relevant and easily accessible to the business community.

New jobs in high-growth and emerging industries are key to economic vitality of North Carolina. Understanding the workforce needs of these industries and preparing workers to meet the needs of companies is key. Increased communication and collaboration between workforce partners locally, regionally, and at the state level is essential to developing a strong workforce development system that businesses can use to grow their businesses

Policy leaders and frontline staff of the state's system must stay attune to current economic trends, and listen consistently to businesses so they can be responsive to provide employers what they need in a timely manner. This includes policies and strategies that engage business leaders in decision-making processes and leverage labor market information in education and agency program planning.

Goal 3: Prepare workers to succeed in the North Carolina economy and continuously improve their skills.

The speed of change in the economy is increasing. Not only has the North Carolina economy shifted from one focused on agriculture and manufacturing to one that is focused on the knowledge economy, but the types of jobs have also changed. Employers want people with more education and training than was required in the past. Today, middle-skill jobs, which require more than a high school education, but less than a four-year degree, make up the largest segment of jobs. To succeed workers must stay informed of new technology and continually increase their knowledge and skills.

North Carolina's workforce development system is designed to help workers find good-paying jobs by assessing skills, provide information on careers, connect people to needed training and education programs, and refer people to jobs. One of the best ways to help individuals gain skills and learn more about a career is through work-based learning. These programs combine classroom education with on-the- job experience and individuals gains valuable work experience while learning new skills.

Governor Cooper believes that education is the foundation to a strong workforce. As the skill requirements of jobs increase and rapidly change, businesses need to find people with the right skills for the jobs they create and North Carolinians need access to training to be ready for those jobs. Governor Cooper continues to make education and preparing the state's youth to enter the workforce a key focus of NCWorks. Governor Cooper's goal is to make North Carolina a Top Ten Educated State by 2025 by increasing the percentage of four-year-olds enrolled in high quality pre-K, raising the high school graduation rate, and increasing the percentage of North Carolinians with a post-secondary degree or credential. An educated North Carolina is a job-ready North Carolina.

The state is making investments to ensure high school graduates are college and career ready by strengthening preK-12 education, enhancing career and technical education, adult literacy programs, and high-demand courses at community colleges, and creating high expectations for employment among youth, including youth with barriers to employment. In addition, efforts are being made to help prepare young people for careers in critical cluster areas, by increasing competency-based credentials, work-based learning opportunities and apprenticeship programs across the state.

North Carolina's ability to grow its human capital infrastructure and raise educational attainment levels is necessary to compete in today's economy. Educational attainment is also a key factor in determining the ability of workers to perform in increasingly knowledge-based work in every industry and occupation and achieve economic self-sufficiency. Data indicates that access to education and training impacts the lives of North Carolinians when looking at the average salaries and unemployment rates of workers. When workforce agencies and economic development work together to create career pathways, it will increase the prosperity of jobseekers.

Goal 4: Use data to drive strategies and ensure accountability.

Data must be used to make well-informed decisions about critical career clusters and determine where to target limited resources. North Carolina has strong resources available to identify key industries and occupations across the state and in regional communities. This information must be used to guide state programs as well as to advise customers.

In addition, it is important that North Carolina's system is held accountable for the money spent on workforce programs and services, as well as for the quality of services provided. Government efficiency is both expected and necessary. It is the commission's expectation that all state agencies with workforce investment responsibilities work together to maximize the use of all funds, including federal dollars. The workforce system will promote demand-driven and data-informed decision making and evaluation to more effectively meet workforce customer needs and enhance system accountability.

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.)

See Appendix 1

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.

The NCWorks Commission is responsible for evaluating the overall effectiveness of the state's workforce development system. To accomplish this task, the commission has established a performance and accountability committee which has several key responsibilities including:

- conducting annual reviews of all workforce program plans to identify gaps in service, duplication and opportunities for better alignment;
- developing annual performance measures for all workforce programs;
- investigating the possibility of system-wide customer satisfaction surveys;
- reviewing the implementation of WIOA to ensure adherence to the state plan; and
- engaging outside consultation for third-party review, analysis, evaluation and recommendations for continuous improvement of services and resulting outcomes.

The NCWorks Commission will use the information, data, and evaluations listed above to advise the Governor, General Assembly and other state leaders on how to continue to improve the state's workforce development system to ensure it is well-coordinate, customer-focused, high-quality, and meeting the needs of both individuals and businesses.

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) AND INCLUDES REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP. "IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTOR OR OCCUPATION" IS DEFINED AT WIOA SECTION 3(23).

The NCWorks Commission created a strategic action plan as a companion piece to its strategic plan to identify the key action steps necessary for achieving the goals identified.

The action steps identified by the commission and through stakeholder engagement and input fall into four categories: system alignment and transformation, business engagement, career pathways, and data. These action steps formed the foundation for the strategies listed below.

Career Pathways

North Carolina's primary work around industry and sector partnerships is done through its career pathways strategy. Career pathways begin with an engaged group of employers from a high-growth industry. This group meets with education and workforce professionals to discuss the workforce needs of the industry as well as specific knowledge, skills, ability, credentials, and experiences needed for occupations within that industry. Education providers then use this information to develop a clear plan for all individuals, including students, job seekers, dislocated workers, veterans, and individuals with disabilities, to use to prepare for these occupations in the most efficient way.

North Carolina's career pathways strategy supports the customer's transition from education to employment in high-growth occupations. Career pathways take advantage of the best available tools and resources to better serve customers and are founded on partner collaboration and targeted resources. Pathways give customers an edge by providing up-to-date information on opportunities in their community including critical career clusters and work-based learning opportunities.

North Carolina has a strong career pathway strategy in place that expanded on the work done over the last decade by the K-12 and community college systems. The current strategy includes a certification process by the NCWorks Commission that requires eight key element be in place to ensure pathways are comprehensive with multiple entry and exit ramps for in-demand occupations. Specific strategies to continue to strengthen and use career pathways are listed below.

- Continue to support and promote the development of NCWorks Certified Career Pathways for critical industry clusters.
- Require workforce development partners use the career pathways to target resources towards helping individuals gain the skills and experience needed for in-demand occupations.
- Provide programs that link low-skilled adults and individuals with barriers to employment to career pathways and job-ready skills along with basic skills.
- Develop a career information portal to ensure students and jobs seekers have reliable information on career opportunities and educational programs to prepare for those opportunities.
- Support individuals with barriers to employment by mitigating obstacles and increasing access to education and other training opportunities along career pathways.
- Support collaborative efforts under the vocational rehabilitation program to provide individuals with disabilities the rehabilitative services, training, and supports needed to obtain or maintain employment, including utilization of career pathways.

- Individually and collaboratively address the unique needs of current and prospective customers, including community college students, youth, and individuals with barriers to employment, veterans, and other populations to help them succeed in education and careers.

Business Engagement and Sector Partnerships

North Carolina also has several additional strategies that will proactively address the changing needs of the economy for a job-driven system by strengthening and expanding our business engagement strategies. Below are specific strategies identified to ensure a stronger connection to the business community and to ensure that the workforce system is meeting the needs of the economy.

- Research best practices on sector strategy initiatives and develop a strategy to implement networks for in-demand industries in North Carolina.
- Implement sector strategy initiatives to get input from the business community on their workforce needs and use this information in combination with analysis of data to make informed decisions and build a globally competitive workforce.
- Work with industry networks and business associations to educate businesses about N.C.'s career pathways strategy.
- Help connect businesses to local and regional career pathways activities.
- Increase, strengthen, and promote work-based learning activities including how they could be incorporated into agreements with companies receiving state economic development incentives, as well as how teachers and instructors can integrate work-based learning into their curriculum programs.
- Expand the number of NCWorks Certified Work-Ready Communities to demonstrate to businesses that communities have the workforce needed.

Identify back-to-industry opportunities for teachers/instructors to help them stay current with industry trends, enhance curriculum appropriately, and integrate work-based learning into their programs.

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).

North Carolina's workforce system includes multiple agencies, programs, and funders. The health of the future economy requires a move towards agency collaboration, policy alignment, innovation & systematic communication.

The three agencies responsible for the six core programs under WIOA - the N.C. Community College System, N.C. Department of Commerce, and N.C. Department of Health and Human Services - are aligning core programs and one-stop partner services via NCWorks. The focus

of the initiative is on one goal: connecting North Carolina jobs with North Carolina people through the efficient use of resources, streamlined customer service for citizens and businesses, alignment of programs and a consistent,

cohesive strategy all under one name - NCWorks. By focusing on common goals and building on each other's strengths, North Carolina will develop the organizational tools, structures and cross-agency protocols needed to support the vision of WIOA and the goals of NCWorks.

Coordinate Across Programs at State and Local Levels

The NCWorks Commission identified coordination and alignment of programs as one of the key strategies to ensure North Carolina has the best workforce development system in the county. In addition, the WIOA State Steering Council, comprised of statewide leaders representing the programs offered through WIOA, was established in the spring of 2015 to oversee the development of the State Unified Plan and implementation of WIOA. This council will continue to exist to review policies and develop strategies for further integration of programs.

The strategies identified by the NCWorks Commission and the State Steering Council to further coordinate programs at the state and local level include:

- ensure the WIOA State Steering Council continues as a permanent cross-agency body to coordinate and align policy;
- create new inter-agency teams at the local and regional levels to enhance alignment in workforce services;
- continue to collaborate with all statewide education and workforce development entities to get all workforce system participants enrolled in NCWorks Online;
- continue to incorporate and promote the NCWorks brand for all workforce development system programs to help customers recognize the value of the system;
- develop and implement a system-wide and consistent outreach strategy;
- develop a consistent menu of services and activities highlighting business and industry engagement opportunities, and develop interagency protocols to better meet employer and jobseeker needs; and
- create a framework for ensuring cross-trained, qualified staff have the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to support the local delivery system to ensure that North Carolina has the nation's most talented, collaborative professionals and leaders for workforce development.

Use Data to Drive Strategies and Ensure Accountability

From using data-driven decision making to improve workforce programs, to providing performance dashboards to stakeholders, system accountability is wide-ranging and imperative to North Carolina's workforce development's future. North Carolina's system will be accountable to the public for providing high-quality workforce development services through the following actions:

- investigate the process of interfacing NCWorks Online with North Carolina's array of workforce development case management systems;
- develop an annual workforce development system report card with universal success metrics;
- create metrics based on consistently collected feedback from customers to strengthen the workforce development system;
- pilot consumer reporting that provides industry-recognized credentials to better assess the outcomes of those individuals who participate in the workforce;
- collaboratively develop information exchange systems for demand- driven, data-informed decision making and evaluation; and

finalize state performance measures for local workforce boards.

III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an Operational Planning Elements section that supports 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 Operational Structures and Processes

The NCWorks Commission is the designated state workforce investment board for North Carolina. The commission operates in accordance with the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, North Carolina General Statute, and commission bylaws. Appointees are given the responsibility for setting the strategic direction of the state-wide workforce development system. Commission members advise state leaders on how to strengthen the state's workforce and serve North Carolina businesses. The commission also develops policy to align workforce programs, assesses the effectiveness of core programs, and oversees the "one-stop" career center system.

Membership

Representation on the NCWorks Commission is mandated by federal and state law. Commission membership includes workforce agency leaders, elected officials, the private sector, and labor, training, and community based organizations. The majority of the members are from the private sector as directed by WIOA. All members are appointed to four-year terms by the Governor. The heads of the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, N.C. Department of Administration, N.C. Department of Public Instruction, N.C. Community College System, University of North Carolina System, and N.C. Department of Commerce all serve as ex-officio members.

Committees

The work of the commission is accomplished through the work of committees. These committees, established by the chair, are created purposefully to accomplish the goals of the commission's bi-annual strategic plan and to carry out the functions under section 101(d) of WIOA. Each committee is led by a chair and is supported by staff. The chairs of each committee, along with the commission chair also compose the Executive Committee.

Staff

The Division of Workforce Solutions in the North Carolina Department of Commerce provides staff support to the commission to carry out the commission's duty to develop an effective and efficient workforce development system. Staff consists of a director and persons engaged in administrative, policy, technical research and support areas. Staff is responsive to the needs of the commission and initiates actions necessary to support the commission in its mandated functions.

Meetings

The commission conducts quarterly business meetings at the call of the chair. Business meetings are attended by the entire commission and are open to the public. Meeting agendas are developed by commission staff and approved by the chair. Actions of the commission are determined by a majority vote of the members present, and a majority of the commission constitutes a quorum for the transaction of business. The rules set forth in *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* govern the procedures of the commission.

The commission also conducts committee meetings comprised of commission members. Committees meet several times a year and are scheduled at the discretion of the committee chair. These meetings are attended by the assigned committee members, its chair, and appropriate staff.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGY

Describe how the lead State agency with responsibility for the administration of each core program or a Combined State 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, as appropriate.

The core programs in WIOA will achieve the strategies identified in North Carolina's State Unified Plan of strengthening the state's workforce and connecting employers to skilled, high quality employees. The NCWorks Commission's strategic plan and action plan will provide the foundation for this work and the commission will continue to track the success of the plan. Below is more detail on the action steps to accomplish this work.

Coordinate Across Programs at State and Local Levels

North Carolina has already made strides in integrating programs under WIOA. Currently programs in Titles I and III, operated by the N.C. Department of Commerce, are already integrated with a referral process to programs in Titles II and IV. The N.C. Department of Commerce will work to continuously improve the integration of services to ensure a customer-centered approach to service delivery. The WIOA State Steering Council will review current referral policy and strategies to identify ways to strengthen this process.

The NCWorks Commission's 2014-2016 strategic plan provides a framework for all workforce programs in North Carolina, including, but not limited to the programs covered under WIOA. This plan is centered on the work of coordinating and aligning all workforce programs. The State Steering Council also identified key actions needed to ensure coordination and alignment.

- Ensure the WIOA State Steering Council continues as a permanent cross-agency body to coordinate and align policy.
    - The State Steering Council was established in spring 2015 to ensure implementation of WIOA and coordination and alignment of programs at the state and local levels. The council will continue to meet on a regular basis to review progress on WIOA implementation and develop strategies for improvement. In addition, the council will review state policies that may inhibit programs from fully aligning activities. The council will provide feedback to the NCWorks Commission and its accountability committee regarding challenges and barriers to completing the work, and suggestions for new policy.
- Create inter-agency teams at the local and regional levels to enhance alignment in workforce services.
    - State-level coordination and alignment can provide the framework, structure, and support for an integrated workforce development system, but it's local and regional activities that must truly be aligned to improve the system. The need for regional councils recognizes the uniqueness of North Carolina's regions and the need to develop and deliver services that meet these unique needs.
    - Prosperity Zones were established by legislation in 2014 to promote collaboration for prosperity within the state. Regional prosperity teams will bring together education, workforce, economic development, and industry leaders to develop strategies for strengthening the workforce system at the local and regional level.
- Continue to collaborate with all statewide education and workforce development entities to get all workforce system participants enrolled in NCWorks Online.
    - NCWorks Online is the state's job-matching system that helps connect people to jobs and helps businesses find the talent they need. Individuals can develop a resume, assess their skills, find training to gain the skills they need, and apply for jobs. Businesses use the system to post jobs and find the talent they need. In addition, the system includes labor market information by industry, occupation, and region.
    - This system is a valuable tool for individuals, businesses, economic developers, and workforce development partners. As more individuals register and use NCWorks Online, businesses will have a larger pool of talent to select from for their workforce needs. In

addition, NCWorks Online can be a valuable tool for showing businesses interested in locating or growing in North Carolina that the state has the workforce they need to be successful.

    - Continue to incorporate and promote the NCWorks brand for all workforce development system programs to help customers recognize the value of the system. Currently, workforce development programs and services are branded under a variety of names, making it difficult for customers, individuals, and businesses to identify where to get workforce development services. In April 2014, the former Governor announced NCWorks and the need for the workforce development system to work under one name.

    - A single brand is needed to create a seamless workforce development system that is easily identifiable to all customers. Citizens, businesses, and key stakeholders will find value in North Carolina's workforce development system when the overwhelming complexity is minimized and services streamlined.

    - A single brand for the entire workforce development system will eliminate the historic focus on individual program services and replace it with a state-wide approach. A common brand also reduces confusion for those unfamiliar with the system by simplifying the message and increasing the efficiency of statewide outreach.

- Develop and implement a system-wide and consistent outreach strategy.

    - Customers of the state's workforce development system may access more than one service. For example, a business looking to grow will need to increase the size of its workforce immediately but also ensure there is a pipeline of workers to continue to fill those positions. The company may be interested in customized training as well as apprenticeship programs to ensure it can fill its current and future workforce needs. The workforce development system needs to develop outreach strategies that provide information on the full range of services available.

    - Currently, each program promotes its services separately, leaving many businesses and individuals confused about what services are available to meet their needs. In addition, combining services across programs is often left up to the customer to figure out. A consistent outreach strategy needs to be developed at the state level that allows for customization at the local level.

- Develop a consistent menu of services and activities highlighting business and industry engagement opportunities, and develop interagency protocols to better meet employer and jobseeker needs.

    - There are many ways for businesses to engage with the workforce development system that will help businesses access the services they need and provide opportunities for individuals to gain work

experience necessary to be a successful candidate for employment. A recent survey of businesses found that lack of work experience was one of the top three reasons employers were having difficulty finding the talent they need. However, businesses may not be fully aware of the ways they can connect with the workforce development system to provide opportunities that both help individuals gain the experience they need and develop a pipeline of talent to meet the businesses' need.

    - Workforce development programs need to work together to identify all the ways that businesses can interact with the workforce development system from facility tours, to internships and externships, to apprenticeships, and on-the-job training opportunities. Then, business outreach specialists can share information with the businesses on the full range of activities, across programs, in which a business can engage to help develop the talent needed to grow their business.

- Create a framework for ensuring cross-trained, qualified staff have the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to support the local delivery system to ensure that North Carolina has the nation's most talented, collaborative professionals and leaders for workforce development.
- Workforce development staff historically have been deployed to meet the specific mission of the program for which they are employed. Local, regional, and state stakeholders agree that a high level of customer service should be one of the cornerstones of the brand architecture for North Carolina's workforce delivery system. Achieving a high level of customer service is dependent on knowledgeable staff with the confidence and understanding of the system that is required to perform all aspects of their jobs. The NCWorks Training Center, in collaboration with workforce program staff, will develop a framework for providing cross-training of workforce programs.

Business Engagement and Sector Partnerships

North Carolina will proactively address the changing needs of the economy for a job-driven system by strengthening and expanding sector partnerships and business engagement strategies. Below are specific strategies identified to ensure a stronger connection to the business community and to ensure that the workforce system is meeting the needs of the economy.

- Research best practices on sector strategy initiatives and develop a strategy to implement networks for in-demand industries in North Carolina to get input from the business community on their workforce needs and use this information in combination with analysis of data to make informed decisions and build a globally competitive workforce.
    - Currently, the NCWorks Certified Career Pathways initiative is a primary example of a sector strategy initiative throughout the state. This initiative is employer driven and promotes partnerships among local businesses and workforce development entities.

- Increase, strengthen and promote work-based learning activities, including investigating how they could be incorporated into agreements with companies receiving state economic development incentives; as well as how teachers and instructors can integrate work-based learning into their curriculum programs.
    - A recent study of employer needs found that work experience was the top reason businesses had trouble finding the qualified workers they need to be successful. Work- based learning is a key strategy for helping to reduce this challenge and is a key element in career pathways and other work.
- North Carolina is currently participating in a National Governor's Association Policy Academy on work-based learning to increase and promote work-based learning activities across the state. North Carolina leaders will investigate how work-based learning activities could be incorporated into agreements with companies receiving state and/or local economic development incentives. There are a variety of types of work-based learning in which a business could engage including internships for students, externships for educators, co-ops, and apprenticeships. Businesses would benefit from these programs by helping to develop the future talent they need to maintain or grow their business.
- Expand the number of NCWorks Certified Work-Ready Communities to demonstrate to businesses that communities have the workforce needed.
    - The availability of a skilled and ready workforce drives economic development activities throughout North Carolina. The Certified Work-Ready Community certification demonstrates the employability of a local workforce, which strengthens the important connection with economic development. This initiative rewards the many workforce partners and local employers who have committed to improving the skill level of its workforce and achieves high standards of workforce quality. The NCWorks Commission's strategic plan provides a framework for all workforce programs in North Carolina, including, but not limited to the programs covered under WIOA. This plan is centered on the work of coordinating and aligning all workforce programs. The State Steering Council also identified key actions needed to ensure coordination and alignment.

Career Pathways

North Carolina has a strong career pathway strategy in place that expanded on the work done over the last decade by the K-12 and community college systems. The current strategy includes a certification process by the NCWorks Commission that requires eight key element be in place. Specific strategies to continue to strengthen and use career pathways are listed below.

- Continue to support and promote the development of NCWorks Certified Career Pathways for critical industry clusters.

    - North Carolina has a Director of Career Pathways position that was created through a grant from the John M. Belk Endowment. This position is responsible for helping teams across the state develop career pathways ready to be certified by the NCWorks Commission.
    - The N.C. Department of Commerce has also received a U.S. Department of Labor Sector Partnership National Emergency Grant that is focused on the development and implementation of career pathways.
- Require workforce development partners use the career pathways to target resources towards helping individuals gain the skills and experience needed for in-demand occupations.
    - NCWorks Career Pathways focus on local and regional in-demand occupations. Development of the pathway is only the first step. The next step is to help individuals enroll in career pathways programs to ensure that there is a pipeline of workers for these occupations. To do this, education and workforce development partners need to target their resources on career awareness and increasing enrollment in career pathways.
    - As resources for the education and the workforce development system continue to shrink in North Carolina and across the country, programs will need to focus their efforts to be more efficient and effective. Targeting resources towards helping people enroll in career pathways for high-demand occupations will help the workforce system be more efficient with its resources; individuals gain access to high-demand occupations and improve their quality of life; and business have the workforce they need to be successful and grow.
- Link Basic Skills programs at community colleges and other Title II providers, designed for low-skilled adults and individuals with barriers to employment to career pathways and job-ready skills.
    - NC Basic Skills programs will provide educational services and activities to this target group to improve literacy skills and employability skills needed for workforce success. State Leadership funds will be used to coordinate with core providers to establish a student referral system, cross-training, and integrated service delivery system. The Community College System will coordinate workforce development strategies to support on-ramp programming to include Integrated and Training, workforce preparation, career advising, and apprentices and transition services. Title II will work with Career and Technical Education to provide training on developing key elements for career pathways to include contextualized instruction for targeted industries, and programming that targets the needs of serving individuals with disabilities and English language learners.

    - Develop a career information portal to ensure students and jobs seekers have reliable information on career opportunities and educational programs to prepare for those opportunities.
        - There is a variety of readily available career information sites, listings, web pages, and portals supported by various agencies and programs. The amount of information is often overwhelming for students and job seekers especially if the data is inconsistent.
    - An interagency working group of partners will review and assess the career information currently available and make recommendations to create a single web portal. This web portal will be a hub where students and job seekers can turn to find relevant and accurate career information. This hub will not replace available career information but provide appropriate navigation to the best resources.
- Support collaborative efforts under the vocational rehabilitation program to provide individuals with disabilities the rehabilitative services, training, and supports needed to obtain or maintain employment, including utilization of career pathways.
    - The vocational rehabilitation programs will incorporate, to the maximum extent possible, career pathways within their services to individuals with disabilities through approaches to include increase emphasis and reference of career pathways during comprehensive assessment of individuals' skills, interests and aptitudes and during counseling and guidance sessions with individuals.
    - Program leadership will promote to staff and service recipients the use of established resources highlighting information about career pathways and in-demand occupations; increase emphasis on established career pathways and career growth when developing employment goals and individualized plans for employment with services and training that directly support the employment objectives; remain actively engaged with workforce partners in the collaborative development of career pathways and identify particular issues or challenges individuals with disabilities may encounter when adopting a career within an established career pathway or enhancements that may be particularly favorable for the populations served by the state's vocational rehabilitation programs.
- Individually and collaboratively address the unique needs of current and prospective customers, including community college students, youth, and individuals with barriers to employment, veterans, and other populations to help them succeed in education and careers.
    - Career pathways provide a consistent plan for individuals to use, regarding less of their current situation to determine how to achieve their career goals. Pathways include multiple entry and exit points so

all people can use the pathway to plan their career. North Carolina's career pathways strategy includes education and training on how to use career pathways to advise and support all individuals.

Use Data to Drive Strategies and Ensure Accountability

From using data-driven decision making to improve workforce programs, to providing performance dashboards to stakeholders, system accountability is wide-ranging and imperative to North Carolina's workforce development's future. North Carolina's system will be accountable to the public for providing high-quality workforce development services.

- Investigate the process of interfacing NCWorks Online with North Carolina's array of workforce development case management systems.
    - There are nearly a dozen case management systems in North Carolina that are used by workforce development programs to track services provided to participants that could include tuition reimbursement amounts, referrals to other agencies, counseling notes, etc. These case management systems are required for data collection and federal reporting. Currently, there is no integration or interface between these systems, requiring extra work on the part of customers and staff. For example, as customers access the workforce system through different agencies, they are required to resubmit eligibility and/or demographic information, which is time consuming and redundant.
- Also, the workforce system does not have a way of tracking services across agencies, which increases the chances of duplication of funds and services. This lack of information also impacts the referral process and decreases staff efficiency.
- The State Steering Council will begin investigating the opportunities and challenges that exist for integrating case management system. Currently, programs offered under Titles I and III use the same system and the council will explore options for expanding the use of this system to other programs.
- Develop an annual workforce development system report card with universal success metrics.
    - While each workforce development program typically has multiple performance measures, many of them mandated by the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Labor, universal success metrics give North Carolina customers a consistent look at the results of the workforce system. These results will be displayed via a report card and provide a common framework to measure our workforce system's progress across a wide variety of programs. This dashboard will be easy to access and understand, and will highlight the employment, wage, and training results for each workforce development program.

    - The NCWorks Commission has established a set of core performance measures for all workforce programs in the state and reports on these measures annually. Measures look at employment and educational enrollment status of former participants across program.

- Create metrics based on consistently collected feedback from customers to strengthen the workforce development system.
    - Each workforce development agency has historically been responsible for measuring the overall satisfaction of its clients. Measuring this level of satisfaction is program specific and lacks consistency.
    - An integrated workforce development system requires universal customer satisfaction metrics based on a consistent feedback loop. The analysis of the feedback will be used to strengthen North Carolina's workforce development system.
    - The workforce development system must be continuously responsive to its customers. With so many programs delivering services to job seekers and businesses, the NCWorks Commission will work with workforce development agencies to establish a continuous improvement process that canvases all customers regardless of access point, seeks to understand their challenges, and provides a mechanism for strengthening the system based on that understanding. This data will be used to create customer satisfaction metrics aimed at continuously improving the system.
- Pilot consumer reporting that provides industry-recognized credentials to better assess the outcomes of those individuals who participate in the workforce.
    - As industry certifications become more prevalent in the labor market, it is important for educational institutions to establish data-sharing relationships with certifying bodies and for state agencies that manage wage and occupation data to ensure their training programs are well aligned with industry and professional standards. There are challenges impacting the effectiveness of direct collaboration between these groups including legal issues and security of data. Educational institutions often do not have access to certification exam data, which limits their ability to know if students are leaving their programs well prepared to meet industry-specified competencies.
    - The N.C. Community College System initiated a conversation with other community college systems and began to hear a consistent need across the country to make progress on this issue. As a result, the system office was encouraged to take a leadership role in leading this national conversation.

- Finalize state performance measures for local workforce boards.
    - North Carolina General Statute directs the NCWorks Commission to develop state performance measure for local workforce development boards. The commission will review baseline information in the spring of 2016 and develop performance measures beginning in program year 2016. These measures will ensure that local boards are fully implementing programs to meet the goals of the commission and WIOA.

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.

Activities listed in section A above, developed by the NCWorks Commission, the state's Workforce Development Board under the Opportunity Act, were planned for the entire workforce development system under the Commission's strategic plan. The NCWorks Commission's 2014-2016 strategic plan provides the framework for all workforce programs in North Carolina, including but not limited to the programs covered under WIOA. These programs include Registered Apprenticeship, career and technical education offered at both the K-12 and community college levels, programs offered by the NC Department of Health and Human Services, including Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and Food and Nutrition Services, and other programs offered by the NC Community College System, and the NC Department of Commerce.

The NCWorks Commission, which includes representatives from the business community, heads of state workforce agencies, educators, and community leaders align workforce programs and activities at the state-level that are focused on coordinating and aligning all workforce programs, and avoiding duplication across workforce activities. Efforts include extensive stakeholder work and programmatic reviews of program plans, policies, and services across agencies. The programs under review include the American Indian Workforce Development Program administered by the NC Department of Administration; the Title I adult and youth programs, Wagner-Peyser, Trade Adjustment Assistance, and Veterans' Program, administered by the NC Department of Commerce; the Registered Apprenticeship Program, Bionetwork, Customized Training, Small Business Center Network, Adult Education and Basic Skills, Occupational Continuing Education, and Postsecondary Career Technical and Vocational Education programs administered by the NC Community College System; the Career and Technical Education program administered by the NC Department of Public Instruction; and the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Food and Nutrition Services, Community Services Block Grant; Senior Community Service Employment, and the Vocational Rehabilitation and VR Services for the Blind programs administered by the NC Department of Health and Human Services.

These programs are evaluated with regard to funding and service capacity, number counties served, types of services provided, and target populations. In the most recent review, the

Commission found that the majority of programs offered some type of skill development and employment services for adults, but relatively few programs served youth. Several programs provide similar services like resume development, career counseling, and skill development; however, while these activities seem duplicative with regard to the type of service provided, the programs serve very different target populations, and programs have specialized services for meeting the needs of their customers such as specialists trained to serve individuals with disabilities. The need to strengthen services to employers, quality customer service, the skills gap, business outreach, and services to youth identified in the evaluation are addressed throughout the WIOA Unified Plan.

Other strategic planning efforts related to workforce development, including those of the Economic Development Board, Education Cabinet, Community College System, and State Board of Education are concurrent with those of the Commission. Efforts to coordinate and align strategic plans, goals, and performance measures with the North Carolina Unified Plan are made through interagency workgroups and stakeholder participation. For example, the strategic plan of the North Carolina Community College System, *Align4NCWorks*, is aligned with the WIOA Unified Plan. Community colleges throughout the state hosted regional Workforce Learning Summits involving partners from business and industry, public schools, workforce development boards and career centers, and economic development. Elected officials, local government leaders, community organizations and other partners also participated. As an alignment strategy, elements of *Align4NCWorks* have been incorporated into the WIOA Unified Plan, with workforce partner agency representatives contributing to the development of both plans.

The NC Community College System also maintains partnerships with a network of community based organizations (CBO) and faith based organizations around North Carolina that have the capacity to outreach and serve those adults who have multiple barriers to job training and employment. The CBO's, who work locally, have the knowledge and relationships to target services to address local economic and social needs of the community. These organizations, already collaborative partners, are included in various trainings, and have access to online resources as described in section A. Similarly, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs maintain working partnerships with non-profit organizations as providers of rehabilitation services. The community rehabilitation programs provide services through contracts and memoranda of agreement, and have representation on a state-level steering committee. The VR programs also have cooperative agreements, policies, and procedures for coordination, referrals, information sharing, and the provision of support services with other programs such as through the NC Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services.

The VR programs also partner with local education agencies to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of VR services.

Another alignment strategy of the state is through data sharing agreements across workforce agencies and the expansion of the North Carolina Common Follow-up System (CFS), a longitudinal tracking system. Data agreements across agencies are being developed to enable electronic referrals, including programs outside the plan, such as between the TANF program and Vocational Rehabilitation. The CFS provides information on the educational and employment outcomes of participants in publicly supported educational,

employment and training programs, including programs outside of the WIOA unified state plan, such as the University of North Carolina, adult correctional programs, and social services programs. The Labor and Economics Division of the NC Department of Commerce is currently working with the Government Data Analytics Center within the NC Department of Information Technology to improve access to the State's longitudinal data and provide flexibility and scalability, and advance data analysis capabilities associated with workforce and educational program operation and performance. Information from the CFS, including cross-program participation, is used in planning, policymaking, program evaluation, resource allocation and career planning.

One state-level initiative that integrates workforce programs is *Education Opportunities for Students with Disabilities*, which establishes a state-level framework for the review and expansion of postsecondary education and employment opportunities for people with disabilities in North Carolina. This initiative requires the NC Department of Health and Human Services with the assistance of the Department of Public Instruction, the University of North Carolina, and the N.C. Community College System, and in consultation with the N.C. Postsecondary Education Alliance, community stakeholders, and other interested parties to assess gaps and system needs to support transitions of people with disabilities to adulthood; develop a program and fiscal policies to expand and sustain postsecondary education and employment opportunities for people with disabilities; plan and implement approaches to public awareness about postsecondary education and employment for people with disabilities; plan and implement joint policies and common data indicators for tracking the outcomes of people with disabilities after leaving high school; and consider options for technology to link agency databases.

The *Education Opportunities for Students with Disabilities* report to the North Carolina General Assembly for 2016 establishes WIOA as foundational federal legislation upon which the state policies and practices concerning system needs are established and aligned. Specific elements of the Unified State Plan and Opportunities Act that have been incorporated include the earmarked Title IV funding, representing roughly $16 million, for pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities who are eligible or 'potentially eligible' for the VR program; the restrictions on subminimum wage employment so that individuals with even the most significant disabilities are encouraged and permitted to pursue competitive integrated employment; the expansion of the triennial statewide comprehensive needs assessment under Title IV to focus on the vocational rehabilitation needs of youth with disabilities; and performance measures aligned with the WIOA Performance Accountability measures for youth as statewide indicators of North Carolina's success.

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 (e.g. transportation), to individuals, including those populations identified in section II(a)(1)(B), and individuals in remote areas The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

As a system, NCWorks will pursue strategies to ensure job seekers have access to all services across programs. The NCWorks Commission recognized in 2014 during its strategic planning process that while North Carolina has some of the best workforce development programs in the country, these programs did not always operate as a cohesive system. As a result, commission identified coordination and alignment of programs as one of the key goals for the system and developed key strategies to meet this goal (see section II(c) State Strategy for more details). An integrated system will allow all customers to access timely and relevant services from a multitude of touch points wrapped around a customer service core. Achievement of this goal will result in a system moving in the same direction with the same goals, and job seekers will experience better service.

To accomplish this goal, the NCWorks Commission has established several key mechanisms to ensure programs are coordinated. Currently Titles I and III are already fully integrated and there is a strong referral process with programs offered through Title IV. The mechanisms listed below will be used to strengthen the coordination between all WIOA programs.

First, the WIOA State Steering Council was established to bring together the senior leadership of each program covered under WIOA to review current activities, discuss solutions, and track implementation. This council will continue to meet on a regular basis to review progress on WIOA implementation and develop strategies for improvement. In addition, the council will review state policies that may inhibit programs from fully aligning activities. The council will implement strategies for better alignment such as creating a common intake form, exploring the possibility of an integrated case management system, and strengthening the referral process between programs. The council will provide feedback to the NCWorks Commission and its accountability committee regarding challenges and barriers to completing the work, and suggestions for new policy.

Second, local and regional teams will be developed to ensure that coordination and alignment is happening at the local level as well. State-level coordination and alignment can provide the framework, structure, and support for an integrated workforce development system, but it's local and regional activities that must truly be aligned to improve the system. These councils will report to the WIOA State Steering Committee on best practices as well as barriers to success.

Third, North Carolina will use the NCWorks brand to assist in creating a seamless workforce development system that is easily identifiable to all customers. Job seekers will find value in North Carolina's workforce development system when the overwhelming complexity is minimized and services streamlined. A common brand will reduce confusion for those unfamiliar with the system by simplifying the message and increasing the efficiency of statewide outreach.

Fourth, NCWorks partners will develop and implement a system-wide and consistent outreach strategy. Currently, each program promotes its services separately, leaving many individuals confused about what services are available to meet their needs. In addition, combining services across programs is often left up to the customer to figure out. A consistent outreach strategy needs to be developed at the state level that allows for customization at the local level. A key activity to achieve this consistent outreach strategy is cross-training of staff. The NCWorks Training Center is developing a framework to ensure program staff have basic knowledge of all workforce programs in the state.

Finally, the commission has established a performance and accountability committee that will review the implementation and effectiveness of WIOA, NCWorks Career Centers, and overall performance of the system. This committee will report back to the full commission on successes and challenges of the system and will recommend key policy changes to the Governor, N.C. General Assembly, and other state and local leaders.

In addition to the strategies put in place by the NCWorks Commission, the three agencies responsible for implementation of WIOA have key activities in place to ensure a well-coordinated, customer-focused, and high-quality system is in place.

NCWorks Career Center System

NCWorks Career Center (one-stop) system has fully integrated services provided through Titles I and III. North Carolina's focus for this system is on achieving a culture of quality customer service. The career center system is established to provide improved performance, coordinated access to services, and service delivery accountability. These centers serve as the front-line touch points for the state's job seekers. The WIOA State Steering Council is currently working to develop key strategies for integrating Titles II and

36. Below is a description of how integrated career centers operate and plans for integrating the remaining WIOA programs.

To ensure a customer-focused career center system, the N.C. Department of Commerce Division of Workforce Solutions implemented a state-wide, integrated services delivery approach to better serve the state's citizens and businesses by responding to customer needs. Integrated services delivery focuses on customer service and is organized around services to customers, not discrete programs offered in silos. In North Carolina, it is a system in which Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act Title I (Adult and Dislocated Worker) programs and Title III (Wagner-Peyser Employment Services) are the operational backbone of NCWorks Career Centers.

Career centers deploy integrated staffing and utilize integrated technology to generate an integrated customer pool and customer flow. Staff are organized by function are cross-trained so that all center staff has the capacity to serve all customers and is knowledgeable about all services the center offers. In addition, staff use a single, web-based system (NCWorks Online) that provides job matching services to job seekers and employers, as well as program and client management/participant tracking used by staff. Customers (when eligibility permits) are enrolled in both WIOA Title I Adult program and Wagner-Peyser program; and all Trade Adjustment Act customers are enrolled in WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker program. This model emphasizes cross-training of staff and strong partnership to serve customers better.

The NCWorks Commission was charged with setting new criteria and standards for quality customer service for the state-wide career center system. This new criteria was approved by the Commission in May 2013 and includes elements to ensure high-quality customer service, integrated services delivery, accessibility, and consistent program offerings to ensure a consistent level of quality customer service throughout the state's workforce delivery system.

In addition, many centers are co-located with community colleges or county social services and have vocation rehabilitation staff who work on-site. In addition, a strong partnership

and referral process is in place for all workforce development programs offered by the state and local communities.

Plans for Integration of All WIOA Programs

In addition to the integration of programs offered through Titles I and III through NCWorks Career Centers, there is also a strong relationship between career centers and the programs offered through Title

37. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Services for the Blind have strong ties with other components of the statewide workforce development system. The partnerships and linkages that

were established prior to the provisions of the Rehabilitation Act amendments of 1998 have served as a stable and effective foundation for effective service delivery. Cooperative agreements or memorandum of agreements have been established with all local area workforce boards. The agreements provide for the following strategies:

- Provision of inter-component staff training and technical assistance with regard to the availability and benefits of, and information on eligibility standards for vocational rehabilitation services; and the promotion of equal, effective, and meaningful participation by individuals with disabilities receiving workforce development system services in all of the states NCWorks Career Centers in the state through the promotion of accessibility; the use of non-discriminatory policies and procedures; the provision of reasonable accommodations; auxiliary aids and services, and rehabilitation technology for persons with disabilities.
- Identification of service delivery strategies by the division within the NCWorks Career Centers and other components of the workforce development system.
- Development and implementation of information systems that link all components of the statewide workforce development system; that link the components to other electronic networks including non-visual electronic networks; and that relate to such subjects as employment statistics and information on job vacancies, career planning, and workforce development activities.
- Further development and use of customer service features such as common intake and referral procedures when feasible, customer databases, resource information, and human services hotlines.
- Establishment of cooperative efforts with employers to facilitate job placement and carry out any other activities that Vocational Rehabilitation and the employers determine to be appropriate.
- Identification of staff roles, responsibilities, and available resources, along with specification of the financial responsibility of each component of the statewide workforce development system with regards to paying for certain services (consistent with state law and federal requirements).

The rehabilitation needs of individuals who are served through components of the statewide workforce development system other than through the public vocational rehabilitation program will be updated and reassessed through the methodology outlined in

that section of the VR portion of the Unified State Plan. One of the ongoing goals for both the vocational rehabilitation and NCWorks system is to continue to refine the processes and procedures for NCWorks staff to better determine which consumers with disabilities utilizing the centers should be referred to DVRS rather than being served through NCWorks. It is necessary to determine which consumers served by the NCWorks system have a disability. Strategies to improve this will be further explored via mutual collaboration between VR and NCWorks Career Centers to establish training for its staff.

The division enthusiastically participated in the development of NCWorks Career Centers and continues to be an active partner throughout North Carolina to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access core workforce services. Vocational Rehabilitation staff are represented on the state level as well as on local boards. The division remains an active partner with the workforce development system and supports the NCWorks concept to provide more universal access to placement and training services; to integrate programs by offering a common core of information and services; and by offering consumers more choices regarding where and how they get services. Through local agreements, direct service delivery staff within the Division have gained more access to comprehensive data, which enables faster service delivery and cross-agency collaboration. Nearly all DVRS offices have obtained access to these databases to date.

In every community where there are NCWorks Career Centers, local Vocational Rehabilitation offices provide counseling staff, vocational evaluators, human resource placement specialists and other staff as appropriate to meet the needs of those individuals who enter an NCWorks Career Center and require the specialized services offered by Vocational Rehabilitation. Specific arrangements and staffing patterns by Vocational Rehabilitation staff vary from site to site depending on local needs and agreements. Enhanced working relationships with key partners of the workforce development system such as Social Services, NC Community College System, and other local partnerships allow all the agencies to better meet the needs of the individual.

The number of individuals served or identified through components of the workforce development system is increasing. Local division management represents Vocational Rehabilitation on the local workforce development boards while staff also actively participate in planning, development, and service delivery with both individual component agencies or within the NCWorks Career Centers already established.

Vocational Rehabilitation Programs

The N.C. Department of Health and Human Services Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) and Services for the Blind have working partnerships with NC Works and other components of the statewide workforce development system, and will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality, customer-centered services. At a systems level this is accomplished through participation on interagency strategic planning committees and workgroups. For example, the Department of Health and Human Services, the designated state agency for the VR programs, is represented on the NC Works Commission and also the Governor's Education Cabinet to align human services programs focused on employment with education and workforce development initiatives. At a local level, DVRS and other workforce partners have representation in strategic planning on local workforce boards.

DVRS supports the NCWorks concept to provide more universal access to placement and training services, to integrate programs by offering a common core of information and services, and by offering consumers more choices regarding where and how they get services. Through local agreements, direct service delivery staff within VR and other partner agencies have access to NCWorks data, which enables faster service delivery and cross-agency collaboration.

Cooperative agreements and memoranda of agreement have been established between the DVRS and all local area workforce boards. The agreements provide for the following strategies:

- Provision of inter-component staff training and technical assistance with regard to the availability and benefits of, and information on eligibility standards for vocational rehabilitation services; and the promotion of equal, effective, and meaningful participation by individuals with disabilities receiving workforce development system services in all of the states NCWorks Career Centers in the state through the promotion of accessibility; the use of non-discriminatory policies and procedures; the provision of reasonable accommodations; auxiliary aids and services, and rehabilitation technology for persons with disabilities.
- Identification of service delivery strategies by the division within the NCWorks Career Centers and other components of the workforce development system.
- Development and implementation of information systems that connect all components of the statewide workforce development system; that connect the components to other electronic networks including non-visual electronic networks; and that relate to such subjects as employment statistics and information on job vacancies, career planning, and workforce development activities.
- Further development and use of customer service features such as referral procedures, customer databases, resource information, and human services hotlines.
- Establishment of cooperative efforts with employers to facilitate job placement and carry out any other activities that Vocational Rehabilitation and the employers determine to be appropriate.
- Identification of staff roles, responsibilities, and available resources, along with specification of the financial responsibility of each component of the statewide workforce development system with regards to paying for certain services, consistent with state law and federal requirements.

In every community where there are NCWorks Career Centers, local DVRS offices provide counseling staff, vocational evaluators, human resource placement specialists and other staff as appropriate to meet the needs of those individuals who enter an NCWorks Career Center and require the specialized services offered by DVRS. Specific arrangements and staffing patterns by DVRS staff at NCWorks career centers vary across the state, depending on local needs and agreements. One of the ongoing goals for both the vocational

rehabilitation and NCWorks system is to continue to refine the processes and procedures for NCWorks staff to better determine which consumers with disabilities utilizing the centers should be referred to DVRS rather than being served through NCWorks. It is necessary to determine which consumers served by the NCWorks system have a disability and to be able to make referrals electronically. Strategies to develop an electronic referral system will be further developed through mutual collaboration between DVRS and NCWorks. DVRS will also provide disability-related trainings for NCWorks staff.

Enhanced working relationships and communication with other key partners of the workforce development system such as the N.C. Division of Social Services, N.C. Community College System, and other local partnerships allow all the agencies to better meet the needs of the individual. Other efforts to provide comprehensive, high-quality, customer-centered services, including supportive services to individuals, will also be conducted through (a) cooperative agreements with agencies not carrying out activities under the statewide workforce development system for the purpose of information and resource sharing and referrals; (b) coordination with education agencies, such as the Department of Public Instruction, N.C. Community College System, University of North Carolina System, and local education agencies for the provision of training and transition services to youth with disabilities, including pre- employment transition services; (c) cooperative agreements and contracts with private nonprofit vocational rehabilitation service providers for the provision of rehabilitation training with short- and long-term supports; (d) arrangements and cooperative agreements for the provision of supported employment services with the N.C. Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services to ensure that individuals with the most significant disabilities have equal access to VR and best practice employment services; and (e) coordination with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities to facilitate VR services and the provision of transition services, including pre- employment transition services, for students and youth with disabilities.

N. C. Community College System

The NC Community College System is the pass-through agency for Title II Adult Education Family Literacy Act. Through a competitive request for proposal process, eligible providers will be funded to provide services and activities that improve adult literacy skills and knowledge for postsecondary transition and or employment. NC community colleges are the main partners for adult education providers for developing and implementing activities and services that support transition to postsecondary training and or employment such as Integrated Education and Training, Workplace Preparation Activities, Pre-apprenticeships, and the model that specifically supports English language learners, the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education.

Proposed activities to implement the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act requirements for adult education and literacy activities for individuals:

- Expand Community College Basic Skills Plus program to include creating on-ramps for students functioning at Adult Basic Education level, and students with disabilities and English language learners. Basic Skills Plus is high on the list of planned activities because it was originally conceived of as an on-ramp to career pathways programs and included tuition waivers. It provides additional “on-ramps” for individuals that have multiple barriers to employment due to low skills or

education attainment. Basic Skills Plus is an integrated and training model that requires co-enrollment in basic skills instruction, occupational training, employability skills and support services.

- Expand Integrated Education and Training (IET) models as links to NC Career Pathways. Develop curriculum improvement projects to contextualize instruction to high demand industries as support for providers operating IET. Provide training to providers on developing career pathway that meet the needs of individuals with intellectual disabilities.
- Disseminate Best Practices. Innovative models previously funded will be disseminated to all providers through professional development activities. Best practice collection and dissemination will include insights about how adult education and literacy providers partner effectively with Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act core partners and mandatory One-Stop partners.
- Enhance Partnership with NCCCS Human Resources Development (HRD) Program and NCWorks Centers. Use State Leadership funds to partner with HRD program to implement a curriculum improvement project to standardize instruction and create a single response to employability skills training that meets employer needs.
- Enhance accountability. Improve data management system to expand real-time data collection and reporting. Create data tools to allow providers to use data for continuous improvement. Create system to systematically monitor provider data and create alert system to provide technical assistance to providers who are in danger of not meeting negotiated performance outcomes.

The Unified Plan process and the NCWorks Certified Career Pathways are also opportunities to bring together Adult Education/Literacy and Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act Youth programming in new ways. The NC Community College System's Align4NCWorks plan supports these types of integration strategies through its objectives 6.A. and 6.B.:

- 6.A. Establish and strengthen policies and practices for students and adult learners to enter into and proceed successfully through career pathways leading to a post-secondary credential and into a quality career.
- 6.B. Address the unique needs of current and prospective students to help them succeed in education and careers.

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 needs and to achieve the goals of industry or sector partners in the state. The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

The three agencies responsible for the core WIOA programs work together in local, regional, and state- level teams to meet the needs of employers in North Carolina. Currently, an inter-agency NCWorks team is coordinating development of comprehensive employer services

literature and brochures for dissemination across all programs, investigating options for an integrated customer relationship management tool, and establishing regional business services teams to ensure coordination among local workforce development boards. Further, the State will recommend a business services committee be established by local workforce development boards that will develop local and regional strategies for employer engagement and report to the Boards quarterly.

With the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, emphasis for local success is built on the concepts of (1) regionalism as an approach to engage businesses, (2) creating collaborative partnerships with economic development/education to provide solutions, and (3) developing sector strategies to build talent pipelines.

Local workforce areas are pursuing a regional approach, and establishing a framework, for business engagement. The framework provides a foundation to support the work of local teams which will work to ensure consistent delivery of services to businesses across the state and to create a comprehensive approach for forging collaborative partnerships with key stakeholders. Local teams will be comprised of business services staff from workforce programs in the area including WIOA core programs as well as other workforce development programs. This work will be focused on business engagement, developing comprehensive solutions (across programs when applicable), and satisfying the talent needs of those businesses.

The following overarching goals are essential:

- businesses are targeted proactively and strategically based on sector analysis and in alignment with local board strategic plans;
- employers are offered a single point-of-contact throughout the relationship to ensure relationships are maintained;
- comprehensive solutions are provided to address business needs throughout the entire business life cycle; and
- technology is leveraged to facilitate information sharing and collaboration.

For business services to work well as a collaborative, and deliver excellent customer service, each local area will position business service representatives to lead their regional efforts to meet business needs.

North Carolina has several other key strategies to engage employers to help meet their workforce needs. Local teams will use the strategies below alone or in combination when working with businesses. Below is a summary of these key strategies.

NCWorks Career Centers

NCWorks Career Centers help employers find, train, and retain qualified employees. Each center provides services to help local businesses, including the following:

- job applicant screening and qualified candidate referrals;
- valuable and up-to-date labor market facts and projections, such as wages;
- information on tax credits for hiring particular groups of workers;

- space to conduct job interviews;
- help arranging job fairs;
- workshops on employer-related subjects;
- employee training resources;
- layoff/closure prevention services for employers; and
- information about federal bonding (insurance for hiring at-risk workers.)

NCWorks Online, a web-based job matching system, is also available for businesses to post jobs, get real- time analysis on the labor market, find qualified candidates to fill open positions, and all at no cost.

Apprenticeship

The apprenticeship program transferred from the N.C. Department of Commerce to the N.C. Community College System at the end of 2017. Employers work with ApprenticeshipNC to create a written agreement that specifies the length of a participant's training, the related technical instruction, and outline of the skills that person will need to learn, and the wages he or she will earn. Through ApprenticeshipNC employers gain:

- a proven process for imparting the knowledge and skills of experienced personnel to new employees;
- greater workforce competency and productivity;
- partnerships with certification and licensing agencies; and
- valuable assets in the recruitment and retention of a highly qualified workforce.

Per federal guidelines, Registered Apprenticeship requires education/training, supervised/mentor-based work-based learning, and a progressive wage scale.

ApprenticeshipNC added pre-apprenticeships to its portfolio for work-based learning to offer greater flexibility to employers while establishing a process for individuals to get "credit" toward a Registered Apprenticeship based on work-based experiences and/or classroom training.

Apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships involve a great deal of coordination with employers and among workforce development partners, including North Carolina Community College apprenticeship consultants; public schools, and other education providers; and workforce development boards as promoters of apprenticeship strategies as a part of their overall portfolio of business services.

Key coordination strategies between WIOA and ApprenticeshipNC are upgraded training of existing employees, WIOA On-the-Job Training Services, along with in-school and out of school-youth apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships.

WIOA can coordinate with economic development and ApprenticeshipNC to provide services to high demand industries: Advanced Manufacturing, Healthcare,

Logistics/Transportation, Energy, Construction, IT and Hospitality. A DOL/OA grant award for expanding apprenticeship could assist in this coordination.

N.C. Department of Commerce Division of Workforce Solutions On-the-Job Training

N.C. Department of Commerce Division of Workforce Solutions on-the-job training ("OJT") provides North Carolina a means to expand and enhance workforce service delivery to the State's citizens. OJT is a viable pathway for unemployed workers seeking employment and for employers seeking workers. It offers the unique opportunity to offset initial training costs to fill skilled positions while building organizational productivity as the employee learns job requirements. An OJT arrangement can be the impetus for an employer to create a job opportunity. Local workforce development boards consider OJT placements in the context of in-demand occupations or industries where career pathways exist with employer partners who have a documented plan to add jobs.

OJT is a viable and compatible part of North Carolina's Integrated Services Delivery services. Local workforce development board OJT policy is critical for consistency, institutionalizing services the local board seeks to deliver, and managing and leveraging OJT funds. Local OJT policy also provides guidance on how to comply with federal and state OJT requirements and leverage other hiring.

Work Opportunity Tax Credits

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit encourages employers to hire individuals who are qualified for open positions but face barriers to employment. Businesses can receive a one-time tax credit of $2,400-$9,600 for hiring a qualified job applicant; the amount varies, depending on the hire.

To be eligible for the tax credit, employers must hire an individual from one of the following groups:

- recipients of Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP);
- former offenders;
- vocational rehabilitation program participant;
- recipients of long-term family assistance;
- veterans unemployed at least four weeks; and
- veterans with a service-connected disability

In North Carolina, the N.C. Division of Workforce Solutions accepts applications for the tax credit, which is authorized by the U.S. Congress.

Services to Employers through the Community Colleges

The North Carolina Community College System is a system of 58 comprehensive community colleges that melded the collection and missions of the state's public junior colleges and its public Industrial Education Centers in the 1960s. The System has a long-standing history of serving employers throughout its programs and became known nationally as the nation's

first and most robust Customized Training programs. In addition, it is the designated provider for High School Equivalency test administration and Basic Skills programs.

Title II Adult Education and Literacy is administered through the NC Community College System. Community colleges are the main educational partners for Title II providers for key workforce development strategies to include Human Resource Development, Basic Skills Plus, Integrated Education and Training, apprenticeships, and employer engagement. The Community College System's current strategic initiative, Align4NCWorks, has a major emphasis on employer services and seeks to meet employer needs through a collaborative approach.

Employer Input in Design of Education and Training

The Community College System requires business advisory committees per the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (reinforced through its program review and accountability process), and (where applicable) federal requirements. All technical programs at a community college have program advisory committees which generally meet at a minimum one to two times a year. Many colleges involve deeper involvement; for example, Brunswick Community College works with an extensive set of economic development and workforce development partners to aggressively seek input on college programming and other workforce services from businesses throughout the county.

In deciding what education, training or certification programs to offer, community colleges rely on a combination of direct input from business (as referenced above), data analyses, and priorities established by economic development partners. Data analysis is generally conducted by college Institutional Research staff (primarily for planning of one- and two-year programs), by college Workforce Continuing Education program leaders (for short-term training), and/ or procured from the N.C. Department of Commerce/Labor and Economic Analysis Division or local economic development partners. There is increasing use of supply and demand analyses as well as a variety of economic and labor market data analyses to determine priorities for education/training based on industries that need workers (and thus education/training) and current/projected hiring within specific occupations.

The state Jobs Plan (economic development strategic plan) lays out a set of target industries, and county/regional economic development entities define their area's specific needs. The NCWorks Strategic Action Plan encourages workforce programs under the NCWorks system's purview to target resources to economic needs.

North Carolina has a long history in sector strategies using WIOA funded services, with locally and regionally defined initiatives as well as statewide sector initiatives in areas ranging from Allied Health, Green Energy, Advanced Manufacturing (including specific areas such as Aviation), and many others.

Community colleges have played major roles throughout the state and local sector strategies, as leaders or collaborators in initiatives that include WIOA partners.

One notable example of a sector strategy that the Community College System leads is the NC BioNetwork program, funded by the General Assembly. The program has regional centers based at community colleges that specialize in key sectors within biotechnology that are important for North Carolina (e.g., food processing and biopharmaceuticals), and these

support the development and provision of community college biotech-related education, training and certification across the state.

NCWorks Customized Training

One of North Carolina's key workforce tools for economic development is NCWorks Customized Training, state-funded community college training tailored to the needs of manufacturing and other "economic base" industries that are looking to expand, relocate to North Carolina or make new investments. Services are typically provided to one employer at a time, although Customized Training projects can pave the way for development of workforce continuing education programs that typically serve multiple employers. There is also a new pilot program testing a pre-hire approach through Customized Training that (with the help of two workforce development boards in eastern North Carolina) would serve multiple employers that individually have the need for just one or two welders at a time.

The focus on employers needs is being intensified as part of the 2015-2018 Align4NCWorks strategic initiative, as is the focus on meeting needs collaboratively. The first goal in the NC Community College System's "Align4NCWorks" strategic plan is to "Increase and sustain employer engagement as part of an integrated, customer-centered workforce system."

Customized Training and workforce development board/career center services already are interwoven in certain areas. There are plans underway via both the NCWorks Commission's and Community College System's strategic plans to better connect Customized Training/other community college education and training services for employers with workforce development board protocols.

Small Business Center Connections to WIOA services

Every community college in North Carolina has a Small Business Center that provides education, training, and counseling for prospective business owners. The state's Jobs Plan, NCWorks Strategic Action Plan, and Align4NCWorks (community college) plan all call for better coordinating entrepreneurship training and development through the Small Business Center Network with the network of NCWorks Career Centers.

Vocational Rehabilitation Programs

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) currently utilizes a dual customer approach by providing services to both businesses and individuals with disabilities. The division emphasizes the definition and marketing of business services to ensure the dual customer approach is recognized and implemented. Business services include recruitment, hiring, consultation on Section 503 compliance, sensitivity/diversity training, accessibility consultation, internships, on-the-job training (OJT), education on tax incentives, and follow-up and job retention services.

DVRS continues to market business services by employing 67 business relations representatives (BRR) that serve as employment specialists across the state. These individuals often have education and experience in a business-related field, such as human resources and marketing, so the division is equipped with personnel who understand the needs of employers. In addition to providing individualized job seeker services, the business

relations representatives connect with local industry through participation in networking events and working relationships with workforce system partners.

The performance of business relations representatives is measured, in part, by assessing relationships with business as evidenced by direct and indirect placements of eligible jobseekers with disabilities. DVRS believes that relationships with employers is the essence of creating positive connections between jobseekers and business, and that providing follow-up and technical assistance to business fosters these relationships so that they can have a sustainable impact on the supporting individuals with disabilities in finding, maintaining, and advancing in employment.

Provision of VR Services through Coordination with Employers

DVRS services to adults intersects with business services in the areas of vocational evaluation and career development, job seeker preparation, and job development and job placement of individuals with disabilities who are ready to work. DVRS staff continue to be trained in the dual customer approach and employment outcomes to identify these intersection points between the VR services DVRS provides to jobseekers and those services provided to employers. The unique role of the business relations representatives highlights this intersection well.

DVRS staff plan to expand the role of employers in vocational evaluation and career development services. DVRS will be enhancing policies around internships and OJT services so that the service procedures are consistent with employer practices while still preparing the individual for competitive employment. DVRS plans to work towards a service definition that is complementary to other internship and OJT programs available in the state through our workforce system partners.

DVRS staff, including business relations representatives, will continue to develop relationships with business based on the individual placement needs of eligible individuals with disabilities who are placement-ready. Employers will be engaged in the individual preparation of job seekers with disabilities by involving them in Employment Marking Skills training classes as well as Job Clubs. Employers participate in job interview preparation of job seekers in addition to information-sharing with job seekers about employer expectations in general and within their specific industry.

DVRS plans to increase the quantity and improve the quality of business partnerships in the future with the expectation that an increased number and depth in business relationships will result in increased opportunities to assist individuals with disabilities with vocational evaluation and career development, job seeker preparation, and job development and job placement. DVRS plans to identify methods for capturing information on employment relationships within our case management system in order to map out the presence of business partnerships and identify opportunities for growth and means for leveraging peer-to-peer marketing of VR business services.

Provision of Transition Services through Coordination with Employers

While youth and students with disabilities have access to the same VR services as adults, there are some VR services reserved for or targeted to transition-aged youth for the purposes of assisting them with leaving high school and preparing for competitive employment. The division plans to focus on program development in the coming year in

order to meet the 15% required spending allocation for Pre- Employment Transition Services (PETS) to students with disabilities. A number of areas of program development are focused on increased engagement with employers in order to implement PETS. These include: summer internships for students and youth with disabilities including on-the-job supports, increased utilization of OJT for students and youth, and increasing the number of Project Search © sites.

DVRS plans to enhance its current internship policies to expand the service to a larger group of students with disabilities, including possibly, those who are college-bound or currently enrolled in college training. The goal is to create enriching work experiences for students that expose them to work options, allow them to develop high expectations around their capacity for competitive employment, and build a resume that will enable young people with disabilities to compete for quality jobs. DVRS plans to also enhance internship opportunities for individuals with disabilities by developing employer-based internship programs with businesses who recognize the value of building up workers. Internship opportunities for youth will be short-term, occur in conjunction with the student's educational requirements or during the student's school breaks, and may involve paid training and engage internship training supports such as job coaching.

DVRS will work on enhancing OJT utilization for students and youth with disabilities as well by engaging business in the development of young talent. DVRS plans to streamline OJT processes, revise policies so that they are complementary to similar OJT programs, and improve marketing and tracking materials and processes so that the materials are engaging to both student/youth participants and potential business as well as easy to complete and accessible.

DVRS will continue to explore unique business partnerships that benefit the unique training and recruitment needs of students and youth with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities. DVRS plans to continue partnering on Project Search © sites where there is a need and willingness by community partners. This model places business in the middle of the training and employment of young people by hosting student interns at the business and seeking placement opportunities within the business where they may exist. Project Search © host businesses can not only support the students enrolled in projects on their site, but can also be business advocates for people with disabilities in their industries.

DVRS will continue to explore unique training, career development, and placement opportunities with NC businesses that may result from greater collaborations with the NC Department of Public Instruction, local education agencies, the NC Community Colleges System, and Title I youth services providers.

Similarly, the Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) VR Employment Services Specialist, VR Counselors and Business Service Representatives will reach out to employers in their geographic areas and statewide to make contact on behalf of the agency to ensure that area employers are aware of what DSB-VR has to offer regarding their employment needs. They will offer general information on DSB Services including opportunities for internships and job shadowing experiences, the Supported Employment Program, potential employees so that they may represent, disability sensitivity training available and benefits to employers that hire those with disabilities.

The DSB VR Employment Services Specialist, VR Transition Counselors and Community Employment Specialists will also communicate with employers regarding the expansive program DSB offers its students and youth with disabilities. They will offer general information on DSB Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) and Youth Services including opportunities for work-based learning experiences, the Supported Employment Program, potential employees that we may represent, disability sensitivity training available and benefits to employers that hire those with disabilities.

Through existing tools and continued innovation, North Carolina is intent on being a provider of Best Practices and Guidance to encourage the adoption of comprehensive employer services across all workforce programs in the state.

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).

NCWorks Career Centers all have formal partnerships with the 58 community colleges across the state, as well as the 115 local public school districts. Some career centers are even located on a community college campus. Enhanced partnerships and collaboration are highlighted in the NCWorks Commission's criteria for career center certification, which promotes improved customer service at all of the state's one-stop locations. Letters of support from local community colleges and the local school districts are required for career center certification and must show viable partnerships are in place with the local workforce board. Also, many of the state's WIOA youth program contracts are with local school systems. Local boards, community colleges and public schools work together to offer services and activities to youth participants such as Career Days, mentoring, and job shadowing.

There is community college representation on all 23 workforce development boards in North Carolina, and some boards also have representation from local Career and Technical Education programs. North Carolina's local workforce development boards and career centers are called upon to collaborate with local education partners to help connect N.C. employers to the N.C. employees they need to succeed in our state and help our citizens gain new skills and find employment. One key examples of this partnership is the state's career pathways initiative.

The NCWorks Career Center community college partnerships and the community college representation on the workforce development boards facilitate alignment of career and technical education and local workforce needs as the comprehensive responsibility of the North Carolina Community College System includes postsecondary occupational (career and technical education) training. The North Carolina Community College System Office partners with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in managing funding provided under the Carl D. Perkins Career Technical Education Act, with the North Carolina Community Colleges implementing the postsecondary career and technical education programming and activities.

Career Pathways

In order to prepare workers to succeed in the North Carolina economy and continuously improve their skills, the workforce development system must strengthen career development services and ensure consistency across programs; enhance programs and enrollment in critical career clusters by targeting resources; coordinate programs among workforce partners to develop skill and education pathways; and become a national leader in providing structured work-based learning. One such strategy is the creation of NCWorks Certified Career Pathways.

Career pathways are purposeful plans for education and training leading to knowledge and skill acquisition and successful careers. Pathway development is led by engaged employers who identify the skills, credentials, and experiences needed to be successful in high-demand occupations. Local partners from workforce development boards, high schools, community colleges, and North Carolina's public universities use the data to craft programs of study across the educational spectrum and provide workforce services that offer individuals the opportunity to gain the targeted skills, credentials, and experiences. Pathways are developed so that all students and job seekers, including people with disabilities and other barriers to employment, can use them to develop clear education and training plans.

The NCWorks Commission approved criteria establishing an NCWorks Certified Career Pathway. This criteria was created by an interagency group representing the NCWorks Commission, Division of Workforce Solutions, Community College System, and Department of Public Instruction. The criteria outline the required elements which local teams will use to draft employer-driven pathways. While career pathways have existed in North Carolina for several years, an NCWorks Certified Career Pathway will have more rigorous requirements including a work-based learning component.

The career pathway criteria ensure that consistent and comprehensive pathways are available across the state while providing local and regional workforce teams the flexibility to meet their community needs. Local workforce partners within the State will work together with a group of engaged employers to develop a career pathway in a high demand occupation. Once the pathway has been developed the local team will apply to have their career pathways certified. This certification will denote that the pathway has been vetted and validated by a statewide team of workforce development professionals. Eight evaluation criteria provide guidance for workforce partners to ensure flexibility to meet diverse workforce needs and consistency to stabilize a regional, sector-driven approach to workforce development statewide.

The Division of Workforce Solutions, within the NC Department of Commerce, is committed to ensuring North Carolina workforce preparation aligns with employer need through NCWorks Certified Career Pathways. Certified career pathways are in high-demand occupations and will help individuals become work ready in a shorter time period as they seek to reduce duplication of educational and work experience attainment. Certified career pathways will also benefit the educational and workforce development institutions that serve dislocated workers by providing a guided, sector strategy approach - with a regional focus - to provide classroom and work based learning opportunities.

Core values of NCWorks Certified Career Pathways are that they demand the leadership of engaged employers within diverse sectors, innovation from educational institutions tasked with meeting the needs of a dynamic workforce and consistency of educational and work-based learning opportunities for pathway participants. From the mountains to the coast,

any individual enrolled in a certified career pathway in N.C. will be assured his/her journey is focused, reducing the need to duplicate training thereby reducing the costs of tuition, fees and training materials. The result is a workforce that is well-trained, in a shorter period of time able to respond to the demands of the state's economy and to earn a wage that provides for a good quality of life.

Vocational Rehabilitation Programs

The Department of Health and Human Services Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) programs work with N.C. Community College System in that DVRS has a strong vendor relationship to sponsor training and enable individuals with disabilities to participate in continuing education, diploma, and degree programs. To achieve this, the VR programs maintain relationships with disability support services coordinators at local colleges to assist persons with disabilities in accessing their education and obtaining academic supports. The VR programs also partner with local colleges in the planning, recruitment, and provision of career readiness programs that target individuals who require basic skills training. In some programs, VR contributes financially to a student with a disability's participation in the work-based learning elements of their program.

Additionally, DVRS and colleges within the NCCCS are two of the partner organizations that comprise Project SEARCH teams in NC. Project SEARCH is a collaborative model serving individuals with the most significant intellectual or developmental disabilities, in which students participate in a series of three internships at the host business as well as job-focused academic skills training to prepare them for integrated, competitive employment in their community. Currently, there are three Project SEARCH sites with community college partnerships with the expectation that two more sites will be added in 2016.

The DHHS VR Programs will continue to develop their partnerships with the NCCCS and its colleges through participation on Align4NCWorks collaborative impact planning committees and by exploring opportunities to combine resources in support of work-based learning opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The VR Programs will continue to collaborate on job-driven training programs that will meet the needs of partnering business and industry and assist individuals with disabilities with obtaining credentials, including through the development of training programs at North Carolina's state operated VR facilities.

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.

Governor Cooper is working to make North Carolina a Top Ten Educated State by 2025. A key priority of Governor Cooper's NC Job Ready initiative is skills and education attainment. As the skill requirements of jobs are increasing and rapidly changing, businesses need to find people with the right skills for the jobs they create and North Carolinians need access to training so they can be ready for those jobs. This involves the fostering of partnerships between businesses, educators, and state and local workforce development agencies.

Key to achieving this goal will be to help students and job seekers connect to education and training partners within the system as well providers outside the state system. North Carolina has one of the strongest community college and university systems in the country which provide exceptional opportunities for job seekers to acquire the education, skills, and credentials needed to be successful. Other education and training partners are also available and will be identified through the state's Eligible Training Provider List.

Eligible Training Providers

The NCWorks Online system allows the individual providers the ability to login and apply to be considered to be on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) to receive referrals of Title 1 eligible

customers. Once they have completed their application, the workforce development board that is closest to the primary location will review the application and take the necessary steps to determine if this provider is one that should be on the state list of approved providers. Once a provider is approved, they must then key in all the programs they offer that will again have to be reviewed and approved by a local WDB. Once a provider has been approved for WIOA training, every WDB in the state has the option to certify that this provider can be available in their area. With the two year review process, they would have to be approved again based on current standards.

The following types of training providers are subject to the ETPL requirements in order to receive WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker funds to provide training services to eligible adult and dislocated worker individuals.

- Institutions of higher education that provide a program of training that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential;
- Apprenticeship programs registered by the USDOL Office of Registered Apprenticeship;
- Public or private training providers, including joint labor-management organizations, pre- apprenticeship programs, and occupational/technical training; and
- Providers of adult education and literacy activities provided in combination with occupational skills training.

The local workforce boards may establish additional criteria for program eligibility within a local area through local policy. This may include setting minimum required levels of performance as criteria for training providers to become or remain eligible to provide services in that particular local area. Training providers should be aware that programs may be approved for some local areas and denied for others based on local criteria, and the approved local areas for each training provider will be listed as part of the ETPL.

In addition to collaboration with NCCCS, and sponsorship of postsecondary training at various educational institutions, the VR Programs have established policies and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of VR services. These are described in the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services portion of the Unified Plan under section (d) Coordination with Education Officials.

With regard to the WIOA Title IV program, the NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) will modify its state level memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to outline a collaborative partnership between the two agencies and provide state-level approval and support to expand transition services for students with disabilities, including Pre- Employment Transition Services (PETS) for students with disabilities that are potentially eligible for VR services. At the local-level VR offices and local education agencies (LEA) will also continue Third Party Cooperative Agreements (TPCA) that outline how the agencies will partner in the provision of services to students with disabilities, with regard to funding contributions, procedures for information sharing, and referral processes. Currently, the local TPCAs are statewide with 96% of all LEAs in North Carolina contributing funding towards 202 positions for VR professional and support staff.

DVRS will maintain and strengthen its programmatic relationships with school transition services through its continued active participation on the State Capacity Building Team for Transition. This workgroup led by the Department of Public Instruction, also includes the University Center for Development and Learning, Parent/Child Advocacy Agency, Career and Technical Education, and NC Community Colleges System. The Team was established to develop statewide goals and better coordinate transition activities for students with disabilities, enabling this population to achieve post-school outcomes, including employment and post-secondary education. Currently, NC's Capacity Building Plan is focused on improving student involvement in the individualized education program (IEP) process so that planning is more consistent with a student's post-school goals.

DVRS plans to continue collaboration with DPI leadership on technical assistance grants that focus on improving transition services and employment outcomes for transition-aged youth, including re- submission for the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) Intensive Technical Assistance grant.

The VR program administered by the Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) also operates under a formal cooperative agreement with DPI, specific to students of transition age who are blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired being served by local education agencies and the schools and require VR services in order to become employed. DSB shares information about the transition program and provides technical assistance and consultation to DPI, LEAs, and schools regarding accommodations and assistive technology that will help facilitate the education and VR of students who are blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired. DSB also has TPCA with twelve LEAs and one regional school that stipulate cost sharing and agency roles and responsibilities.

Additionally, both VR programs, DVRS and DSB, sponsor training from various providers under an individualized plan for employment. This may include postsecondary academic training from a public or private college or university; vocational training from business schools, trade schools, and vocational training programs at the community college level or technical institute level. Sponsorship of such services and supportive services is subject to financial need and provided as appropriate for the client's individualized plan for employment within policy guidelines that include rate schedules. Established standards for training providers, including colleges and universities, proprietary schools, barber and cosmetology schools, commercial driver training schools and other training programs, are stipulated in VR policy.

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).

North Carolina is making access to education a priority. A key priority of Governor Cooper's NC Job Ready initiative is skills and education attainment, and Governor Cooper has laid out the goal to make North Carolina a Top Ten Educated State by 2025 by increasing the number of four-year-olds enrolled in high quality pre-K, raising the high school graduation rate, and increasing the number of North Carolinians with a post-secondary degree or credential. An educated North Carolina is a job-ready North Carolina.

NCWorks Certified Career Pathways will serve as a fulcrum for increased educational access for citizens and collaboration among workforce partners. The establishment of regional workforce and education teams will connect employer engagement activities with career pathways strategies on the local level. The three agencies responsible for the six core programs continue to strategize and work collaboratively to leverage all resources available to serve the state's job seekers and training seekers. Many of the 23 local workforce development boards also leverage resources from their respective cities and counties to enhance access to educational and workforce programs. Other resources may come in the form of local grants, other federal grant money, and partnerships with nonprofit organizations and school districts.

One example of a current grant is the Job Driven Initiative, a grant funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, with the specific objective to implement new or expand local and regional job driven partnerships that will serve dislocated workers and achieve better employment related outcomes for this group of workers. In North Carolina, N.C. Department of Commerce Division of Workforce Solutions is partnering with local workforce development boards and the North Carolina Community College System to provide occupational skills training and on-the-job training with Job Driven Initiative funds.

Other Leveraged Resources to Increase Educational Access

North Carolina currently leverages the following other sources of funding for educational access/workforce development:

- Pell grants. North Carolina community college students rely on Pell grant funding each year.
- GI bill educational resources for veterans and initiatives and tools that make it easier for veterans to crosswalk their military experience and gain educational credit/credentials.
- State, local and private scholarships or sponsorships (e.g., Golden LEAF Foundation, Duke Energy/other private companies, State Employees' Credit Union, and other sources). Funding flows through the State Board of Community Colleges, local community college foundations, and directly to students.
- In addition to its scholarships for individual students, Golden LEAF Foundation is an important source of workforce development grant funding

in North Carolina. Grants are made to community colleges, LEAs, nonprofit organizations, and other entities to boost education and training, pay for equipment needed for job training programs, etc.

- The Belk Foundation is supporting key work on career pathways in North Carolina.
- Other state and national foundations and corporative giving programs are important for workforce development access and success. North Carolina is part of the National Governor's Association Policy Academy on Aligning the Talent Pipeline with the Needs of the Economy, which is supporting educational goal-setting and collaborative workforce development.
- If funding allows after paying for work-related needs, local departments of social services can use Child Care and Development Fund dollars and state Smart Start dollars to assist with subsidized child care for those in training or looking for work.
- At the local level, decisions are made by community action agencies (with federal CSBG and private funding sources), nonprofit organizations and/or faith-based organizations to provide transportation assistance, child care assistance and/or occasionally direct educational assistance.
- North Carolina is investigating ways to increase the number of SNAP Employment and Training programs across the state and finding linkages to the community college system to help get more food stamp recipients into education and training programs.
- Promote Career and College Promise to give high school students a jump start on higher education and possible reduction in time/cost at higher education institutions. (Support in the 2015 legislature will provide funding for NCCCS-supported Career Coaches in high schools across the state that provide postsecondary education information as well as guidance about community college programming.)
- N.C. Community College System Office is going to complete a policy analysis to identify barriers to access, including but not limited to education costs, wrap-around costs (transportation, credentialing, child care, etc.) and non-financial barriers, and work in collaboration with workforce, education, and nonprofit partners to mitigate barriers.
- Track state and federal program changes that could impact education and training affordability, and ensure that support through WIOA programs is connected with community college financial aid resources.

Vocational Rehabilitation

The N.C. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) plans to maintain and strengthen its programmatic relationships with school transition services through its continued active participation by the Division's Transition Program Specialist on the State Capacity Building Team for Transition. This team, including NC Department of Public Instruction (DPI) leadership, DVRS, University Center for Development and Learning,

Parent/Child Advocacy Agency, Career and Technical Education, and NC Community Colleges System representation was formed in recent years to develop statewide goals and provide better coordinated transition activities for students with disabilities to achieve better results with post-school outcomes, including obtaining employment or attending post-secondary education.

Currently, NC's Capacity Building Plan is focused on improving student involvement in the individualized education program (IEP) process so that planning is more meaningful and associated with a student's post-school goals. The state is continuing to work on a Transition Toolkit for teachers and anticipates the development of toolkits for parents, students, and agencies that will be individualized at the local level. DPI consultants are providing transition training to LEAs to promote student-led IEPs, and NC DVR plans to provide training to VR counselors and LEA representatives in the spring of 2016 to focus on the role of the VR Counselor in the IEP process.

DVRS plans to continue collaboration with DPI leadership on technical assistance grants that focus on improving transition services and employment outcomes for transition-aged youth, including re- submission for the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) Intensive Technical Assistance grant.

Description of Policies and Procedures for Coordination with Education Officials

As the Title IV regulations are finalized, DVRS plans to increase transition service offerings to students with disabilities through partnerships with NC public schools. Some areas of program development and service enhancement being considered by DVRS are**:**

- summer internships for students/youth with disabilities;
- increased utilization of On-the-Job Training (OJT) with students and youth;
- utilizing Transition Navigators to identify and serve students with disabilities who are potentially eligible and/or to provide VR PETS services to groups;
- increasing Project Search sites;
- hosting Self-Advocacy summer summits, camps, or school-based workshops;
- enhancing vocational evaluation tools and allocating increased vocational evaluation staff to serve students with disabilities in exploring career options; and
- increasing work-based experiences for students with disabilities who require on-the-job supports, such as job coaching, by partnering in innovative ways with community rehabilitation programs.

DVRS plans to re-brand and revise marketing materials and communications about vocational rehabilitation services to students with disabilities to highlight PETS offerings to both students and school personnel. This effort will include targeted marketing for youth disability groups whose incidence within DVRS is declining despite remaining steady or increasing within the public schools (e.g., students with learning disabilities). DVRS will revisit policies related to post-secondary training and learning disability eligibility to ensure that the needs of all eligible students with disabilities as well as those students for

whom we are mandated to provide PETS are being met in terms of preparing students to obtain competitive integrated employment in such a way to promote advancement and ongoing career development.

By enhancing and incorporating new programs that promote and support work-based experiences, DVRS will continue its commitment to students in pursuit of a high school diploma through the Occupational Course of Study (OCS), a pathway established by the NC Board of Education for students with IEPs to achieve a high school diploma by completing occupational coursework and work experiences. DVRS has recently revised policies for In-School Work Adjustment services to students with significant or most significant disabilities. The service is coordinated through school-based agreements to incentivize a student's participation in school-coordinated work experiences by providing guidance and counseling as well as an incentive payment to students for improvements in work behaviors and attitudes. The Division continues to offer internship and OJT services to students, but hopes to increase utilization and improve feasibility for students, schools, and partnering businesses through policy and procedure revisions and collaboration with workforce system partners. Other PETS programs/services under consideration are intended to address students' expectations around pursuing employment and to improve their preparedness for participating in additional rehabilitation services, such as training and placement.

DVRS requires each local VR office with vocational rehabilitation counseling staff serving on a local school transition services team to send an annual report to the school systems with which the Division has a TPCA. This report includes data about services and expenditures for students with disabilities provided by the Division, and addresses how VR staff members worked with school staff in transition planning for students with significant and most significant disabilities.

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.

Governor Cooper's NC Job Ready initiative and North Carolina's sector strategies, job-driven workforce strategies, and career pathways strategies all emphasize the importance of post-secondary credentials. North Carolina will focus efforts by all education and workforce programs to help working adults gain post-secondary credentials either through the state's higher education system or through other strategies such as Registered Apprenticeship and third party industry credentials.

Career Pathways

North Carolina's strategic focus on career pathways will help individuals' access training leading to in- demand postsecondary credentials. A primary tenant of the career pathways initiative is the flexibility and

creativity in providing opportunities for students and job seekers to enter and exit a pathway. In addition, the commission hopes that local and regional teams develop a system

of crediting students for earned credentials, prior learning, and demonstrated job skills. Pathways must be designed to easily allow individuals to enter and exit at different points without duplicating credit/effort. Where possible, pathways must:

- include non-degree training that articulates credit to degree pathways (including awarding credit for appropriate prior learning experiences, attained third-party certifications or badges);
- provide special considerations for veterans to demonstrate skills based on experience (i.e., MOS or Badges) and provide accelerated educational/training opportunities for gap fulfillment; and
- include postsecondary registration with Department of Labor's RACC program to offer registered apprenticeship completers a pathway to complete their postsecondary degree.

Another core tenant of the career pathway philosophy is a strong work-based learning component. Local and regional teams must provide opportunities for students and job seekers to incorporate work-based learning into their programs of study. Pathways must include work-based learning as a strategy for career exploration and workforce engagement related to the individual's program of study or training/employability plan. Work-based learning is a critical part of the pathway system that:

- provides skills development related to the individual's program of study or training plan and offers course credit;
- includes in-depth industry tours, shadowing, mentorships, project based learning, service learning, cooperative education, structured volunteer experiences, junior achievement, internships, apprenticeships, etc.; and
- provides for a structured experience that is supported with demonstrated commitment from employers.

The commission also encourages local and regional teams to provide opportunities for students to obtain knowledge, skills and credentials efficiently. Career pathways should maximize use of articulation agreements to encourage coordination of educational offerings and encourage obtainment of stackable credentials to reduce duplication and foster a streamlined progression along the career pathway.

A program of study in career pathways includes a comprehensive, structured approach for delivering academic and technical education to prepare individuals for postsecondary education and career success that connects skilled graduates to job opportunities. Rigorous programs of study must:

- provide integrated academic, technical, and occupational skills training through classroom, on the job, online and experiential learning for individuals to meet employer needs;
- offer secondary students the opportunity to earn postsecondary credit through programs such as Career and College Promise;
- provide individuals opportunity to earn academic and technical certificates, diplomas, and degrees;

- include coordinated, non-duplicative progression of courses that allow for articulated credit, for prior learning and in accordance with existing articulation agreements between institutions; and
- allow individuals to stack credentials such as career readiness certificates, industry validated recognized third party certifications, and state licenses or certificates.

Registered Apprenticeship

North Carolina is also working to grow its Registered Apprenticeship program and make stronger connections with local workforce boards, career centers, and other workforce programs across the state.

NCWorks and ApprenticeshipNC staff are actively working to education and inform businesses about Registered Apprenticeship as a great way to develop and sustain a talent pipeline to meet their workforce needs. In addition to staff reaching out to businesses, the program also uses businesses with an apprenticeship program to talk to other businesses. This peer-to-peer communication has seen success across the state.

NCWorks and ApprenticeshipNC staff are also working to expand the number of public-private partnerships in North Carolina. This model brings together several companies that require similar skills in their workforce and sets up one apprenticeship program for the group of companies. The state has seen great success with this model and is actively working to expand it.

N.C. Community College System Areas of Focus

The North Carolina Community College System's strategic plan sets a goal to ensure education and training address and validate skill and competency needs and assessment. This goal calls for the state to increase the number of students leaving the community college system with an in-demand job-ready credential (e.g., third-party certification, state licensure, degree, certificate, or diploma). The action steps under that objective address the following:

- expanding industry-recognized credentials;
- credentials (of any kind) to further students' success toward career goals;
- continuing to support the implementation of WorkKeys assessments;
- expanding the community college transfer pipeline to universities;
- co-leading a national network of state agencies, research institutions, and national organizations that are researching and piloting strategies to capture industry-recognized credentials tracked by third-party organizations; and
- support work-based learning strategies.

Vocational Rehabilitation Areas of Focus

North Carolina's Vocational Rehabilitation programs improve access to postsecondary credentials for individuals with disabilities through the sponsorship of training and supportive services at colleges, universities, and vocational and occupational training

programs as appropriate for the participants' individualized plan for employment. The Vocational Rehabilitation Programs have policies stipulating sponsorship requirements and cost limitations, including academic standards, the requirement for participant financial need and use of any comparable benefits, such as Pell grants, as contributory funding.

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.

Throughout the workforce system, economic development partners aid in the identification of economic priorities - key industries and occupations for emphasis in career pathway development, education and training curriculum development, and assistance in reaching businesses that often have less regular communication with workforce development leaders than economic development leaders. In addition, in certain areas, economic development leaders have led the charge for workforce initiatives, ranging from eastern North Carolina regional economic development entities demonstrating the value of Work-Ready Communities to efforts in western NC to close the "interest gap" and change perceptions of manufacturing jobs.

North Carolina's key workforce development strategies are well aligned with economic development activities in North Carolina. When the NCWorks Commission (N.C.'s state workforce investment board) was developing its strategic plan it pulled key strategies from the state 10-year economic development plan, the Jobs Plan, to include in the commission plan to ensure alignment between economic and workforce development. This work has resulted in a workforce development plan that is in alignment with the state's economic development plan. The information below details more specific ways the state's strategies connect with economic development.

Key strategies identified by the NCWorks Commission in its strategic plan are aligned with N.C.'s economic development strategies will help North Carolina current and future businesses be successful. These key statewide strategies are described below.

- Continue to incorporate and promote the NCWorks brand for all workforce development system programs to help customers recognize the value of the system.

A single brand is needed to create a seamless workforce development system that is easily identifiable to all customers. Citizens, businesses, and key stakeholders will find value in North Carolina's workforce development system when the overwhelming complexity is minimized and services streamlined.

A single brand for the entire workforce development system will eliminate the historic focus on individual program services and replace it with a state-wide approach. A common brand also reduces confusion for those unfamiliar with the system by simplifying the message and increasing the efficiency of statewide outreach.

- Develop and implement a system-wide and consistent outreach strategy.

Customers of the state's workforce development system may access more than one service. For example, a business looking to grow will need to increase the size of its workforce

immediately but also ensure there is a pipeline of workers to continue to fill those positions. The company may be interested in customized training as well as apprenticeship programs to ensure it can fill its current and future workforce needs. The workforce development system needs to develop outreach strategies that provide information on the full range of services available.

Currently, each program promotes its services separately, leaving many businesses confused about what services are available to meet their needs. In addition, combining services across programs is often left up to the customer to figure out. A consistent outreach strategy needs to be developed at the state level that allows for customization at the local level.

- Develop a consistent menu of services and activities highlighting business and industry engagement opportunities, and develop interagency protocols to better meet employer and jobseeker needs.

There are many ways for businesses to engage with the workforce development system that will help businesses access the services they need and provide opportunities for individuals to gain work experience necessary to be a successful candidate for employment. A recent survey of businesses found that lack of work experience was one of the top three reasons employers were having difficulty finding the talent they need. However, businesses may not be fully aware of the ways they can connect with the workforce development system to provide opportunities that both

help individuals gain the experience they need and develop a pipeline of talent to meet the businesses' need.

Workforce development programs need to work together to identify all the ways that businesses can interact with the workforce development system from facility tours, to internships and externships, to apprenticeships, and on-the-job training opportunities. Then, business outreach specialists can share information with the businesses on the full range of activities, across programs, in which a business can engage to help develop the talent needed to grow their business.

In addition, North Carolina has eight regions across the state that are used to coordinate activities, especially in economic and workforce development. These regions, called Prosperity Zones, aligns key economic, workforce, and education activities. Each major workforce and economic development program including WIOA programs, economic development, community colleges, and public schools has a regional representative in each zone. These regional staff meet together on a regular basis to discuss current economic and workforce development issues.

Career Pathways

North Carolina also has a strong career pathways system that is ensuring that the state has a sustainable talent pipeline for the state's key industries. These pathways show businesses interested in moving to or growing in N.C. that the state will have the workforce needed to ensure their success.

Career pathways begin with an engaged group of employers from a high-growth industry. This group meets with education and workforce professionals to discuss the workforce

needs of the industry as well as specific knowledge, skills, ability, credentials, and experiences needed for occupations within that industry. Education providers then use this information to develop clear plan for all individuals (students, job seekers, dislocated workers, veterans, individuals with disabilities, etc.) to use to prepare for these occupations in the most efficient way. The current strategy includes a certification process by the NCWorks Commission that requires eight key element be in place to ensure pathways are comprehensive and will develop the talent needed for in-demand occupations.

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 Systems

NCWorks Online

For Title I and Title III workforce programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, TAA) NCWorks Online is the state's official labor exchange and case management system. The system, powered by Geographical Solutions, provides access to a complete set of employment tools in one website. It is a one-stop online resource for job seekers and employers in North Carolina. Job seekers can search for jobs, create resumes, and find education and training. Employers can find candidates, post jobs, and search labor market information. The online system is accessible via the Internet or an Intranet at an NCWorks Career Center. It is specifically designed for job seekers, students, case managers, employers, training providers, workforce professionals, and others seeking benefits and services. Each NCWorks Career Center utilizes NCWorks Online for client management and for data collection and reporting on workforce programs. Up-to-date career center contact information and hours of operation are posted in NCWorks Online as well. This system is designed to be intuitive and user-friendly, even for the person who has little computer experience.

North Carolina Common Follow-up System

The Common Follow-up System (CFS) is a longitudinal tracking system that provides information on the educational and employment outcomes of participants in publicly supported educational, employment and training programs, including programs outside of the WIOA unified state plan, such as the University of North Carolina, adult correctional programs, and social services programs. The Labor and Economics Division of the NC Department of Commerce is currently working with the Government Data Analytics Center within the NC Department of Information Technology to improve access to the State's

longitudinal data and provide flexibility and scalability, and advance data analysis capabilities associated with workforce and educational program operation and performance.

Data from the CFS have been incorporated into the North Carolina Tool for Online Workforce and Education Reporting (NCTOWER), a web-based tool for the delivery and display of program performance information. The web site currently contains 10 years of post-completion employment and wage information for all Curriculum Programs offered through the North Carolina Community College System and degree programs through the University of North Carolina system. Available information includes outcomes by college/university, degree and major. As part of the enhancement efforts LEAD staff is currently working to expand the data coverage within CFS. This includes working with existing agencies to expand their data submissions and to also include agencies and programs not currently participating in CFS. Data expansion efforts also include expanding access to out of state employment and wage data through the Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS) and the Wage Record Interchange System 2 (WRIS 2) as well as accessing federal employment related data through the Federal Employment Data Exchange System (FEDES).

Workforce and Labor Market Information System

North Carolina's Workforce and Labor Market Information System (WLMIS) is managed by NC Commerce's Labor and Economic Analysis Division (LEAD). LEAD leverages resources such as the Workforce Information Grant (WIG), Bureau of Labor Statistics, Workforce Data Quality Initiative Grant (WDQI) and other state and Federal funds to effectively provide responsive customer service and quality career/workforce/labor market information products and services. Information is made accessible to the public through an online portal powered by the "D4" Demand Driven Data Delivery System, which provides users online ad hoc query capability regarding local area unemployment statistics, employment and wages, and other labor statistics.

NC Community College Information Systems

North Carolina's Community College System has relatively decentralized processes for data collection and reporting. The 58 community colleges collect data for their students through case management systems and communication systems that are developed and managed at the individual community college level, and use file extraction process for centralized reporting. For example, the Curriculum Registration Progress and Financial Aid file for Curriculum students includes Student demographics; Course enrollment; Grades; and Graduation information. A Continuing Education Registration File is generated for training programs and education that do not lead to an academic credential includes Student demographics and Course enrollment. The Literacy Education Information System data file is extracted quarterly to report enrollment data, functioning levels, testing, and other student information.

Reporting for the Title II Adult Education and Literacy Program under WIOA is managed by the community college Research and Performance unit. All providers report data to the system office using the community college data management system or Literacy, Adult and Community Education System. Files are extracted and reported to the National Reporting

System (NRS). Data analytics tools are being created to assist programs in using data for continuous program improvement.

The North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) serves as the state administrator for the Title II - Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) funds. The Providers throughout the state collect student data through the Literacy Education Information System (LEIS) form for each period of participation. The data is reported by the Providers through one of two student information system databases: Colleague by the Colleges and LACES by the Community Based Organizations.

NCCCS serves as the central repository for the collection, evaluation and reporting of the data annually to the Office of Career Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE). The data is evaluated by the Research and Performance Management (RPM) department and reported by the College and Career Readiness (CCR) department on the National Reporting System (NRS) tables developed by the Division of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL). Through the NRS tables, the state demonstrates learner outcomes for measurable skills gains (MSGs) and follow-up indicators.

The MSGs include:

- Secondary Diploma/Equivalency achievement
  - AHS Diploma
  - High School Equivalency
- Educational Functioning Level gain demonstrated through:
  - Pre/Post Test
  - AHS Credits
  - Program Exit/Entry into Postsecondary Education

The Follow-up Indicators include:

- Employment
- Credential Attainment
  - Secondary
  - Postsecondary

<u>Department of Health and Human Services Systems</u>

The NC Department of Health and Human Services is the designated state agency (DSA) for the administration of the state's VR programs for individuals with disabilities. NC DHHS is the largest single agency in State government in terms of the budget and second largest in terms of number of employees. As such, enterprise-level systems are integrated across the Department's Health and Human Services programs and interface with other information systems at the levels of local, state, and federal government. The primary system used for the administration of the WIOA Title IV VR programs is BEAM (Business Electronic Access Management system), a fully automated web-accessible case management and service payment solution. BEAM was implemented in July 2014, fully replacing several legacy

mainframe systems. However, the developer for the BEAM system, Libera, will discontinue product support after 2017 and DHHS has since initiated the process of selecting a replacement system.

In BEAM, the identifying and demographic information of VR program participants is managed through a system interface with the NC DHHS Common Name Data Service (CNDS), a centralized enterprise service that allows NC DHHS applications and systems to store and retrieve unique identification information for clients that are participating in programs and receiving services and benefits from NC DHHS. Use of the CNDS is an integral part of NC DHHS case management consolidation.

VR vendor information, invoice payment, and accounting services functions are facilitated through a BEAM interface with the North Carolina Accounting System (NCAS). NCAS is the central accounting system for the State of North Carolina, operated under the authority of the Office of the State Controller (OSC). It provides control over the State's financial transactions, resource balances, and subsidiary accounts and records through a central general ledger and other uniform information databases. NCAS also provides financial statements and reports reflecting the current condition of all State agency accounts and assists central managers in maintaining financial control over State government operations.

For the purpose of VR Program applicant Social Security benefits verification, a BEAM interface was developed for the Social Security Administration's (SSA) State Verification and Exchange System (SVES). Administered by the SSA, SVES provides a data file with information on Title II--SSA Retirement, Survivors, Disability and Health Insurance benefits; and Title XVI--Supplemental Security Income benefits.

A separate data file exchange process is maintained for uploading VR participant information to the SSA portal for the SSA Ticket-to-Work program. This file exchange process isn't fully automated and is limited to establishing VR participant in-use status and eligibility for agency cost reimbursement. An interface with Department of Commerce, Division of Employment Security provides quarterly State unemployment insurance wage records and related information to establish whether a former VR participant is working at the level of substantial gainful activity for agency cost-reimbursement under the Ticket-to-Work program.

Most recently, an interface was developed between BEAM and NC Tracks, the new multi-payer Medicaid Management Information System for NC DHHS. This interface includes the pricing logic for VR medical service claims submitted by healthcare providers and facilitates accurate medical claims processing. The VR programs are currently investigating the possibility of developing interfaces between BEAM and other program systems for the purpose of expediting referrals across programs, including NC Works and NC FAST, the system for the Division of Social Services.

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

Adult Education and Literacy Adult education and literacy reporting is carried out in line with the guidelines of the National Reporting System for Adult Education (NRS) and state-established measures. NRS is an outcome-based reporting system for the State-administered, federally funded adult education program. Developed by the U.S. Department

of Education's Division of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL), the NRS continues a cooperative process through which State adult education directors and DAEL manage a reporting system that demonstrates learner outcomes for adult education. The NRS tracks 5 key outcomes for adult learners:

- educational gain;
- entered employment;
- retained employment;
- obtained a secondary credential; and
- entered post-secondary education

NRS Secondary Measures include additional outcome measures related to employment, family, and community. They are listed on page 2 of the LEIS form and include:

- achieve work-based project learning goal;
- leave public assistance;
- achieve citizenship skills;
- increase involvement in children's education;
- increase involvement in children's literacy activities;
- vote or register to vote; and
- increase involvement in community activities.

See more on NRS at www.nrsweb.org and www.nrsweb.org/docs/NRSataGlance.pdf. A state snapshot for North Carolina is available at http://www.nrsweb.org/reports/nc.aspx. In addition to federal performance measures, each Basic Skills program is held accountable one state measure, Basic Skills Progress Measure. For this measure, the System Office has developed "baselines" and "goals." Each year, a report is published that compares the three-year rolling average results of all colleges in relation to the performance measures, two of which involve Basic Skills. Incentive funding is available to community colleges that exceed goals. See www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/analytics for more information. North Carolina's Community College System has relatively decentralized processes for data collection and reporting. The 58 community colleges collect data for their students, and the NC Community College System uses a Literacy Education Information System (LEIS) data file extraction process to collect data from colleges quarterly. The LEIS captures enrollment data, functioning levels, testing, etc. Reports are submitted to the federal government annually, at the end of the calendar year for the past program year ending June 30.

Vocational Rehabilitation Programs The North Carolina Department of Health of Human Services (NC DHHS) is the designated state agency for the administration of the state's Vocational Rehabilitation programs for individuals with disabilities. NC DHHS is the largest single agency in State government in terms of the budget and second largest in terms of number of employees. As such, enterprise level systems are integrated across the Department's Health and Human Services programs and interface with other information systems at the levels of local, state, and federal government. The primary system used for the administration of the Vocational Rehabilitation programs is BEAM (Business Electronic Access Management system), a fully automated web-accessible case management and service payment solution. BEAM went live in July 2014, fully replacing several legacy mainframe systems. In BEAM, the identifying and demographic information of VR program

participants is managed through a system interface with the NC DHHS Common Name Data Service (CNDS), an enterprise service that allows NC DHHS applications and systems to store and retrieve unique identification information for clients that are participating in programs and receiving services and benefits from NC DHHS. Use of the CNDS is an integral part of NC DHHS case management consolidation. For the purpose of VR Program applicant Social Security benefits verification, a BEAM interface was developed for the Social Security Administration's (SSA) State Verification and Exchange System (SVES). Administered by the SSA, SVES provides a data file with information on Title II--SSA Retirement, Survivors, Disability and Health Insurance benefits; and Title XVI--Supplemental Security Income benefits. A separate data file exchange process is maintained for uploading VR participant information to the SSA portal for the SSA Ticket-to-Work program. This file exchange process isn't fully automated and is limited to establishing VR participant in-use status and eligibility for agency cost reimbursement. An interface with the Department of Commerce, Division of Employment Security (DES) provides quarterly State unemployment insurance wage records and related information to establish whether a former VR participant is working at the level of substantial gainful activity for agency cost-reimbursement under the Ticket-to-Work program. Most recently, an interface was developed between BEAM and NC Tracks, the new multi-payer Medicaid Management Information System for NC DHHS. This interface includes the pricing logic for VR medical service claims submitted by healthcare providers and facilitates accurate medical claims processing. Starting in 2016, information from the BEAM production environment will be replicated to the NC DHHS Client Services Data Warehouse (CSDW), an enterprise data warehouse that provides historical data for use by county and state staff as well as federal government and third-party users. The NC DHHS CSDW currently compiles data from business applications and systems for a variety of divisions within DHHS, including, but not limited to, the Divisions of Social Services; Medical Assistance; Public Health; Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services; Child Development and Early Education; and Aging and Adult Services. The NC DHHS CSDW supports various enterprise reporting and program administration functions. The data warehouse will be utilized for the creation of specific county, state and federal reports that are not available "out of the box" in BEAM. It will also provide a means for meeting end-user ad hoc reporting requirements through the use of tools available as part of the DHHS CSDW. The DHHS CSDW will also house data for statistical analysis for consumption by both the department and external entities such as the University of North Carolina, the NC Department of Public Instruction, the Common Follow-up System, state and federal quality control monitoring entities, advocates, and other state and federal oversight agencies.

Labor Market Information North Carolina's Workforce and Labor Market Information System (WLMIS) is managed by NC Commerce's Labor and Economic Analysis (LEA) Division. LEA processes a high capacity to leverage resources such as the Workforce Information Grant (WIG), Bureau of Labor Statistics, Workforce Data Quality Initiative Grant (WDQI) and other state and Federal funds to effectively provide responsive customer service and quality career/workforce/labor market information products and services. The Division assists NCWorks Commission in the provision system performance measures, with surveys and data collection designed to fill critical information gaps (i.e. employer needs survey) and undertakes various research projects to support the alignment of education, workforce and economic development (Interconnected Markets.)

North Carolina Common Follow-up System There is an increasing need and demand for information regarding the effectiveness of programs in preparing North Carolina's workforce. The North Carolina Department of Commerce's Labor and Economic Analysis Division (LEA) maintains a common follow-up information management system (CFS) for tracking performance measures related to current and former participants in State job training, education, and placement programs. The Common Follow-up System provides the mechanism for carrying out longitudinal analyses that can be utilized to develop measures of program performance. These measures can provide critical information that can be used in the assessment of program effectiveness. As part of its responsibility for evaluating programs contained in the CFS, LEA undertook a series of analyses that focused on assessing the educational and employment outcomes of individuals participating in several of North Carolina's public education, employment and training programs. The goal was to develop key evaluative performance indicators related to employment and wage outcomes as well as measures related to further participation in education and employment programs. It is intended that these measures can be utilized in concert with other programmatic information to aid in the assessment of program effectiveness. During the 2012 Session, the North Carolina Legislature enacted Session Law 2012-131. The law required the Department of Commerce to improve and strengthen the Common Follow up System and to further utilize data from the system in the development of performance measures for North Carolina's workforce development system. As part of its efforts to improve and strengthen the CFS, LEA has been undertaking several initiatives. These include enhancing the technology processes for system processing and storage, enhancing data integrity, updating system documentation regarding agency and programmatic information, enhancing system outputs, and collaborating with the participating agencies and stakeholders. LEA's efforts towards improving system outputs has focused in several key areas including collaboration with the NCWorks Commission in the development of performance measures for the workforce development system. Further efforts have included the development of the North Carolina Tool for Online Workforce and Education Reporting NCTOWER.com a web-based tool for the delivery and display of program performance information. The web site currently contains 10 years of post-completion employment and wage information for all curriculum programs offered through the North Carolina Community College System and degree programs through the University of North Carolina system. Available information includes outcomes by college/university, degree and major. This new data delivery tool facilitates the use and delivery of information from CFS and helps in achieving the goal of enhanced system outputs. As part of the enhancement efforts LEA staff is currently working to expand the data coverage within CFS including working with existing agencies to expand their data submissions and adding agencies and programs not currently participating in CFS. Data expansion efforts also include expanding access to out of state employment and wage data through the Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS) and the Wage Record Interchange System 2 (WRIS 2) as well as accessing federal employment related data through the Federal Employment Data Exchange System (FEDES). LEA anticipates that these additional sources of employment and wage data should be available for use over the next several months. Further evaluative efforts that are underway include the analysis of the additional agencies and programs contained in the CFS. This includes information from the University of North Carolina system and Department of Public Safety. In addition the Labor and Economic Analysis Division will continue to build on the analysis carried out in support of this report to provide additional

outcome information for each program by sub-geographical areas and institutions as well as the analysis of information from additional programs not included in this report. In addition to these efforts, Session Law 2014-100 required the Department of Commerce to develop a plan for the transfer of the information and capabilities of the CFS to the Government Data Analytics Center (GDAC) within the Office of Information Technology Services. The Department of Commerce is currently working with the GDAC staff to transfer the technology and capabilities into the GDAC environment. It is intended that this effort will assist in developing enhanced technological and analytical capacity which will help to further enhance the capabilities of the CFS to meet research, performance, evaluative and reporting efforts. Furthermore, the technological, analytical and data access within the GDAC will facilitate additional matching and analytics that will help to address some of the data limitations including matching that has previously been limited to the use of SSNs.

* 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, PROVIDE THE STATE'S GUIDELINES FOR STATE-ADMINISTERED ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO A ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM.

North Carolina has several policies in place to support the implementation of the State's strategies including integrated service delivery, career center and career pathways certification through the NCWorks Commission, a statewide goal for educational attainment, and performance measures for local workforce development boards. In addition, North Carolina will continue to review and evaluate statewide policies to support implementation of the state's strategies.

The Division of Workforce Solutions implemented an integrated service delivery model for the programs in Titles I and III. The division maintains memoranda of understanding (MOU) with each local workforce development board on this delivery model. This MOU includes key policies around integrated teams, use of one case management system, and co-enrollment in Title I and III programs. This delivery model ensures an aligned, customer-focused system in all NCWorks Career Centers (N.C.'s one-stop system).

The NCWorks Commission also has several policies that support the implementation of the state's strategies. The commission established criteria for NCWorks Career Centers to ensure they are high quality, customer-focused centers that meet the needs of job seekers and employers. Local workforce development boards must apply to the commission for certification and all centers in their area must be certified. Centers are certified for three years and develop continuous improvement plans that are reviewed by staff every year. Criteria for certification are in the following categories:

- Customer-centered design and accessibility
- Partnerships and integrated services
- Professional staff
- Performance and customer satisfaction

The commission has also created a certification process for NCWorks Certified Career Pathways for recognizing comprehensive career pathways that at helping to develop a talent pipeline for in-demand occupations. Career pathways are a key areas of focus for North Carolina which has been an innovator in developing strategies that support transitions from education to employment. North Carolina's career pathways work brings together three key programs, local workforce boards, community colleges, and the public schools to work with engaged employers. This collaboration identifies and creates clear pathways for in-demand occupations to ensure that the state has the workforce needed for our businesses to succeed. (For more information on career pathways, see Section II (c).)

The NCWorks Commission is also responsible for development state performance measures for local workforce development boards. The commission has been working with the local workforce development boards to track performance since 2016. New measures have been approved and data will be tracked for performance starting in 2018. These measures are focused on key activities required by local boards for a comprehensive workforce development system including outreach, employer engagement, training services, development of career pathways, and certified career centers.

North Carolina's workforce development partners are committed to preparing students to enter the workforce, helping job seekers find good jobs, and helping employers find a talented workforce. To accomplish this task better the NCWorks Commission continues to support cooperation and collaboration among North Carolina's workforce delivery system partners regarding the use of NCWorks Online. This depends on each partner agency's willingness (listed below) to encourage all program participants of North Carolina's workforce programs to enroll in NCWorks Online.

- NCWorks Commission
- Department of Commerce
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Community College System
- Department of Public Instruction
- Department of Administration

By promoting and encouraging workforce program participants to be registered or enrolled in NCWorks Online, the job-matching system will be more robust and offer employers a larger and more varied pool of candidates to choose from.

In addition, with the understanding that each agency has federal policies and requirements to adhere to, a policy group of the NCWorks Commission has discussed possible procedures and protocols that could be improved upon to further support alignment and collaboration.

- Common intake or pre-application process for all customers**.** In the absence of one common data and/or case management system for all workforce customers, a

uniform intake method (i.e., 5 questions on a home screen) could at least be used when enrolling customers.

- Common referral process for all agencies. One process used by all workforce partners when referring customers throughout the system.

The NCWorks Commission will continue to work with state agency leaders to review current policies, suggest needed changes to those policies, and identify new policies needed to continue to strengthen the state's workforce development system. Coordination and alignment of this system is a key goal for the commission.

State's guidelines for State-administered one-stop partner programs' contributions

In 2016, the North Carolina Division of Workforce Solutions developed, as part of the NCWorks Career Center Operations Strategic Priorities, a number of Lines of Effort (LOE) to address key initiatives within the North Carolina One-Stop system. These LOE's were created to provide a framework to focus effort and resources, with maximum flexibility at the local workforce development board level to enhance and improve career center operations. The Cost Sharing Line of Effort (LOE) was developed to enable the implementation of WIOA one-stop partner cost sharing requirements by the January 1, 2018 deadline. Under this initiative, Division staff, Workforce Board Directors, and subject matter experts were charged with assembling a team to address infrastructure cost processes including terms and method for collecting contributions.

A key component of the Cost Sharing LOE, was the convening of a negotiating team representing all of North Carolina's 23 Workforce Development Boards and the required One-Stop partners. This process streamlined negotiations and made it convenient for all parties involved. As a result of the consensus reached by all the required partners, infrastructure costs in North Carolina are funded through the Local Funding Mechanism (LFM). Negotiations focused on seeking contributions from each agency/program equal to the program caps outlined in the State Funding Mechanism (SFM). The caps for each program were 1.5% of the defined eligible budget except for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) which was 0.75% per the graduated cap outlined in TEGL 17-16. VR's contribution should increase in subsequent years by 0.25% until reaching 1.5%. Should the partner agencies fail to agree on the terms of implementing the IFA, the matter will be referred to the Governor. As part of the Cost Sharing LOE, the partners drafted a memorandum of understanding (MOU) template to be used by each Workforce Development Board. The completed signed partner agreements were submitted to the State. Cost sharing summaries were issued and PY2017 partner contributions (six months) were collected in November of 2017. PY2018 contributions and a new memorandum of understanding with infrastructure cost agreement addendums will be due by July 1, 2018.

The North Carolina Division of Workforce Solutions is in the process of finalizing and issuing formal policy that outlines the infrastructure cost sharing information and includes a required template for the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and the Infrastructure Cost Agreement addendum. Policy is scheduled to be issued in May 2018.

North Carolina Cost Sharing Implementation Timeline	
ACTION	TIMELINE
Cost Sharing Line of Effort (LOE) Established	July 2016
Cost Sharing Presentation to Joint DWS Leadership and Director's Council	September 2016
Initial Meeting with Required State Level Partners to Introduce Cost Sharing	November 2016
Joint Meeting to Review Funding Mechanisms	February 2017
Gather Baseline Cost for All NCWorks Career Centers	March to July 2017
Engage Required State Partners In Negotiations	June to September 20
Develop Methodology for Allocating Partner Contributions to Each Local Area	September 2017
Develop Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to Capture Agreements	October 2017
Distribute Cost Sharing Allocation Summaries to each WDB	November 2017
Cost Sharing Information / Q & A Sessions held with WDB Directors	November 2017
Process Documented for Ongoing Administration	In Process
Complete Local Area Negotiations	September to Novemb 2017
Complete Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFA) and Obtain Partner Signatures	Due no later than December 31, 2017
Issue Payments/Invoices to Cover Balances Due	Within 30 Days of Invoice or Per Monthl Payment Date

3. STATE PROGRAM AND STATE BOARD OVERVIEW

A. STATE AGENCY ORGANIZATION

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

State Agency Organization

The NCWorks Commission guides the workforce development system in North Carolina. At the state level, the commission coordinates 20 programs administered by five agencies. The agencies include Department of Commerce, Department of Health and Human Services, Community College System, Department of Public Instruction, and Department of Administration. In 2015, the University of North Carolina system was also added to the NCWorks Commission membership and the commission is currently working to align programs with the university system as well.

The Departments of Commerce and Health and Human Services are cabinet agencies and report to the Governor. Commerce directly operates the Title III program and oversees the Title I program, which is operated by 23 local workforce development boards. Services offered through Titles I and III are integrated and offered at NCWorks Career Centers, which are overseen by the local workforce development boards in conjunction with commerce staff. There are 80 certified career centers across the state and approximately 20 outreach locations.

The Department of Health and Human Services operates the Title IV program and provides vocational rehabilitation and services for the blind at 80 locations across the state providing coverage of all 100 counties. Some of these offices are shared with other related service organizations and workforce partners. From these offices, Vocational rehabilitation services are primarily provided directly by vocational rehabilitation counselors, vocational evaluators, assistive technologists, rehabilitation engineers, and business relations representatives. Each office is locally managed under the supervision of regional and central management teams under the authority of the central management structure within the Department of Health and Human resources. The vocational rehabilitation programs do have rehabilitation counselors that provide itinerant support at the NC Works Career Centers on a regular basis to facilitate service coordination for individuals who identify themselves as having a disability and express interest in receiving specialized services, guidance, and supports that lead to successful employment.

The North Carolina Community College System is composed of 58 local community colleges and is governed by the State Board of Community Colleges. The state board has designated the College and Career Readiness (CCR) section of the Programs and Student Services Division to administer the federal and state grant funds under WIOA, Title II-Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA). The CCR section provides leadership, oversight, professional development, policy guidance, monitoring, and evaluation of providers who receive funds from WIOA-AEFLA grant program. The CCR section competes funds to eligible providers to provide instructional services activities for Adult Basic Education, Corrections Education and Education of Other Institutionalized Individuals and Integrated Education and Literacy and Civics. All providers must align their plans with local workforce development board plans.

Staff at career centers, community colleges, and vocational rehabilitation offices all maintain good referral processes among each other when serving customers.

B. STATE BOARD

Provide a description of the State Board, including—

The NCWorks Commission is the designated state workforce investment board for North Carolina. The commission operates in accordance with the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, North Carolina General Statute, and commission bylaws. Appointees are given the responsibility for setting the strategic direction of the state-wide workforce development system. Commission members advise state leaders on how to strengthen the state's workforce and serve North Carolina businesses. The commission also develops policy to align workforce programs, assesses the effectiveness of core programs, and oversees the "one-stop" career center system.

I. MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

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

Representation on the NCWorks Commission is mandated by federal and state law. Commission membership includes workforce agency leaders, elected officials, the private sector, and labor, training, and community based organizations. The majority of the members are from the private sector as directed by WIOA. All members are appointed to four year terms by the Governor. The heads of the Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Administration, Department of Public Instruction, Community College System, University of North Carolina System, and Department of Commerce all serve as ex-officio members.

NCWorks Commission Membership Roster

Member Name	*Affiliation*	*Organization*
Roy Cooper	*Government Representative*	*Governor, State of North Carolina*
Mark Johnson	*Government Representative*	*State Superintendent, N.C. Department of Public Instruction*
Machelle Sanders	*Government Representative*	*Secretary, N.C. Department of Administration*
Linda Haygood	*Government Representative*	*Interim President, N.C. Community College System*
Tony Copeland	*Government Representative*	*Secretary, N.C. Department of Commerce*
Mandy Cohen	*Government Representative*	*Secretary, N.C. Department of Health & Human Services*
Margaret Spellings	*Government Representative*	*President, UNC System*
Shawn Brown	*Locally Elected City Official*	*Mayor, Claremont*
Ronnie Smith	*Locally Elected County Official*	*Commissioner of Martin County*
Kevin Trapani	*Private Business Representative*	*The Redwoods Group*
Joe Magno	*Private Business Representative*	*N.C. Center of Innovation Network*
Josh Arant	*Private Business*	*Mako Medical Laboratories*

Member Name	*Affiliation*	*Organization*
	Representative	
Stephen Rosenburgh	*Private Business Representative*	*USDevelopments*
Sergi Roura	*Private Business Representative*	*Grifols*
Olalah Njenga	*Private Business Representative*	*YellowWood Group*
Melanie Chernoff	*Private Business Representative*	*Red Hat, Inc.*
Susan Jackson	*Private Business Representative*	*C3HealthcareRx*
Stan Sherrill	*Private Business Representative*	*Duke-Energy*
Kim Toler	*Private Business Representative*	*PotashCorp*
Joe Rogers	*Private Business Representative*	*Rogers International, LLC*
Marti Matthews	*Private Business Representative*	*PPDI*
Christopher Gergen	*Private Business Representative*	*Forward Impact*
Osceola Ellis	*Private Business Representative*	*Military Relocator Real Estate & Property Management*
Chris Watters	*Private Business Representative*	*Restoration Hardware*
Pam Townsend	*Private Business Representative*	*WSP USA*
Vacant	*Private Business Representative*	
Michael Okun	*Labor*	*NC State AFL-CIO*
MaryBe McMillan	*Labor*	*NC State AFL-CIO*
Walter Siegenthaler	*Apprenticeship*	*Max Daetwyler Corporation*
Sherry Carpenter	*Community Based Organization*	*Goodwill Industries*
Nate Davis	*Community Based*	*World Overcomers Church*

Member Name	*Affiliation*	*Organization*
	Organization	
Hope Williams	*Community Based Organization*	*N.C. Independent Colleges and Universities*
Jeffrey Frederick	*Community Based Organization*	*N.C. Association of Workforce Boards*

II. BOARD ACTIVITIES

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

Committees The work of the commission is accomplished through the work of committees. These committees, established by the chair, are created purposefully to accomplish the goals of the commission's 2014-2016 strategic plan and to carry out the functions under section 101(d) of WIOA. Each committee is led by a chair and is supported by staff. The chairs of each committee, along with the commission chair also compose the Executive Committee.

Meetings The commission conducts quarterly business meetings at the call of the chair. Business meetings are attended by the entire commission and are open to the public. Meeting agendas are developed by commission staff and approved by the chair. Actions of the commission are determined by a majority vote of the members present, and a majority of the commission constitutes a quorum for the transaction of business. The rules set forth in Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised govern the procedures of the commission. The commission also conducts committee meetings comprised of commission members. Committees meet several times a year and are scheduled at the discretion of the committee chair. These meetings are attended by the assigned committee members, its chair, and appropriate staff.

Several key activities will assist the NCWorks Commission members and staff carry out state board functions. First, the NCWorks Commission has assembled a group of agency leaders to help coordinate and integrate workforce programs across agencies. This State-Agency Sub-Committee is working on policy alignment, a unified branding and outreach strategy, a unified business services strategy, and creating regional teams for North Carolina's eight Prosperity Zones to ensure a consistent and comprehensive approach to workforce development in each zone.

Additionally, the commission is developing strategies to support the use of career pathways to provide individuals, including low-skilled adults, youth and individuals with barriers to employment, with workforce investment activates, education, and supportive services to enter or retain employment. Specifically, the Career Pathways Committee of the commission has created an interagency team that has developed a framework for defining, developing and implementing clear, concise and comprehensive career pathways. NCWorks Certified Career Pathways criteria and an application have been established, and the endorsement process is underway. In addition, multiple promotional events are underway to promote the

development of certified career pathways. A state-wide Career Pathways Conference was conducted in September 2015 with over 200 attendees.

Through the efforts of the Performance and Accountability Committee, the commission guides the continuous improvement of the workforce development system using data-driven strategies. Session Law 2012-131 and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act require the commission to develop, continuously improve, and report on system-wide performance measures assessing the effectiveness of the entire workforce development system. The commission responded by convening an inter-agency work group that developed a set of common measures to track and analyze performance.

The Performance and Accountability Committee of the NCWorks Commission works with the Labor and Economic Analysis Division (LEA) in the Department of Commerce to analyze state workforce development program data. LEA maintains the Common Follow-Up System (CFS) which contains a rich longitudinal repository of information from a variety of education and workforce programs as well as employment, wage, claims, and benefit payment information from the unemployment insurance system. This information has been used to develop annual reports on the workforce development system as well as continuously improve performance measures.

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.

The NCWorks Commission (N.C.'s state workforce investment board) is responsible for assessing N.C.'s workforce development system, including core WIOA programs. This work is accomplished by the commission's accountability committee which reports to the full commission at each quarterly meeting.

First, state law requires the commission to annually review and evaluate the plans and programs for all federally- or state-funded workforce development programs. In 2014, the NCWorks Commission completed a review of 20 workforce development program plans, policies and services across five agencies in North Carolina. This review included an analysis of core programs as well as other one-stop delivery system partners. The commission reviewed workforce program funding levels and sources, service provision types, special populations served and business outreach initiatives. (See section II(a) 2(A) for a summary.)

Second, the commission is required to develop and continuously improve performance measures to assess the effectiveness of workforce training and employment in the state. The workforce development system agencies worked collaboratively to design and implement universal performance measures. The commission which oversaw these efforts, recognized that by using common metrics and applying them across a wide range of workforce

programs, the performance measures offer a comprehensive program-by-program look at North Carolina's workforce system.

Finally, the commission's performance and accountability committee will be developing strategies to track the implementation, activities, and performance of core programs as directed by WIOA. The commission is also required to develop state performance accountability measures for local workforce development boards.

B. ASSESSMENT OF ONE-STOP PROGRAM 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.

The NCWorks Commission is responsible for reviewing and evaluating the workforce development system in North Carolina which includes core WIOA programs and one-stop partner program services. See answer to question III (b)(4)(A) for more details.

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 assessments 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.

Performance from the first two years of WIOA will be used as the baseline for future assessments of the effectiveness of core programs and NCWorks Career Center (one-stop) partners.

In March 2017, the NCWorks Commission conducted its most recent annual review, which surveyed 19 statewide workforce development programs administered across the Department of Commerce, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Public Instruction, Department of Administration, and the Community College System. Survey results show that North Carolina's workforce development system serves a wide variety of customers, the most common of which are the unemployed, and underemployed, and low-income individuals, and adults and youth ages 16-24. These programs target youth and adults over 55 least frequently. The programs across the workforce development system offer a wide variety of services to jobseekers in North Carolina. Services include education/training, interview preparations and assessments, resume assistance and job search assistance, and career counseling. Over half of the programs provide various employability and soft skills training—focusing on critical skills like communication, time management, and work adjustment training.

The commission also is required to develop state performance accountability measures for local workforce development boards. The commission developed these measures in consultation with the local workforce development board directors and chairs to complement the WIOA federal primary indicators of performance for adult and youth training and employment. Measuring the performance of local workforce development

boards will provide all job seekers, workers, and businesses with high quality career, training and supportive services that they need to succeed. In an effort to identify future opportunities for change and continuous improvement, the NCWorks Commission adjusted measure targets and will vote to approve these updated measures for 2018 to reflect previous performance.

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.

North Carolina will conduct vigorous, objective and thorough assessments of WIOA core programs as part of the overarching NCWorks system. Plans for this comprehensive assessment process include:

- Collective regular reviews by the State Steering Council which include agency leaders from all WIOA core programs on data reflecting enrollment, resource sharing among core partners, measures of effectiveness and efficiency and an analysis of mutually agreed upon targets for expected and achieved performance. Further, data from all core partners on consumer input will also be collected, shared, and summarized.
- Formative evaluation on goals established to guide, and focus core partner activities on alignment, coordination of services, referrals, resource sharing, and other important partner engagement activities at both the state and local levels. The result of this assessment will be to determine the level and breadth of partner engagement in serving North Carolina's workforce system in a coordinated, purposeful manner.
- Annual performance evaluation by NCWorks Commission of efficiency and effectiveness of core programs and NCWorks Career Center system and measures of satisfaction of consumers, both businesses and individuals served in the system. Other measures of performance would include the employment and retention outcomes, post-secondary achievements and an examination of the level of penetration into groups and individuals eligible for services and the degree to which the workforce system has reached them.
- State performance measures will also be set by the NCWorks Commission for local workforce boards beginning in program year 2016. These measures will be developed in conjunction with board staff and will be complimentary to the federal performance measures.
- Engagement of outside consultation for third-party review, analysis, evaluation and recommendations for continuous improvement of services and resulting outcomes. Utilizing North Carolina's excellent public and private universities' research capabilities is anticipated.
- The NCWorks Commission will commission research projects on employer needs every two years to follow up on two previous studies, best practices in key topics, and other key areas of research to help improve the workforce development system.

Program assessments conducted during the final two years of the Workforce Investment Act by the NCWorks Commission were reviewed and considered in formulating North Carolina's Unified Plan. Performance from the first two years of WIOA will be used as the baseline for future assessments of the effectiveness of core programs and NCWorks Career Center system. From the baseline assessment on program performance targets will be established and regularly monitored by individual core partner agencies as well as the State Steering Council and the NCWorks Commission. Program performance targets will demonstrate North Carolina's best effort in reaching a diverse workforce and maximizing the system's resources to prepare workers for the demands and needs of employers currently and in years to come. Under circumstances where performance targets fall short of expected levels an analysis will be conducted regarding the reasons with suggested means of improving performance for the next reporting period.

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—

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

Title I: Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker In April or early May of each year, the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) of the Federal Department of Labor (DOL) releases a Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) that provides the program allotment amounts and specifics on the formulas states should use to determine the allocation amount for each Workforce Development Board (WDB). Out of each program's total allocation amount, an administrative holdback amount to be used for statewide workforce investment activities is deducted from the total. The percentage can vary year to year and program to program. In addition, the Dislocated Worker program also has a percentage of its allocation deducted, to be used for statewide rapid response activities. For the most recent program year for which allocations have been calculated, PY 2015, the percentages deducted were as follows: Adult 10% administrative holdback Youth 10% administrative holdback Dislocated Worker 10% administrative holdback 25% statewide rapid response holdback Also included in the TEGL, is the ratio of July to October funding for the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. Youth funds are not divided into two distributions. Once the Local Area allocation amounts have been calculated, this ratio is then used to determine what amount is available for July and what is available for October. For PY 2015, that ratio was:

July Adult Percentage: 8.3574% July Dislocated Worker Percentage: 15.3575% October Adult Percentage: 91.6426% October Dislocated Worker Percentage: 84.6425%

Once the total allocation amounts for each program are known, the DOL-provided formulas are then used to calculate the Local Area allocation amounts. Both the Adult and Youth programs have a minimum allocation amount in effect (the Dislocated Worker program will also have this in effect for PY 2016), defined as follows: The local area shall not receive an allocation percentage that is less than 90 percent of the average allocation percentage of the

local area for the 2 preceding fiscal years. Amounts necessary for increasing such allocations to local areas to comply with this requirement are to be obtained by ratably reducing the allocations of the other local areas. The formulas used for each program, as well as the definitions of some important terms within those formulas, are included below, sourced from TEGL 29-14.

WIOA Youth Activities Formula: 1/3: State relative share of total unemployment in areas of substantial unemployment (ASU) (average 12 months ending 6/30) 1/3: State relative share of excess unemployment (average 12 months ending 6/30) 1/3: State relative share of economically disadvantaged youth (American Community Survey 2006-2010)
WIOA Adult Activities Formula: 1/3: State relative share of total unemployment in areas of substantial unemployment (ASU) (average 12 months ending 6/30) 1/3: State relative share of excess unemployment (average 12 months ending 6/30) 1/3: State relative share of economically disadvantaged Adult (American Community Survey 2006-2010)

The State has considered the factors included in WIOA 133(b), but based upon their lack of availability and reliability, has chosen to apply the factors used by the US Department of Labor in determining each state's Dislocated Worker allotment.

WIOA Dislocated Workers

Formula:

1/3: State relative share of total unemployed (average 12 months ending 09/30)

1/3: State relative share of excess unemployed (average 12 months ending 09/30)

1/3: State relative share of long-term unemployed (average 12 months ending 09/30)

Formula Data Factor Definitions

WIOA Youth and Adults Programs

ASU: contiguous areas with unemployment rate of 6.5 percent or more excess unemployed. Higher of:

(1) excess unemployed (unemployment in excess of 4.5 percent) in ASU's; or

(2) excess unemployed (unemployment in excess of 4.5 percent) in all areas

Economically disadvantaged adults: individuals, age 22-72, meeting (or member of family meeting):

OMB poverty level or

70 percent of lower living standard income level (LLSIL).

Economically disadvantaged youth: individuals, age 16-21, meeting (or member of family meeting):

OMB poverty level or

70 percent of lower living standard income level (LLSIL).

WIOA Dislocated Workers Program

Excess unemployed: unemployment in excess of 4.5 percent

Long-term unemployed: number unemployed 15 or more weeks.

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

Title I: Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker In April or early May of each year, the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) of the Federal Department of Labor (DOL) releases a Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) that provides the program allotment amounts and specifics on the formulas states should use to determine the allocation amount for each Workforce Development Board (WDB). Out of each program's total allocation amount, an administrative holdback amount to be used for statewide workforce investment activities is deducted from the total. The percentage can vary year to year and program to program. In addition, the Dislocated Worker program also has a percentage of its allocation deducted, to be used for statewide rapid response activities. For the most recent program year for which allocations have been calculated, PY 2015, the percentages deducted were as follows: Adult 10% administrative holdback Youth 10% administrative holdback Dislocated Worker 10% administrative holdback 25% statewide rapid response holdback

Also included in the TEGL, is the ratio of July to October funding for the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. Youth funds are not divided into two distributions. Once the Local Area allocation amounts have been calculated, this ratio is then used to determine what amount is available for July and what is available for October. For PY 2015, that ratio was: Program July Percentage October Percentage Adult 8.3574% 91.6426% Dislocated Worker 15.3575% 84.6425%

Once the total allocation amounts for each program are known, the DOL-provided formulas are then used to calculate the Local Area allocation amounts. Both the Adult and Youth programs have a minimum allocation amount in effect (the Dislocated Worker program will also have this in effect for PY 2016), defined as follows: The local area shall not receive an allocation percentage that is less than 90 percent of the average allocation percentage of the

local area for the 2 preceding fiscal years. Amounts necessary for increasing such allocations to local areas to comply with this requirement are to be obtained by ratably reducing the allocations of the other local areas. The formulas used for each program, as well as the definitions of some important terms within those formulas, are included below, sourced from TEGL 29-14.

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

Title I: Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker In April or early May of each year, the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) of the Federal Department of Labor (DOL) releases a Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) that provides the program allotment amounts and specifics on the formulas states should use to determine the allocation amount for each Workforce Development Board (WDB). Out of each program's total allocation amount, an administrative holdback amount to be used for statewide workforce investment activities is deducted from the total. The percentage can vary year to year and program to program. In addition, the Dislocated Worker program also has a percentage of its allocation deducted, to be used for statewide rapid response activities. For the most recent program year for which allocations have been calculated, PY 2015, the percentages deducted were as follows: Adult 10% administrative holdback Youth 10% administrative holdback Dislocated Worker 10% administrative holdback 25% statewide rapid response holdback

Also included in the TEGL, is the ratio of July to October funding for the Adult and Dislocated Worker programs. Youth funds are not divided into two distributions. Once the Local Area allocation amounts have been calculated, this ratio is then used to determine what amount is available for July and what is available for October. For PY 2015, that ratio was: Program July Percentage October Percentage Adult 8.3574% 91.6426% Dislocated Worker 15.3575% 84.6425%

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B. FOR TITLE II:

I. 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.

The NC Community College System (NCCCS), College and Career Readiness (CCR) office is the State's agency for managing funding provided through the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA). NCCCS will allocate AEFLA funds for multiyear awards for three years with a re-application process for continued funding in year two and three for grantees in good standing. The NCCCS will require all eligible providers' use the same application process for sections 231, 225, and 243. All three programs will use the same grant application and process. Funds will be allocated through a Request for Proposal (RFP) to eligible providers who may be the following but not limited to: 1. Local educational agencies, 2. Community-based organizations or faith-based organizations, 3. Volunteer literacy organizations, 4. Institutions of higher education, 5. Public or private nonprofit agencies, Libraries, 6. Public housing authorities 7. Nonprofit institutions that are not described in any of the above and have the ability to provide adult education and literacy activities to eligible individuals 8. Consortia or coalitions of the agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described above, and 9. Partnerships between an employer and an entity described above

Past Effectiveness: All eligible providers must establish that it has demonstrated past effectiveness by providing performance data on its record of improving the skills of eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals, especially those with low levels of literacy in content domains of reading, writing, mathematics, English language acquisition. Providers must also provide data regarding its outcomes for participants related to employment, attainment of secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and transition to post secondary education and training. An eligible provider that has not been previously funded under Title II will be required to supply data demonstrating their ability to improve the literacy skills of eligible individuals, including data for participants related to employment, attainment of secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent. A trained evaluation team will review the proposals using a weighted rubric. Evaluation criteria will include the degree to which improvements meet the State-adjusted level of performance, and the degree to which programs meet the 13 considerations. The NCCCS allocates 82.5 percent of the state allocation for local assistance grants. Funds must be used for AEFLA required activities with 5% allowed for indirect cost. NCCCS funding structure is based on populations most in need by counties. NCCCS gives priorities to: 1) populations with greatest need, including adults who are functioning at the lowest literacy and numeracy levels and English language learners, and populations residing in rural areas who have multiple barriers to attendance, 2) populations who are functioning above 8th grade level but need to earn a high school diploma or its equivalent or adults who have not attained an equivalent level of education needed to transition to post secondary, and 3) incarcerated adults who need to earn a high school diploma or its equivalent or adults who have not attained an equivalent level of education.

The following timeline will be followed to make award to eligible providers effective July 1, 2018:

Request for Proposals Planning Timeline

October - December 2017 Convene RFP development team, develop RFP format, content and evaluation rubric. January 2018 RFP Technical Assistance workshops. January 2018 Issue RFP. Proposals Due March 2018. Review proposals and submit for approval to NCCCS

State Board May 2018. Announce awards July 1, 2018 Effective Start Date for all programs is July 2018.

II. 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 NCCCS will require all eligible providers' use the same application process for sections 231, 225, and 243. All three programs will use the same grant application and process. NCCCS office has a formal RFP process that ensures all eligible providers have direct and equitable access to apply for grant and contract funds. The RFP process standardizes the announcement of requests for RFP, application and review process so that the same process is used for all eligible providers. The RFP will be posted on the NC Government Grant portal. The application will be available on the NCCCS office website and announcements will be placed in state's largest circulating newspapers. All current providers will be notified through NCCCS system office provider's distribution list. NCCCS office NC will host technical assistance meetings and invite current and potential new adult education providers. NCCCS office will appoint a team to respond to assistance in completing the application for a specified period.

C. TITLE IV VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

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

Title IV: Vocational Rehabilitation Programs Funds distribution between the Divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Division of Services for the Blind was recently changed between the two agencies so that it more accurately reflect spending levels. Distribution calculations are based on previous years' expenditure levels for each agency while allowing for sufficient carry forward to maintain on-going operations in the event of a disruption of federal funding.

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.

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

There are three state agencies in North Carolina that have administrative responsibility for the WIOA core programs. These include the North Carolina Department of Commerce, North Carolina Community College System, and North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. While each of these entities maintain separate participant and financial information systems, the agencies have worked and continue to work collaboratively to integrate data across North Carolina's workforce development system. As the final WIOA operational and reporting policies and regulations are released, North Carolina's workforce agencies will continue to work and explore mechanisms by which further data integration can be achieved across entities to achieve the data integration and reporting goals of WIOA. The NCWorks Commission has identified as one of its key action steps to explore opportunities for interfacing NCWorks Online with North Carolina's array for workforce development case management systems. The commission will work with state agency leaders and track this initiative to ensure that all opportunities are explored. In addition to the administrative data functions that are completed in separate information systems, each of the WIOA core program agencies along with several other education and workforce entities are participants in a longitudinal workforce system called the North Carolina Common Follow—up System (CFS). This system is a state mandated longitudinal system that is utilized to provide information on the educational and employment outcomes of participants in publicly supported educational, employment, and training programs for use in planning, policymaking, program evaluation, resource allocation, and career planning.

II. 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.

Each year participating agencies provide data extracts to CFS. These extracts include record level data files that include participant demographic information and program related information. These extracts are loaded to historical longitudinal data files housed within CFS. In addition to the education and workforce data submissions, CFS also receives data from the state's unemployment insurance system and employer related information from the Labor and Economic Analysis Division (LEA). UI related information includes detailed UI claims and benefit payment information as well as quarterly unemployment insurance wage data. Currently, CFS contains over 148 million program participant records on over 9 million individuals, over 15 years of monthly UI claims and benefit payment information, over 17 years (over 396 million records) of quarterly UI wage and over 14 years of quarterly employer information including industry classification and employer size.

III. 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.

North Carolina received a Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) grant from the U.S. DOL's Employment and Training Administration in 2013. WDQI resources are being utilized

to enhance and expand the capacity of CFS as a longitudinal workforce system. This enhancement effort includes the migration of historical data into relational data structures, the expansion of data submittals, and enhancement of the systems technology infrastructure. While LEA is charged with operation of CFS, the new enhanced CFS is being developed in collaboration with the North Carolina Department of Information Technology's Government Data Analytics Center (GDAC).

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

Each core WIOA agency will be responsible for submitting their version of the Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL) data and yearly and quarterly reports. As the final WIOA operational and reporting regulations are released, North Carolina's workforce agencies will continue to work and explore mechanisms by which further data integration can be achieved across entities to achieve the data integration and reporting goals of WIOA. This includes automation of electronic data exchanges across existing participant systems and to leverage the state's resources available through the Common Follow—up System.

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. 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.

The three agencies the administer the core WIOA programs participate in a state level longitudinal data collection system used in North Carolina along with other education and workforce programs. This Common Follow—Up System (CFS) allows N.C. to leverage its existing data collection systems and report our individual requirements needed but to have a common view of data and to show the effectiveness of all programs working together.

The NCWorks Commission uses the information from the CFS to complete its annual performance measures report. One of the indicators that is tracked for each program is continuation in higher education and/or other workforce programs. The commission reviews this information annually and reports to the N.C. General Assembly.

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.)

The core WIOA agencies have different methods of accessing UI wage data including direct access to data to allow immediate reports. Agencies also use UI wage data as part of the reports produced from the Common Follow—up System.

North Carolina has a long history and wealth of experience in the analyses and use of Unemployment Insurance wage data to meet both state and federal reporting and evaluation requirements. Through the North Carolina Common Follow—up System, the state has a longitudinal repository of Unemployment Insurance data with over 17 hears of historical quarterly wage records. In addition, the state is currently participating in both the Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS) as well as the Wage Record Interchange System 2 (WRIS2). In addition, the state is working to finalize its agreement in the Federal Employment Data Exchange System (FEDES). Each of the core WIOA programs have access to the State's Unemployment Insurance wage data either through direct access or through the return of matched data files through the Common Follow up System. Access to UI wage records are completed under signed Memoranda of Understanding which outline data sharing and confidentiality laws and 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 core WIOA agencies use secure servers to access and share data.

Programs administered through the Division of Workforce Solutions employ specific measures for privacy safeguarding by creating a unique identifier for the individual's Social Security information when registered for services. Unique identifiers are used to eliminate exposure of sensitive information through the case management and referrals processes.

Programs administered through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services are regulated by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA) and conform to all privacy safeguards therein as well as obtaining a signed release from individuals seeking services.

Workforce programs administered by the NC Community College System are regulated by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and conform to all privacy safeguards therein.

Data from the state's unemployment insurance system used for the computation of WIOA performance measures by the Division of Workforce Solutions and the NCCCS are utilized in compliance with 20. C.F.R Part 603.

North Carolina will continue investigating unified data management systems for statewide application and will make privacy considerations a priority in all initiatives

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.

North Carolina's public workforce development system offers programs designed to improve employment opportunities for all customers. Services include assessments, training programs, staff—assisted services, and self—service online programs. In addition to serving people with various levels of education and work experience, some specialized programs provide customized services to special populations, especially veterans. North Carolina is home to seven military installations and over 775,000 of its citizens are veterans. Staff at NCWorks Career Centers are committed to helping veterans and other individuals with barriers to employment navigate the employment process beginning with assessment and continuing throughout the job—search and culminating in suitable employment.

On November 7, 2002, the Jobs for Veterans Act (JVA), Public Law 107—288 was signed into law. One provision of the JVA, codified at 38 U.S.C. 4215, establishes a priority of service requirement for "covered persons" (veterans and certain spouses of veterans, as defined by 38 U.S.C. 4215(a) (l) (A—B), in qualified job training programs. Qualified job training programs include all workforce programs funded directly, in whole or in part, by the US Department of Labor (USDOL), such as WIOA Title I and Title III (Wagner Peyser) employment services and other job training programs offered through competitive grants. The final rule implementing the priority of service requirement took effect on January 19, 2009, and can be found at 20 CFR 1010. Additionally, USDOL has provided policy guidance to the workforce investment system regarding the implementation of the priority of service. In brief, priority of service means that veterans and eligible spouses are given priority over non—covered persons for the receipt of employment, training, and placement services provided under a qualified job training program. A veteran or an eligible spouse either receives access to a service earlier in time than a non—covered person, or, if the resource is limited, the veteran or eligible spouse receives access to the services instead of or before the non—covered person.

It is important to note, however, that the priority of service requirements are not affected by this guidance; direct recipients of USDOL funding remain subject to the priority of service guidance and regulations. Additionally, the priority of services requirements should not be interpreted to limit veterans and eligible spouses to receiving services only from veterans' program staff. Procedures or policies that restrict a veteran's access to WIOA Title I or Title III services, even if such restrictions are intended to provide the veteran with specialized services, are contrary to the priority of service requirement.

Priority of service provisions for veterans are monitored on a regular basis through field checks and by generating reports from NCWorks Online, the state's labor exchange portal. Additionally, North Carolina statute requires annually that a report be submitted to the NC General Assembly, in accordance with General Statute 165—44, and consistent with the federal Jobs for Veterans' Act (P.L. 107—288).

Many US military veterans complete service only to discover they cannot find jobs when they return home. Although service members develop a wide range of skills through military education, training, and experience, they often find it difficult to translate these skills into civilian jobs, perhaps because technical skills, education, and experience differ

between military and civilian sectors. This is especially true for veterans with medical training such as combat medics and corpsmen.

The Department of Commerce provides a Veteran Services Program across the state to assist veterans with employment. The Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialists (DVOPs) assist veterans with overcoming barriers through intensive, targeted services. Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVERs) reach out to employers to advocate for hiring Veterans. Recent changes to the federal policies concerning the roles of these staff that serve veterans have been made to ensure that eligible veterans and eligible spouses receive the best combination of services, according to their needs. The agency determined that to accomplish this refocusing, Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists will serve only those veterans and eligible spouses most in need of the intensive services to address significant barriers to employment. As a result, DVOP specialists will serve fewer veterans and eligible spouses, but will be able to provide more intensive services.

The current referral process is to have the veteran complete a questionnaire upon their arrival in the NCWorks Career Center. They are asked to check if they have any of the following (barriers):

- disabilities;
- homelessness;
- unemployed for at least 27 weeks;
- criminal background (released within the last 12 months);
- no high school diploma or GED;
- low income; and
- between 18—24 years old.

Veterans with any of these barriers are then referred to a DVOP, or in the limited locations without a DVOP, the veteran will be given a priority of service and will be assisted by another career center staff. Included in career counseling conversations with veterans, staff inform veterans of the Registered Apprenticeship program and the eligibility and utilization of GI Bill Benefits for the apprenticeship program.

Another manifestation of the priority of service policy is in the NCWorks Online job order process. This means that all registered veterans have an opportunity to view the job opening before non—veterans. To accomplish this, a 24—hour business day hold plus overnight update is placed on each job order before it is released to the general public.

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.

Both physical and programmatic accessibility are essential for all individuals to participate in services offered by the NCWorks Career Centers and the collaborating community partners. With employment as the ultimate objective, accessibility to facilities and programs offered as legislated by the Americans with Disabilities Act is essential to support individuals with significant barriers to employment to achieve employment.

The physical accessibility of facilities is systematically addressed across the state. The State maintains a Methods of Administration which details how compliance with WIOA Section 188 will be maintained. The Methods of Administration is a "living" document which ensures current federal regulations and directives are implemented at the state and local level as quickly as possible. NCWorks Career Centers also utilize the North Carolina Department of Commerce Division of Workforce Solutions Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance Review Checklist to ensure access to the entire range of services at each location. As a part of the certification process to become an NCWorks Career Center, each site is required to obtain a letter of ADA compliance from the host agency. ADA compliance is monitored and reviewed on an annual basis by the NC Department of Commerce and the host agency. Sites are required to maintain and update accessibility as ADA regulations are revised and NCWorks Career Center Certifications are renewed.

In partnership with local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs), the NCWorks Commission in May 2013, established minimum certification criteria for NCWorks Career Centers to ensure consistency in quality service delivery throughout the state. Presently, 76 Career Centers are certified.

Certification criteria emphasize staff cross—training and partnerships to provide excellent service to customers. The certification process involves three steps:

- Local workforce office submits an application demonstrating how certification criteria have been met.
- A Quality Improvement team from the Division of Workforce Solutions visits the office to observe and evaluate operations.
- The local office receives certification upon successful evaluation.

Career Center Certification Accessibility Criteria:

- Adequate handicapped parking with compliant curb ramp(s) connected to the accessibility route into the Center(s).
- Handicapped parking must be clearly marked.
- Entrance and exit must be accessible and free of obstacles with appropriate signage.
- Pedestrian routes inside the host agency facility must be accessible and free of obstacles.
- Entrance and exit doors are required to be equipped with hardware that is usable with one hand without tight grasping, pinching or twisting of the wrist.
- Furniture inside the Center must be arranged to allow wheelchair access.
- Computer and desk workstations must be wheelchair accessible.
- Restrooms must be appropriately accessible.
- Auxiliary aids and services must be available upon request as are interpreter services for ESL customers.

- Emergency drills are to be conducted annually and staff is to be provided with host agency procedures.

Career Centers are monitored and reviewed every two years for continued compliance with certification standards. If a center is found out of compliance, a Corrective Action plan is required and a follow—up monitoring visit is conducted. Centers must begin immediate corrective action to achieve compliance, depending on the nature of the finding.

Per federal law, each local workforce board must appoint a local Equal Opportunity Officer who is responsible for ensuring local WIOA Section 188 compliance. Local Equal Opportunity Officers are responsible for informing senior staff of applicable federal regulations and ensuring all programs and activities are implemented in compliance. Additionally, local Equal Opportunity Officers collect and resolve local grievances and complaints as needed. They also serve as liaisons with the state's Title I—B Equal Opportunity Officer and USDOL's Civil Rights Center to remain current on regulatory updates and guidance. They are then responsible for circulating new information locally and ensuring it is properly implemented.

During program year 2016 Career Center staff will receive training to follow established procedures to ensure inclusion and programmatic accessibility to center services. This training, comprised of eight half—day sessions across the state, will allow staff to better understand the different types of disabilities, how to handle issues of disclosure and disability identification with sensitivity at program intake, and how to determine the most effective mix of services and referrals to make when a disability is identified. These trainings will be presented by subject matter experts and include such topics as: federal, state, and local disability policies; identifying barriers/hidden disabilities; disability awareness and etiquette; website accessibility; providing reasonable accommodations; assistive technology accommodations and resources; Section 503 for federal contractors; and simulation training.

9. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE 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.

North Carolina's One—Stop delivery system is able to meet the needs of our English language learners through our Limited English Proficiency (LEP) program. LEP is operated from the Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS) state office using the Applicant Services Unit and a LEP Coordinator. DWS has established policy for providing LEP services to all customers who do not speak English as their primary language. The goal is to deliver the same level of high quality services to all our customers, even those with LEP.

The LEP state Coordinator is responsible for the following:

- distributing policy to all One Stops or NCWorks Career Centers;
- establishing procedures for serving LEP customers;

- training new NCWorks Career Center staff and providing annual training to keep Career Center staff current on action needed to serve LEP customers ;
- providing Technical Assistance to NC Works Career Center staff concerning serving LEP customers;
- establishing and regularly updating the LEP Directory, the directory provides a list of persons (DWS and non—DWS) who speak various languages that can be contacted for assistance with LEP customers;
- monitoring services provided to LEP customers;
- documenting and Reporting LEP services provided; and
- developing webinars outlining LEP procedures.

In addition to the state LEP Coordinator, all NCWorks Career Centers have a designated LEP Specialist who is the resource person for the center concerning steps to take when serving a LEP customer.

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.

In spring 2015, North Carolina created the WIOA State Steering Council comprised of leaders from each of the agencies responsible for implementing WIOA (NCWorks Commission, Department of Commerce, N.C. Community College System, and Department of Health and Human Services). This council has met regularly over the last year to develop the State Unified Plan which included gathering input from state and local staff in all core programs. In addition, the council has worked directly with the NCWorks Commission to ensure the plan is aligned with the commission's strategic plan. Below is a summary of activities of the State Steering Council to develop the State Unified Plan.

In the fall of 2015, the State Steering Council held a series of summits across the state to provide information on WIOA and the State Unified Plan development and to gather input from local staff. The summits were held in communities across the state and during each summit, local staff were engaged in conversation about key WIOA themes to gather their input. The council kicked things off with a statewide summit in Durham then followed up with three regional summits in the eastern, western, and central areas of the state. The council completed this work with a roundtable conversation and several town hall events at the state's NCWorks Partnership Conference.

The council also developed eight working groups organized around plan components and with representation from each of the three core agencies. These working groups met and developed initial content for the state plan. The working groups included:

- alignment and coordination
- economic and workforce system data and analysis;
- services to youth;
- services to persons with barriers to employment;
- core program operations;
- systems and policies;
- IT and data integration; and
- summit planning.

The information developed by the working groups was sent to the State Steering Council which reviewed the content and used it for development of the final draft.

The final draft was posted on the NCWorks Commission's website and an email address was provided for public comments. The State Steering Council also has several key meetings with the full NCWorks Commission and with the ad hoc WIOA Unified Plan review committee. In December 2015, the council presented an outline of the plan components to the full NCWorks Commission. In January 2015, a full draft of the plan was provided to the ad hoc WIOA Unified Plan review committee. This committee reviewed the plan and met with the steering council to address questions. In February 2016, the review committee

recommended to the full NCWorks Commission that the plan be sent to the Governor after final edits from commission feedback and public comments are made to the plan.

After the February 2016 commission meeting, final guidance was released from the federal government. The State Steering Council reviewed the final guidance, commission feedback, and public comments to finalize N.C.'s State Unified Plan.

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. ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

1. REGIONS AND LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS

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

North Carolina's 23 local workforce development areas are provided as Appendix 2C. The overlay of North Carolina's eight economic development prosperity zones shown on the map are the basis for designation of regions. The current 23 boards meet the performance and fiscal accountability criteria of the Opportunity Act and were accordingly re—designated for the initial two year period. North Carolina began a regional approach to planning and service delivery under the Workforce Investment Act and established eight regions that most closely aligned the geography of the local workforce development areas and the Prosperity Zones without dividing local areas. These regions are consistent with labor market areas and will be the initial regions under the Opportunity Act subject to review at the end of two years. The regions with their constituent local workforce development areas are:

- Western Region: Southwestern and Mountain Area WDBs;
- Northwest Region: High Country, Western Piedmont, and Region C WDBs;
- Piedmont Triad Region: Northwest Piedmont, Guilford County, DavidsonWorks, and Regional Partnership WDBs;

  Southwest Region: Centralina, Charlotte/Mecklenburg, and Gaston County WDBs;

- North Central Region: Kerr—Tar, Durham, and Capital Area WDBs;
- Sandhills Region: Lumber River, Cumberland County, and Triangle South WDBs;
- Northeast Region: Region Q, Northeastern, and Turning Point WDBs; and
- Southeast Region: Eastern Carolina and Cape Fear WDBs.

B. DESCRIBE THE PROCESS USED FOR DESIGNATING LOCAL AREAS, INCLUDING PROCEDURES FOR DETERMINING WHETHER THE LOCAL AREA MET THE CRITERIA FOR "PERFORMED SUCCESSFULLY" AND "SUSTAINED FISCAL INTEGRITY" IN ACCORDANCE WITH 106(B)(2) AND (3) OF WIOA. DESCRIBE THE PROCESS USED

FOR IDENTIFYING REGIONS AND PLANNING REGIONS UNDER SECTION 106(A) OF WIOA. THIS MUST INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE STATE CONSULTED WITH THE LOCAL BOARDS AND CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIALS IN IDENTIFYING THE REGIONS.

The process for the initial designation of local workforce development areas in North Carolina originates from a letter of request to the Governor from the local Chief Elected Official of each potential workforce development area. The letter of request must contain the official local area name as well as the county(ies) that comprise the area. Upon receipt of the request by the Governor and review, it will be determined if the local area meets the criteria for performed successfully and sustained fiscal integrity.

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.

North Carolina's workforce system includes businesses, organizations, agencies, employed and unemployed persons, training and educational institutions, adults and youth. To enhance service to all these constituents, aligning workforce development planning and services with regional labor markets is both efficient and productive. Communities and regions recognize that to have successful economic development it must go hand-in-hand with a well-functioning workforce development system. North Carolina has built on several years of emphasizing the value of regional efforts and worked with local workforce development boards and local elected officials to establish and enhance identification of appropriate regions and the working relationships that have been developed.

In Program Year 2014, the State determined regional configurations based on regional geography, existing workforce board structure, and labor market areas. The regional designations were discussed with local workforce board staff on numerous occasions during Program Year 2014. Each Local Workforce Development Area submitted Local Area' Regional Plans using these designations. Each Plan was submitted with the approval of its Chief Elected Officials and followed the process established for public comment. These designated regional configurations continue to be used and reflect compatibility with the North Carolina Jobs Plan, issued December 2013 that contains recommended strategies for economic growth during the years 2014 - 2024.

The designated regional framework enables Local Areas to better:

• Promote effective and efficient use of resources;

• Align with North Carolina's regional economic development efforts;

• Identify the workforce needs of businesses, job seekers and workers, current and projected employment opportunities and job skills necessary to obtain employment;

• Address the workforce issues of businesses and individuals on a labor market basis;

• Detail coordination with community colleges and universities;

• Provide a customer-focused coordinated approach to delivery of training, employment services and economic development; and

• Articulate a consistent and defined regional approach to workforce development.

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

At the conclusion of the initial two year designation, North Carolina will conduct an official subsequent designation process per Section 106(b)(3) of WIOA. At that time, should a requesting area not be granted designation, the state's appeal process will be followed. North Carolina's process is under development and will follow the WIOA and relevant regulations.

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

North Carolina's appeal process related to determinations of infrastructure funding is under development and will follow WIOA and relevant regulations.

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.

North Carolina uses statewide funds to develop and fund innovative and dynamic initiatives that pilot new service delivery strategies and target specific populations throughout the state. These initiatives are aligned with the mission and direction of WIOA by assisting job seekers, especially job seekers with barriers to employment, with access to employment, education, training, and support services they need to succeed in the labor market while also matching employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. All guidance related to the usage of WIOA Title I funding is posted on the Division of Workforce Solutions' website.

Policy Statements

Policy Statements are used to transmit policy and operational guidance. Policy Statements are indexed and available on the Division's website. Policy Statements are issued through the Assistant Secretary by calendar year with consecutive numbers assigned and posted by Planning and Policy Development.

Voluntary Transfer of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Funds To transmit procedures for voluntary transfers of WIOA funds between Local Workforce Development Areas and to rescind DWS Policy Statement, Number 07-2015. Revised in Number: PS 09-2016 Date: 6/27/2016

Funds Transfer Between Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act To issue the requirements for the transfer of local Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) formula funds between Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs and to rescind DWS Policy Statement Number: PS 06-2015 Policy Statement Number 10-2016 Date: October 26, 2016

NCWorks Mobile Career Center No Cost usage Agreement and Fee-for-Use Schedule To provide guidance on the NCWorks Mobile Career Center's expanded no cost usage agreement and update fee-for-use schedule. To rescind DWS PS 09-2015 "Mobile Unit's

expanded no cost usage agreement and updated fee-for-use schedule. " Policy Statement Number 11-2016 Date: October 26, 2016

Revised Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Participant Transportation Policy To transmit the changes in the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Participant Transportation, Job Search Allowance, and Relocation Allowance Reimbursement. Policy Statement Number 12-2016 Date: November 21, 2016

Requirement for Local Workforce Development Boards to Meet or Exceed All Federal Performance Measures To inform local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) of the requirement that Boards must meet or exceed all of the individual Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker federal performance measures. Policy Statement Number 01-2017 Date: January 17, 2017

Guidance on Eligibility for Participation in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title 1 Dislocated Worker Program To provide guidance on eligibility for participation in the WIOA Title 1 Dislocated Worker Program Policy Statement Number 02-2017 Date: January 18, 2017

Priority of Service for Veterans and Eligible Spouses is all U.S. Department of Labor Job Training Programs To emphasize to staff of local Workforce Development Boards, Division of Workforce Solutions Offices, and NCWorks Career Centers provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Final Rule for Priority in all federally-funded training and employment programs as prescribed in the Jobs for Veterans Act, and to provide instruction on the implementation of the provisions. To rescind DWS Policy Statement Number PS 12-2014. Policy Statement Number 03-2017 Date: January 17, 2017

Maximize Carolina Sector Grants for Workforce Pipeline Related Projects The North Carolina Department of Commerce, Division of Workforce Solutions announces the Maximize Carolina Grant for business-led Partnerships to develop and implement projects in targeted sectors designed to solve applicant pipeline problems related to skills gaps or workforce shortages. The grant is also intended to support or implement sector partnerships within regions and possibly be integrated with local career pathways. Policy Statement Number 04-2017 Date: February 7, 2017

Updates to Local and Regional Area Plan Instructions To transmit updates to the Division's Program Years 2017-2018 Local and Regional Area Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title 1 Plan Instructions. Policy Statement Number 05-2017 Date March 29, 2017

WIOA Youth Formula Funds Expenditure Requirements To inform local Workforce Development Boards of the requirement that Boards must meet the mandated 20% Work Experience expenditure rate for local Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I Youth formula funds and the percentage of Youth formula funds used to serve out-of-school youth must be at least 75 percent. Policy Statement Number 06-2017 Date: March 29, 2017

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Service Delivery Innovation Grant Guidelines To transmit guidelines for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Service Delivery Innovation Grant Guidelines. Policy Statement Number 07-2017 Date April 3, 2017

Electronic File Storage and Protecting Personally Identifiable Information To provide guidance on the use of electronic file storage, protecting Personally Identifiable Information (PII) and retrieval of workforce and other federal funds' participant, program and financial documents; and to rescind Policy Statement No. 09-2013. Policy Statement Number 08-2017

Guidance on the Provision of WIOA Work Experience Opportunities To provide local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) with guidance regarding the use, documentation, and tracking of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds in the provision of Work Experience (WEX) opportunities for youth, adult, and dislocated worker participants. Policy Statement Number 09-2017 Date: April 19, 2017

Guidance on the Provision of WIOA Work Experience Opportunities To provide local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) with additional information and clarification on guidance regarding the use, documentation, and tracking of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I funds in the provision of Work Experience (WEX) opportunities for youth, adult, and dislocated worker participants and rescind Policy Statement 09-2017 Policy Statement Number 10-2017 Date: May 9, 2017

Conflict of Interest To provide additional guidance for Policy Statement 22-2015, Procurement and Contracting. This information includes possible scenarios and exceptions from North Carolina General Statue (NCGS) 14-234. Policy Statement Number 11-2017 Date: May 17, 2017

2017 Lower Living Standard Income Level and to Rescind DWS Policy Statement Number 05-2016 To transmit the income chart identifying the higher of the "Federal Poverty Level Income Guidelines" and the "70% Lower Living Standard Income Level Guidelines" and rescind DWS Policy Statement Number 05-2016 Policy Statement Number 12-2017 Date: May 23, 2017

Local WIOA Workforce Development Program Year 2017 Allocations To transmit Local WIOA Workforce Development Program Year 2017 Allocations Policy Statement Number 15-2017 Date June 15, 2017

Maximize Carolina Sector Grant To update the North Carolina Department of Commerce, Division of Workforce Solutions Maximize Carolina Grants Guidelines and rescind Policy Statement number PS 04-2017. Maximize Carolina Sector Grants are to assist local Partnerships in the development and implementation of projects in targeted sectors designed to solve applicant pipeline problems related to skills gaps or workforce shortages. The grants are also intended to support or implement sector partnerships within regions and potentially be integrated with local career pathways. Policy Statement Number 04-2017, Change 1

Requesting Dislocated Worker Contingency Funds Available from NC's WIOA Statewide Rapid Response Allotment To transmit policy and requirements for requesting Dislocated Worker Contingency Funds and rescind Policy Statement 06-2016. Policy Statement Number 06-2016, Change 1 Date August 8, 2017

WIOA Program Enhancement Grant Application To transmit guidelines for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Program Enhancement Grant Application. The Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS) has developed a systematic approach to reviewing

and approving Local Workforce Development Board requests for funding to support enhanced WIOA services. Policy Statement Number 16-2017 Date: September 28, 2017

Guidance for Local Incumbent Worker Training Policies To provide Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) guidelines, according to WIOA Section 134(d)(4), to Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) choosing to use up to 20 percent of the combined Adult and Dislocated Worker allocated formula program funds to serve Incumbent Workers (IWs). Policy Statement Number 17-2017 Date: November 20, 2017

Conflict of Interest Requirements for Workforce Development Boards and Staff To inform local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) of the requirement to develop a Conflict of Interest Policy and provide a policy template. To rescind PS 11-2017. Policy Statement Number18-2017 Date: November 21, 2017

Requirement for Local Workforce Development Boards to Use Competitive Selection Processes to Procure Training Providers and One-Stop Operators To inform local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) of the requirement that they must use a competitive procurement process to select providers of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult, Youth, and Dislocated Worker services, as well as, for the operator of a local certified NCWorks Career Center using the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Final Regulations. To provide instructions for a waiver in the case of a failed procurement process. To rescind PS 08-2016. Policy Statement Number 19-2017 Date: November 21, 2017

Financial Management Policy for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I To transmit the current Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS) Financial Management policies updated to reflect Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Uniform Guidance. To rescind PS 19-2015. Policy Statement Number 20-2017 Date: November 21, 2017

Procurement and Contracting Policy To provide local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) and other sub recipients minimum standards and procedures designed to ensure the proper procurement of and contracting for services. To rescind PS 22-2015 Policy Statement 21-2017 Date: November 21, 2017

WIOA Program Enhancement Planning Grant Application To transmit guidelines for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Program Enhancement Planning Grant Application that allows Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) to apply for grant funds for the planning and development of WIOA Program Enhancement Grant Applications to support enhanced WIOA services. Policy Statement Number 22-2017 Date: December 7, 2017

Employer Accounts and Job Order Policy To provide guidance regarding the Division of Workforce Solutions' Employer Accounts and Job Order Policy and to rescind PS 03-2014. Number: PS 02-2016 Date: 1/26/2016

Consumer Choice in Selecting Training Providers To ensure that Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) consumers are positioned to make informed choices relative to training opportunities available through the eligible WIOA provider list which maintains the integrity of the WIOA system. To support a workforce system that is readily understood, accessible, and responsive to local and regional workers, job seekers, students and

businesses. To ensure customers receive information on the full array of services from public and private sources. Number: PS 21-2015 Date: 10/23/2015

Refocused Roles and Responsibilities of Jobs for Veterans State Grant Staff To inform Workforce Development Boards (WDBs), Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS) staff, NCWorks Career Center staff and workforce partners' staff of the federally required "Refocused Roles and Responsibilities of Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) Staff (Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist and Local Veterans Employment Representative)." The policy conveys duties staff are to perform and discusses the relationship of services provided by staff within the larger workforce system. Reference Bulletin: JVSG Staff Roles & Responsibilities Bulletin Number: PS 20-2015 Date: 10/23/2015

Incident Reporting Process To transmit state policy, procedures, and guidance for reporting alleged or suspected program fraud or abuse of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) resources to the N.C. Division of Workforce Solutions and to rescind Local Area Issuance No. 2009-05. Number: PS 15-2015 Date: 8/14/2015

Non-Criminal Program Complaints To provide local Workforce Development Boards and other Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) subrecipients the minimum standards and procedures for processing non-criminal program complaints and to rescind Local Area Issuance No. 2009-06. Number: PS 14-2015 Date: 8/14/2015

Sector Partnership Grants for NCWorks Certified Career Pathways serving Dislocated Workers To transmit guidelines allowing local Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) to apply for Sector Partnership National Emergency Grant (SPNEG) funds for creation, development and implementation of NCWorks Certified Career Pathways as they relate to dislocated workers as defined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Section 3. Number: PS 13-2015 Date: 8/10/2015

Definition of WIOA's "Requires Additional Assistance" for Youth Eligibility To provide North Carolina's definition for "requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to serve and hold employment" as it relates to eligibility for youth at Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Sections 129 (1)(B)(iii)(VIII) and (1)(C)(iv)(VII) and to rescind Local Area Issuance 2009-18. Number: PS 11-2015 Date: 7/27/2015

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Funds and Pell Grants To provide information on the use of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) resources when combined with Pell Grants and to rescind DWS Policy Statement Number: 18-2013. Number: PS 08-2015 Date: 7/13/2015

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Nondiscrimination/Equal Opportunity Standards and Complaint Procedures To provide Local Workforce Development Areas and other subrecipients minimum standards and procedures designed to ensure that all WIOA programs will be conducted in accordance with applicable equal opportunity and nondiscrimination requirements. This Policy Statement provides current contact information and rescinds DWS Policy Statement Number PS 08-2014. Number: PS 05-2015 Date: 7/8/2015

On-the-Job Training (OJT) Using Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Funds To establish and communicate the policy requirements and forms for conducting On-the-

Job Training (OJT) activities in North Carolina and to rescind DWS Policy Statement 13-2013. Number: PS 04-2015 Date: 7/8/2015

Refocused Roles and Responsibilities of Jobs for Veterans State Grant Staff To inform Workforce Development Boards (WDBs), Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS) Workforce Centers and workforce partners staff of the federally required "Refocused Roles and Responsibilities of Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) Staff (Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist and Local Veterans Employment Representative)." The policy conveys duties staff are to perform and discusses the relationship of services provided by staff within the larger workforce system. Reference Bulletin: New Roles and Responsibilities Number: PS 07-2014 Date: 7/11/2014

NCWorks Online Service Activity Codes and Definitions; Guidance on Case Notes and Exit Dates To provide NCWorks Online Participant Service Activity Codes and Definitions, guidance on Case Notes and NCWorks Online Exit Dates. Number: PS 06-2014 Date: 6/3/2014

NC Division of Workforce Solutions Process for Distribution of Policy and Administrative Information To establish an official method of issuing and disseminating the Division of Workforce Solutions' procedural, administrative, management and program directions to Division staff, local Workforce Development Areas and other interested parties. Number: PS 01-2013 Date: 2/25/2013

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

North Carolina will use state set aside funding to support the key goals and strategies laid out in NCWorks Commission's strategic plan and this WIOA State Unified Plan.

Sector strategies and business engagement.

Funds will be available to help develop and support public—private partnership, increase number of apprenticeship programs, and cross—training of staff across programs.

Career pathways.

Funds will be used to continue to support development of NCWorks Certified Career Pathways through training, materials, and coaching local teams. Funds will also be available to support the development of a Career Information Portal that can be used by all North Carolinians.

Career center improvements.

Funds will be used to update and improve outreach materials, technology upgrades, and staff training.

Performance funds.

Incentive funding will be available to local workforce development boards that exceed state performance measures.

Upon receipt of any information as it pertains to a mass layoff or facility closure to include notices filed in compliance to WARN, the state Rapid Response Dislocated Worker Unit makes an initial telephone contact to the employer within 48 hours to schedule a management meeting with the employer and Chief Union Official, if applicable. The purpose of the management meeting is to develop a plan of action to ensure that workers have a smooth and successful transition into new employment through a collaborative effort of support from state, regional and local partners. Rapid Response funds are utilized at the state level. Rapid Response contingency funds are available to Workforce Development Boards to assist with a dislocation when local formula funds have been expended or obligated. The Rapid Response Dislocated Worker Unit can help prevent or avert a layoff by providing a company with an Incumbent Worker Training Grant.

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.

In the event of a natural disaster, the state Rapid Response Dislocated Worker Unit coordinates with USDOL Employment and Training Administration, Federal Emergency Management Agency, NC Public Safety Emergency Management Division and American Red Cross to ensure available resources are provided to dislocated workers and survivors of a natural disaster. The Unit can file a National Dislocated Worker Grant as well as provide guidance and/or financial assistance to help impacted communities in organizing support for dislocated workers and meeting the basic needs of their families. Such assistance may include providing heat, shelter, food, clothing and other necessities and services. The Unit coordinates with partner agencies to dispatch the mobile career classroom to assist survivors in locating missing family members or file a claim for Disaster Unemployment Assistance.

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

The state Rapid Response Dislocated Worker Unit works closely with the state's Trade Adjustment Assistance Unit, which keeps staff apprised of new TAA petitions filed. Information on how to file a petition for TAA is provided to all companies faced with either a mass layoff or facility closure and is part of the employer packet provided to the management team at the initial rapid response meeting. If the company is impacted due to foreign competition or discloses their plans to shift production to another country, then

information on the Trade Program is shared. If the company is already certified or becomes certified for TAA while workers are still employed, then Trade orientation sessions are facilitated on-site so workers will understand the expanded benefits the Trade Program offers.

Information about Trade Act Programs is disseminated to impacted individuals in several ways. A press release is provided to the Department of Commerce Public Information Officer, which is then distributed to the appropriate media market. When a Trade petition is certified while employees are/have been released from employment, Division staff contact the trade affected employer and ask them to provide a list with contact information of their incumbent and dislocated workers. These workers are mailed a letter that outlines the types of benefits available and advises them of potential eligibility, and they are instructed to contact their local NCWorks Career Center to complete the required application. This letter include NCWorks Career Center locations and phone numbers.

Workers are frequently co-enrolled into WIOA to receive timely and individualized career services as well as the wrap around supportive services not offered through the Trade Program.

B. ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

1. WORK-BASED TRAINING MODELS

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.

The Division of Workforce Solutions encourages local workforce development boards to utilize formula funding to fund Local Incumbent Worker training programs. Local Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) is designed to meet the special requirements of an employer (including a group of employers) to retain a skilled workforce or avert the need to lay off employees by assisting the workers in obtaining the skills necessary to retain employment.

Local Workforce Board staff guide candidate businesses in the application process, ensuring that quality training is selected to address the employees' identified skills gaps, and fits within the WIOA parameters. The application process includes validation of the trainer and asks the company to describe how the requested training will address the identified skills gaps, improve employee retention, impact company stability, and increase the competitiveness of the employee and employer.

2. REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

Describe how the State will incorporate Registered Apprenticeship into its strategy for service design and delivery (e.g., job center staff taking applications and conducting assessments).

North Carolina is working closely with NCWorks Career Centers to develop pre-apprenticeships for local employers. The career centers will be assisting with conducting

assessments, providing referrals and screening potential apprentices for pre-apprenticeship. The pre-apprenticeship will provide pre-employment training as determined by the employer so that a talent pipeline of workers is created for employers to choose from. Those that successfully complete their pre-apprenticeship will go on to a registered apprenticeship. WIOA funds will be used for those eligible to assist with training needs for the apprentice.

North Carolina is also utilizing public/private partnerships to grow its apprenticeship programs, focusing on youth apprenticeship with sector strategies. Several of these partnerships are growing apprenticeships in advanced manufacturing; specifically, tool and die, machining and mechatronics. Another sector strategy is in the area of IT apprenticeships. There are approximately 10,000 unfilled IT jobs in the state and there are public/private partnerships working to form a solid and sustainable apprenticeship program.

Additionally, because the US Military is the second largest employer in the state, Ft. Bragg has an approved Registered Apprenticeship program to register soldiers in 72 apprentice occupations. Camp Lejeune has a pipe fitting/welder Apprenticeship program that enables soldiers to receive training and at successful completion will receive credentials upon transitioning out of the service. We are looking at connecting more employers to those transitioning out of the service so that more can not only receive nationally recognized credentials but have possible direct entry into employment as they exit the military.

ApprenticeshipNC is also working with several large electrical, plumbing, carpentry and masonry companies to recruit youth into these technical trade skilled careers where there are massive shortages of trained workers.

Additionally, our apprenticeship staff is being integrated into our Business Services teams, NCWorks Career Centers and Community Colleges in order to collaborate and work as an Integrated Service Delivery Team that holistically serves all of the needs of our businesses.

3. TRAINING PROVIDER ELIGIBILITY PROCEDURE

Provide the procedure, eligibility criteria, and information requirements for determining training provider initial and continued eligibility, including Registered Apprenticeship programs (WIOA Section 122).

The NCWorks Online system allows the individual providers the ability to login and apply to be considered to be on the Eligible Training Provider List to receive referrals of Title 1 eligible customers. Once they have completed their application, the Workforce Development Board that is closest to the primary location will review the application and take the necessary steps to determine if this provider is one that should be on the state list of approved providers. Once a provider is approved, they must then key in all the programs they offer that will again have to be reviewed and approved by a local WDB. Once a provider has been approved for WIOA training, every WDB in the state has the option to certify that this provider can be available in their area. With the two year review process, they would have to be approved again based on current standards.

The following types of training providers are subject to the ETPL requirements in order to receive WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker funds to provide training services to

eligible adult and dislocated worker individuals through ITAs. ITAs may also be used for WIOA Title I Youth funds to provide training to older, out-of-school youth (ages 18-24):

o institutions of higher education that provide a program of training that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential;

o apprenticeship programs registered by the USDOL Office of Registered Apprenticeship; State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA), and ApprenticeshipNC;

o public or private training providers, including joint labor-management organizations, pre-apprenticeship programs, and occupational/technical training; and

o providers of adult education and literacy activities provided in combination with occupational skills training.

Initial Eligibility and Application Process

Training providers that were not eligible providers under WIA may submit an application through the website for initial program eligibility. Training providers may apply for initial program eligibility on a rolling basis throughout the year.

All applications for the ETPL will be completed online. Training providers can apply for a program's inclusion on the ETPL in one or more local workforce areas with a single application. The specific local areas that are covered must be marked on the application, and performance data for all local areas must be provided.

The first step in the online application process for training providers will verify that the training provider is licensed, certified, or authorized by the relevant state agency with oversight, to operate training programs in North Carolina. If a provider is in compliance with the oversight agency, the provider can proceed to the next step in the application process. If a program is not in compliance with the oversight agency as required by state law, the provider will not be able to apply for inclusion on the ETPL until they meet the necessary requirements. This applies to in-state and out-of-state training providers with training programs.

Next, training providers applying for initial program eligibility must provide the following through the online application:

o description of each program of training services to be offered;

o information on cost of attendance, including costs of tuition and fees;

o which in-demand industry sectors and occupations best fit with the training program; and

o description of the prerequisites or skills and knowledge required prior to the commencement of training.

Once the online application is submitted and the state has determined that the required information has been provided, each local workforce area will be notified to approve, deny, or request further information on the program within 30 days of the receipt of a complete application. Local Workforce Boards may require supplemental information and may set additional eligibility criteria in local policy. If the Local Workforce Board has taken no action on a complete application after 30 days, the application will be automatically approved.

Registered apprenticeship programs are not subject to the eligibility criteria or application requirements. While registered apprenticeship programs are automatically eligible, not all registered apprenticeship sponsors may wish to be included on the list. Registered apprenticeship programs will automatically be included on the State list until they lose their registration or they indicate they do not wish to be included.

Additional Eligibility Criteria for Local Areas

The Local Workforce Boards may establish additional criteria for program eligibility within a local area through local policy. This may include setting minimum required levels of performance as criteria for training providers to become or remain eligible to provide services in that particular local area. Training providers should be aware that programs may be approved for some local areas and denied for others based on local criteria, and the approved local areas for each training provider will be listed as part of the ETPL.

Continued Eligibility

After the initial eligibility period of one full fiscal year, training providers must submit online applications through the website for continued program eligibility every two years. Applications for continued eligibility must show the training program is still authorized by the appropriate oversight agency to operate and must include the following (in addition to updating the information provided for initial eligibility):

o total number of participants enrolled in the program;

o total number of participants completing the program;

o total number of participants exiting the program;

o information on recognized post-secondary credentials received by program participants; and

o information on the program completion rate for such participants.

The NCWorks Commission, the state's Workforce Investment Board, will use training provider performance data gathered in Program Year 2016 to establish a baseline for performance benchmarks for the continued eligibility for providers. Training providers that fall below the required performance thresholds will be removed from the Eligible Training Provider 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 FUNDED BY THE ADULT FORMULA PROGRAM.

The State has a process in place to ensure Adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of career and training services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients or basic skills deficient. In addition, the State requires that Workforce Development Boards describe in their annual plan a description of their priority of services

processes, including any related policies, to meet priority of service requirements for Adult Training Services.

Efforts to ensure that special populations receive much needed services are addressed through North Carolina's integrated services delivery (ISD) approach. As part of ISD, resource staff is assigned to each career center. These staff are knowledgeable of specific program(s) and work to provide services and resources such as transportation, food, housing, and training opportunities.

The State's Field Services Teams continuously monitor special population priority, for compliance, using North Carolina's management information system (MIS), NCWorks Online, along with face—to—face interviews, using a comprehensive monitoring tool.

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

The State has implemented policy for the transfer of local WIOA funds between the Adult and Dislocated Worker funding streams. The policy establishes procedures to manage transfers and to facilitate accurate reporting to the U.S. Department of Labor. The policy dictates that while 100% transfer is allowable, local workforce development areas are reminded that appropriate services to both dislocated workers and adult customers are required. Local areas are to include rationale for requesting transfer and explanation of how services to adults and dislocated workers will be maintained, along with meeting priority of service requirements. 100% transferability gives local workforce areas:

o more flexibility to move funds where they are most needed and can provide the greatest benefit;

o ability to better respond to ongoing changes within local areas;

o increased local control over program design and delivery;

o enhanced collaboration between industry needs and worker training;

o more ability to leverage non-WIOA resources; and

o better control in the implementation of WIOA programs and services to best to meet both employer and participant need.

The State will establish criteria, issued through a North Carolina Division of Workforce Solutions Policy Statement, for determining when transfer of funds is necessary. Local Areas must submit requests via the State's online Workforce Investment ISE system. Once the request has been received by the State, it will be reviewed within 5 business days to determine approval or denial of request. All requests must include the following:

• Reason for transfer request, including current service level information,

• Listing of other Local Area funding availability to serve A/DW population (i.e., NDWG, other Federal or State funding, other Special Grant funding).

• Statement that participants served with transferred funds will be subject to performance outcomes of new funding source.

• Statement that all funds transfers are subject to priority of service requirements.

Upon review, Local Areas will receive written notification.

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 OR CONTRACTS 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 OR CONTRACTS.*

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

(1) Criteria for Awarding Grants

The NCWorks Commission supports cost—efficient, collaborative efforts that result in comprehensive and innovative services that lead youth to academic improvement, high school graduation or High School Equivalency attainment, employment, military services, advanced or apprenticeship training, paid and unpaid internships, and/or post—secondary education.

Local programs must link academic and occupational learning and develop measures of successful outcomes. Effective programs require the involvement of local groups providing input on the proposed program design, and coordinating the delivery of the youth services with local employers, NCWorks Career Centers and other youth services already available in the community. Local programs have the discretion to determine what specific program services will be provided to a youth participant, based on each participant's objective assessment and individual service strategy. Critical to the success is integrating a youth development strategy that focuses on a young person's assets, provides a variety of interventions and supports allowing the youth to grow, learn and mature—successfully transitioning to careers and productive adulthood. Youth development activities include leadership development opportunities that encourage responsibility, employability, and other positive social behaviors. It is expected that each youth will participate in more than one of the fourteen program elements required as part of any local youth program. The overall goal of the youth program is to help youth complete a high school diploma or equivalent and to prepare for a career pathway that will transition into skilled employment and/or postsecondary education.

Youth program outcomes should prepare youth for post—secondary educational opportunities, provide better linkages between academic and occupational learning, prepare youth for employment; and offer effective connections to intermediary organizations that provide strong links to the job market and employers. All youth must receive some form of follow—up services for a minimum period of 12 months, following the completion of participation in the program.

Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB) will follow the procurement procedures set forth in their own local plan as established by each local area to ensure proper competition and transparency. Procurement of WIOA funded Youth Services requires the selection of

youth providers through a competitive selection process. Each LWDB, with recommendations from its designated youth committee and in accordance with criteria outlined in the local WIOA Strategic Plan, is afforded the opportunity to identify providers of youth services that effectively address the needs of local youth.

Local Youth Committees who serve as a sub—committee to the board play a significant role in developing programs and services for youth. Their responsibilities include developing portions of the local plan related to eligible youth and making recommendations to the local workforce board regarding youth service providers. As part of their local plan, each local area will develop written criteria to identify effective youth activities and providers. The local boards will fund youth providers based on performance and program cost data provided by potential providers and based on criteria that may include those youth activities and providers that:

- Develop relationships between youth and caring adults
- Involve family members
- Build youth responsibility
- Develop youth citizenship and leadership skills
- Place high expectations on youth and staff
- Provide appropriate services based on age and needs of each youth
- Demonstrate involvement of the business/employer community
- Provide accessible facilities and provide accommodations for special needs </li
- populations, including individuals with disabilities
- Demonstrate prior successes in providing employment and training services to youth
- Prepare youth for success in employment
- Advocate for the youth perspective
- Demonstrate the connection between work and learning
- Provide comprehensive guidance and counseling

The criteria to solicit competitive proposals for the operation of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) Title I, Public Law 113—128, will ensure that Youth Programs are competitively procured and solicited for comprehensive year—round Youth Programs for out—of—school youth between the ages 16—24, and in—school youth between the ages of 14 and 21. Local Areas' youth program design must offer a unique opportunity to provide creative and innovative mix of services designed to address the academic, vocational, and employment needs of at—risk youth.

Targeted activities include:

1. Tutoring, study skills training, instruction, and evidence—based dropout prevention and recovery strategies that lead to completion of the requirements for a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent (including a recognized certificate of attendance or similar document for individuals with disabilities) or for a recognized postsecondary credential;

2. Alternative secondary school services, or dropout recovery services, as appropriate;

3. Paid and unpaid work experiences that have as a component, academic and occupational education, which may include: a. summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year; b. pre—apprenticeship programs; c. internships and job shadowing; and d. on—the—job training opportunities;

4. Occupational skill training, which shall include priority consideration for training programs that lead to recognized postsecondary credentials that are aligned with in demand industry sectors or occupations in the local area involved, if the local board determines that the programs meet the quality criteria described in section 123;

5. Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster; </L.

6. Leadership development opportunities, which may include community service and peer—centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social and civic behaviors, as appropriate;

7. Supportive services;

8. Adult mentoring for the period of participation and a subsequent period, for a total of not less than 12 months;

9. Follow—up services for not less than 12 months after the completion of participation, as appropriate;

10. Comprehensive guidance and counseling, which may include drug and alcohol abuse counseling and referral, as appropriate;

11. Financial literacy education;

12. Entrepreneurial skills training;

13. Services that provide labor market and employment information about in—demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services; and

14. Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training.

Local Boards must follow a procurement process that ensures compliance with the prescribed rules and regulations. At a minimum, the procurement process must ensure:

- solicitation methods that promote fair and open competition;
- written code of conduct that includes specific conflict of interest provisions to ensure that those who develop or issue a proposal are separate and distinct from those who are involved in the selection process;
- clear and accurate description of the services being procured; and
- specific contract time frame with the option to extend the contract for a specified period based on a provider's compliance with the terms of the contract.

In addition, each LWDB must use the following criteria in awarding contracts for youth services:

- the extent to which the organization specifically focuses on serving at-risk youth, including youth who are at risk of school dropout or at risk of school displacement due to suspension or expulsion;
- whether the organization leverages community-based resources, including partnerships with organizations that provide mentoring services and private-sector employment involvement;
- the use of an evidenced-based program model by the organization with a proven track record of success;
- the inclusion of rigorous, quantitative performance measures by the organization to confirm effectiveness of the program;
- the deployment of comprehensive support services to youth, including addressing behavioral issues, emphasizing academic and career growth, and enhancing parent and family engagement.

WIOA has established core performance indicators (See Table 1 on Next Page) to ensure that Federal investments in employment and training programs are accountable to job seekers, employers, customers, and taxpayers. There is a renewed system which will ensure access for all individuals, of every skill level, the opportunity to pursue the skills, training, and education they need to obtain employment that will lead to financial stability and economic security for themselves and their families. Employers will also have the assurance that trained and qualified workers will be available to fill their current and future openings.

State WIOA Performance Indicators		
Category	**Measure**	**Description**
Adults/ Dislocated Workers	**Entered Employment Rate**	The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidizec employment during the 2nd quarter after exit.
	Employment Retention Rate	The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidizec employment during the 4th quarter after exit.
	Median Earnings	The median earnings of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the 2nd quarter after e
	Credential Rate	The percentage of participants who obtain a recognize postsecondary credential, or a secondary school diplon or its recognized equivalent, during participation or wi 1 year after exit.
	Measureable Skills Gain	The percentage of participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads a recognized postsecondary credential or employment who are achieving measureable skill gains toward such credential or employment.
Youth	**Placement in Employment /Education/Training**	The percentage of participants who are in education or training services, or in unsubsidized employment durir the 2nd quarter after exit.
	Retention in Employment/ Education/Training	The percentage of participants who are in education or training services, or in unsubsidized employment durir the 4th quarter after exit.
	Earnings	The median earnings of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the 2nd quarter after e
	Credential Rate	The percentage of participants who obtain a recognize postsecondary credential, or a secondary school diplon or its recognized equivalent, during participation or wi 1 year after exit.
	In-Program Skills Gain	The percentage of participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads a recognized postsecondary credential or employment who are achieving measureable skill gains toward such credential or employment.
Employers	**Indicators of effectiveness**	To Be Determined

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, ANY COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN, REQUIRED AND OPTIONAL ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS, AND ANY OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE.

Through administrative oversight and monitoring of the 23 local Workforce Development Boards, the state ensures local area program design incorporates the availability of all Youth Program elements. The state has all 23 local Workforce Development Boards identify through Local and Regional Plan questions how the Program Elements will be made available. Once identified, as a required strategy of the individual's service strategy, whether it is by WIOA formula funds and/or through partnership, Local Workforce Development Boards must also identify the partnerships providing the service. Local areas may use WIOA youth funds to carry out the fourteen program elements either directly, in partnership, or by referral, that will assist youth in improving their educational attainment and employment opportunities.

Along with Core Partners and a variety of interested stakeholders, North Carolina plans a more cohesive partnership with the school systems' Career & Technical Education Departments, the university and community college systems & enhance involvement with employers to address/provide employment opportunities. It is strongly encouraged that local WIOA youth program operators have a presence within the NCWorks Career Centers as they house various partners (i.e., Vocational Rehabilitation, local Departments of Social Services, Community Colleges, and many others to include community based organizations.) These partners may prove beneficial in addressing persons with identified and unidentified disabilities, high school equivalency credentials, leadership development and supportive service needs.

Career Pathways for youth will be of importance in regards to occupational skills training. North Carolina will provide training through Career Pathways and Work Based Learning opportunities so that staff/partners/schools have a clear understanding of these elements and how they apply to youth. North Carolina will provide resources/training on how to assist youth to become career ready.

The State intends to achieve improved outcomes for Out of School Youth by implementing an increased focus in monitoring service and performance levels, and providing technical assistance to Local Workforce Development Areas. The State will increase participation in regular meetings with local area staff, youth leads, and service providers to offer guidance, technical assistance, and present best practices on topics which include outreach, at-risk youth, and disconnected youth, predicated on evidenced based research.

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, INCLUDING QUALITY PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS UNDER THE WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAM ELEMENT.*

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

In their comprehensive plan, each workforce development board is required to provide a detailed description of how each of the required fourteen program elements will be made available to youth. Each local plan identifies how these services will be administered either through referral or through WIOA resources. Boards are required to establish policies and procedures for the delivery of these elements in their respective local areas.

The State's field services teams monitor local area implementation practices, on a quarterly basis, utilizing North Carolina's management information system, NCWorks Online, in addition to using face—to—face interviews using a comprehensive monitoring tool, to ensure programs are available to eligible youth.

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). IF THE STATE DOES NOT HAVE A POLICY, DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THAT LOCAL AREAS WILL HAVE A POLICY FOR THESE CRITERIA.

North Carolina Local Workforce Development Boards are to use the following definitions when determining youth eligibility. In North Carolina, "requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment" is defined as all youth, including youth with a disability, who meet the criteria in either 1 or 2 below:

- In— School Youth and has:

  poor attendance patterns in an educational program during the last 12 calendar months; or

  been expelled from school within the last 12 calendar months; or

  been suspended from school at least within the last 12 calendar months; or

  below average grades; or

  previously been placed in out—of—home care (foster care, group home, or kinship care) for more than 6 months between the ages of 14—21; or

  a currently incarcerated parent(s)/guardian.

- Out—of—School Youth and has:

  dropped out of a post—secondary educational program during the past 12 calendar months; or

Has a poor work history, to include no work history, or has been fired from a job in the last 6 calendar months; or

previously been placed in out—of—home care (foster care, group home, or kinship care) for more than 6 months between the ages of 16—21; or

currently incarcerated parent(s)/guardian.

Furthermore, North Carolina understands and provides guidance that in each local area, not more than 5% of the In—school Youth assisted may be made eligible using WIOA Section 129(a)(1)(C)(iv)(VII) as follows: (VII) An individual who requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment.

The 5% "Limitation" is calculated based on all In—School Youth served in the WIOA local youth program in a given Program Year. For example, if you serve a total of 40 In—School Youth, only 2 may be eligible using clause (VII) "requires additional assistance" (40 x .05 = 2).

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 AND PROVIDE THE STATE POLICY FOR DETERMINING WHETHER A YOUTH IS ATTENDING OR NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL.

North Carolina has the following law for attending school:

§ 115C 378. Children required to attend. Every parent, guardian or other person in this State having charge or control of a child between the ages of seven and 16 years shall cause such child to attend school continuously for a period equal to the time which the public school to which the child is assigned shall be in session. Every parent, guardian, or other person in this State having charge or control of a child under age seven who is enrolled in a public school in grades kindergarten through two shall also cause such child to attend school continuously for a period equal to the time which the public school to which the child is assigned shall be in session unless the child has withdrawn from school.

In North Carolina, schools also include home schooling, charter schools, alternative schools and private schools.

While the definitions above address secondary school attendance policies, North Carolina continues to focus its expanded scope beyond secondary education. As it relates to the definitions of WIOA Youth Attending and Not Attending School, North Carolina does consider attending school to be beyond and in addition to the scope of secondary education. Therefore, individuals enrolled in or attending colleges, universities (private or public), or other credential or degree skills training programs are to be considered Youth Attending school or In—School Youth for WIOA purposes except as where mentioned otherwise by WIOA.

However, North Carolina will following the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking clause, 681.230, for purposes of WIOA, the Department does not consider providers of Adult Education under title II of WIOA, YouthBuild programs, and Job Corps programs to be schools. Therefore, WIOA youth programs may consider a youth to be out—of—school youth for purposes of WIOA youth program eligibility if they are attending Adult Education provided under title II of WIOA, YouthBuild, or Job Corps, until otherwise notified by USDOL.

6. IF USING THE BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT DEFINITION CONTAINED IN WIOA SECTION 3(5)(B), INCLUDE THE STATE DEFINITION WHICH MUST FURTHER DEFINE HOW TO DETERMINE IF AN 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. IF NOT USING THE PORTION OF THE DEFINITION CONTAINED IN WIOA SECTION 3(5)(B), INDICATE THAT IS THE CASE.

As included in WIOA Section 3(5)(B): (5) BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT.—The term "basic skills deficient" means, with respect to an individual— (A) 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 (B) who is a youth or adult, that the individual is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society.

North Carolina defines "below the 8th grade level" to mean a testing score at or below 8.9. North Carolina does recognize the WIOA Title II definitions of English Language Learner (WIOA Section 203(7)), and promotes a positive and cooperative understanding of the importance of language access to federally assisted programs for limited English proficiency individuals.

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 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. A DESCRIPTION OF THE TYPE AND AVAILABILITY OF WIOA TITLE I YOUTH ACTIVITIES AND SUCCESSFUL MODELS, INCLUDING FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(9).)

Single—area State Requirements Not applicable to North Carolina

4. A DESCRIPTION OF THE ROLES AND RESOURCE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE ONE-STOP PARTNERS.

5. THE COMPETITIVE PROCESS USED TO AWARD THE SUBGRANTS AND CONTRACTS FOR TITLE I ACTIVITIES.

6. HOW TRAINING SERVICES OUTLINED IN SECTION 134 WILL BE PROVIDED THROUGH INDIVIDUAL TRAINING ACCOUNTS AND/OR THROUGH CONTRACTS, AND HOW SUCH TRAINING APPROACHES WILL BE COORDINATED. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL MEET INFORMED CUSTOMER CHOICE REQUIREMENTS REGARDLESS OF TRAINING APPROACH.

7. HOW THE STATE BOARD, IN FULFILLING LOCAL BOARD FUNCTIONS, WILL COORDINATE TITLE I ACTIVITIES WITH THOSE ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE II. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE BOARD WILL CARRY OUT THE REVIEW OF LOCAL APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED UNDER TITLE II CONSISTENT WITH WIOA SECS. 107(D)(11)(A) AND (B)(I) AND WIOA SEC. 232.

8. COPIES OF EXECUTED COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WHICH DEFINE HOW ALL LOCAL SERVICE PROVIDERS WILL CARRY OUT THE REQUIREMENTS FOR INTEGRATION OF AND ACCESS TO THE ENTIRE SET OF SERVICES AVAILABLE IN THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM, INCLUDING COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH ENTITIES ADMINISTERING REHABILITATION ACT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.

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:

- SUPPORTING EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT;
- CONNECTING EDUCATION AND TRAINING STRATEGIES;
- SUPPORTING WORK-BASED LEARNING;
- IMPROVING JOB AND CAREER RESULTS, AND
- 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 PROCESSES USED TO:

- MONITOR THE PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE WAIVER;
- PROVIDE NOTICE TO ANY LOCAL BOARD AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER;
- PROVIDE ANY LOCAL BOARD AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER AN OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON THE REQUEST;
- ENSURE MEANINGFUL PUBLIC COMMENT, INCLUDING COMMENT BY BUSINESS AND ORGANIZED LABOR, ON THE WAIVER.
- COLLECT AND REPORT INFORMATION ABOUT WAIVER OUTCOMES IN THE STATE'S WIOA ANNUAL REPORT

7. 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;

(1) Statutory Requirements

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;

The North Carolina Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS) is seeking a waiver from the requirements outlined in the WIOA at Sections 116 and 122, and at 20 CFR 677.230 and 20 CFR 680.400 thru 680.530, which require the collection and reporting of performance related data on all students participating in training programs listed on the State's Eligible Training Providers List (ETPL).

Under WIOA Section 116(d)(4)(A) and 20 CFR 677.230(a)(5), Eligible Training Providers must report performance data with respect to all individuals engaging in a program of study (or the equivalent). While DWS recognizes the value and importance of monitoring provider performance, requiring ETPs to produce data on all individuals instead of just WIOA-funded participants places an undue burden on

ETPs to collect, enter, and report excessive data. This is especially burdensome when ETPs have many students of whom only a small percentage are WIOA participants. The US Departments of Labor (DOL) and Education acknowledge this burden in their response to comments regarding 20 CFR 677.230 in the preamble of the WIOA Final Rule by stating, "The Departments are cognizant of the reporting burden the ETP performance report places on ETPs and do not want to place additional burden on these entities," however, there was no change to the regulatory text.

Further, ETPs and DWS are concerned that providing data on all individuals engaging in a program of study (or the equivalent) instead of WIOA-funded participants only may conflict with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which protects the privacy of student education records. Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student to release any information from a student's education record (34 CFR 99.30). Releasing student information on individuals who are not workforce system participants without their explicit consent may be in violation of federal law and compromise their personally identifiable information (PII). Additionally, requiring ETPs to provide data on all individuals instead of WIOA-funded participants may dissuade the institution from participating as a WIOA program provider, thereby significantly limiting consumer choice.

Under this waiver, ETPs will continue to collect and report performance data for all WIOA-funded participants in accordance with WIOA Section 116(d)(4)(A) and as specified at 20 CFR 677.230.

(2) Actions to Remove Barriers

There are no state or local statutory or regulatory barriers to implementing the requested waiver. North Carolina regulations and policy statements are in compliance with current federal law.

(3) Goals of Waivers

Ease undue reporting burden on ETPs - Reporting performance data on all individuals engaging in a program of study (or the equivalent) consumes considerable time and expense. Reducing ETPs' reporting requirements to include only WIOA-funded participants would save considerable time and expense to allow ETPs to focus on education and training outcomes while still providing the required data on WIOA-funded participants.

Ensure protection of non-WIOA participants' PII - Not reporting data for individuals who are not WIOA participants would reduce ETPs' liability for potential breach of those individuals' PII.

Programmatic Outcomes - Reduction of the reporting burden on ETPs allows them to focus more time and resources on producing successful outcomes for WIOA-funded participants as well as for their non-WIOA students.

In addition, the waiver will provide the following:

More available and varied training offerings for individuals utilizing ITAs via the public workforce system (greater customer choice).

More training providers can lead to lower cost options.

Greater utilization of ETPL by individuals pursing training via ITAs.

Stronger partnerships and relationships between training providers and the public workforce system.

Enhanced ability of local boards to respond quickly and efficiently to immediate local job seeker and employer needs.

(4) Alignment with Priorities

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.

This waiver aligns with DOL's policy priorities in that it connects education and training strategies by reducing the reporting burden on ETPs, thus allowing them to focus more time and resources on producing successful outcomes for WIOA-funded participants; and further protects the privacy rights of ETPs' students who are not WIOA participants.

(5) Impact Describes the individuals affected by the waiver, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations or individuals with multiple barriers to employment.

This waiver is intended to reduce the reporting burden on ETPs while still requiring them to report required performance data for all WIOA-funded participants.

Through this waiver, ETPs will be more willing to submit data on their WIOA-funded students and to remain in the ETP program, thus allowing the North Carolina workforce system to continue delivering essential training services that meet the needs of employers, job seekers, and workers.

(6) Processes Describes the processes used to:

(A) Monitor the progress in implementing the waiver;

DWS will continue to collect data from ETPs on their WIOA-funded students and to submit that data via DWS' annual report to DOL.

(B) Provide notice to any local board affected by the waiver;

Concurrent with the submission of this waiver request, the state will notify all 23 local Workforce Development Board directors of the state's intent of

this request. Upon approval of the waiver, North Carolina will issue a Policy Statement notifying all local Workforce Development Boards that this practice will be implemented effective July 1, 2018.

(C) Provide any local board affected by the waiver an opportunity to comment on the request;

Local Workforce Development Boards will be able to contact the Division of Workforce Solutions prior to submission of the State Unified WIOA Plan modification to discuss and have input on the waiver request. All local boards will also have access to the draft Unified Plan and opportunity to comment during the public review and comment period.

(D) Ensure meaningful public comment, including comment by business and organized labor, on the waiver.

This waiver request will be included in the Unified Plan submission and subject to public comment within Plan guidelines and the WIOA requirements.

(E) Collect and report information about waiver outcomes in the State's WIOA Annual Report.

North Carolina will collect and report information about waiver outcomes in the State's WIOA Annual Report.

(7) Outcomes of Existing Waivers

Not applicable.

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.

DWS will utilize professional development activities for Employment Service staff using the NCWorks Training Center whose primary mission is to provide high—quality, affordable, easily accessible training and professional development services for North Carolina's workforce system.

The NCWorks Training Center achieves its mission by providing a variety of training options tailored to meet the dynamic needs of the Division of Workforce Solutions, NCWorks Career Center staff, the state's 23 local Workforce Development Boards and staff of partner agencies. These efforts and services help ensure all staff and partners are well—trained with current skills and knowledge relevant to workforce trends. This is accomplished through workshops by professional, peer and in—house trainers in both face—to—face sessions and online webinars and tutorials.

The NCWorks Training Center also provides a vast list of supportive services including: meeting and conference preparation, and planning and other customized event services as requested.

The NCWorks Training Center is located in a self—contained facility and boasts two well—equipped classrooms. A recent addition of 24 laptop computers has allowed either room to function as a computer lab, affording more versatility for students and visitors of the Center. The NCWorks Training Center team is comprised of five diverse and highly skilled staff members who continually strive to stay current on workforce trends and issues, at the state and national levels, and to use this knowledge to design, coordinate, plan, and facilitate training.

Records of these events are retained and managed through the Training Registration and Information Network (TRAIN). This comprehensive system is managed by Training Center and Division staff and collects and retains client records, maintains data for easy reporting, stores student transcripts, and manages event and training registration.

The NCWorks Training Center was readily available with logistical planning of events, registration, data collection, supportive services, and training delivery and successfully increased and improved its online presence and accessibility of training through 79 live and recorded webinars on a variety of on demand topics. The NCWorks Training Center continues to provide workforce development professionals a globally recognized credentialing opportunity through the Career Development Facilitator (CDF) course. This 120—hour course uses the National Career Development Association's curriculum and standardizes the knowledge and experience of workforce development professionals and others in career development services. The instructional format blends traditional classroom, web—based distance learning, and independent project completion. This course provides a unique opportunity for workforce professionals from varied perspectives of the career field to network, share ideas and resources, and develop new partnerships to benefit the public.

Each year, the NCWorks Training Center staff host the NCWorks Partnership Conference. This event offers opportunities for attendees to participate in more than 65 workshops provided by professional trainers from around the country and peers from around the state. Attendees included frontline staff of NCWorks Career Centers, Workforce Board Directors and staff, private

sector business representatives, staff and management of government agencies, and non—profit organizations.

DWS also used the train—the—trainer model with ten Regional Representatives across the state who are subject matter experts in Employment Service and Unemployment Insurance policy. As appropriate, training is developed and distributed to NCWorks Career Center staff in a manner that is efficient and consistent across the state.

2. DESCRIBE STRATEGIES DEVELOPED TO SUPPORT TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACROSS CORE PROGRAMS AND THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) 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 the strategies described in the previous question, DWS also uses the train-the-trainer model with ten Regional Representatives across the state who are subject matter experts in Employment Service and Unemployment Insurance policy. As appropriate, training is developed and distributed to NCWorks Career Center staff in a manner that is efficient and consistent across the state. Assistance to Unemployment Insurance Claimants The Division of Workforce Solutions and the Division of Employment Security continue to collaborate on ways to provide significant assistance to individuals requesting help in filing for unemployment insurance compensation. State office staff from both Divisions meet quarterly to discuss unemployment insurance policy, keep abreast of program changes and discuss concerns. Changes or corrections to unemployment insurance procedures are distributed to NCWorks Career Center staff electronically via statewide Bulletins. Individuals are instructed on how to file a claim by way of the Internet (www.ncesc.com) or by calling the Customer Call Center (1-888-737-0259). Individuals are able to access the computers and telephones in the NCWorks Career Resource Center, with or without assistance from NCWorks Career Center staff, to file a claim. Guidance and information is provided using the "Getting Answers About Unemployment Insurance" form which includes information such as: • How to File a Claim • Where to call concerning claim questions • Filing a Weekly Certification • What to do if my weekly payment does not arrive • What to do if my debit card does not arrive or is lost • Where to call if I have questions regarding my appeal • What to do if I am notified of an overpayment on my claim

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.

Customers entering an NCWorks Career Center to learn about or to apply for Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits are assisted by trained professionals. Center staff are well versed in UI and can answer general questions about the program and the level of benefits available to recipients in North Carolina. Customers who wish to apply for UI are directed to the public computers in each Career Center and, if assistance is requested for any reason, including limited English proficiency, disabilities, or other barriers, staff will provide the requested assistance to the customer in completing the online application for benefits. Assistance with UI questions is also available to customers by phone. Staff are also available to help connect customers with the UI call center operated by the Division of Employment Security, the state's administrator of UI. Call center staff will answer very specific questions concerning individual claims and their benefits.

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

Labor exchange services are provided to unemployment insurance claimants when they report for their reemployment appointment. Each claimant is notified by mail of a specific mandatory reemployment appointment and to report to their nearest NCWorks Career Center. During this appointment claimants receive an orientation of employment services to provide an awareness of services offered. This is essential in allowing the claimant to take advantage of services he/she views as beneficial. Labor exchange services are also extended to claimants through the mandatory registration in NCWorks Online. This ensures that claimants are registered for work. Through the job matching system, assistance is provided to find employment. Employers registered in NCWorks Online have access to the claimants resume and qualifications.

During the reemployment visit, the NCWorks Career Center staff determines if claimants are meeting the work test requirements. The requirements include: 1) the claimant is out of work due to no fault of their own; 2) the claimant has not returned to work; and 3) the claimant is able, available and actively seeking employment. If appropriate during this visit, staff discuss job referrals, Job Development Contacts (JDCs), referrals to workshops (e.g. resume writing, job seeking skills, keeping a job, etc.) and look for opportunities to make referrals for applicable training programs.

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;

The Division of Workforce Solutions and the Division of Employment Security, which administers the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program, work very closely together to meet the employment needs of UI recipients. As described in questions (b) and (c) above, Wagner-Peyser funded staff in NCWorks Career Centers meet face-to-face with UI recipients within the first four weeks of receiving benefits, document that they are registered for work, review their job search activities, and make referrals to available jobs or WIOA Title I training, if appropriate. If the claimant has not complied with the Work Search and Claims Filing requirements, the Division of Employment Security is notified of the non-compliance and the case is referred for adjudication.

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

The Division of Workforce Solutions and the Division of Employment Security, which administers the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program, work very closely together to meet the employment needs of UI recipients. As described in questions (b) and (c) above, Wagner-Peyser funded staff in NCWorks Career Centers meet face-to-face with UI recipients within the first four weeks of receiving benefits, document that they are registered for work, review their job search activities, and make referrals to available jobs or WIOA Title I training, if appropriate. If the claimant has not complied with the Work Search and Claims Filing requirements, the Division of Employment Security is notified of the non-compliance and the case is referred for adjudication.

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 Division of Workforce Solutions and the Division of Employment Security, which administers the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program, work very closely together to meet the employment needs of UI recipients. As described in questions (b) and (c) above, Wagner-Peyser funded staff in NCWorks Career Centers meet face-to-face with UI recipients within the first four weeks of receiving benefits, document that they are registered for work, review their job search activities, and make referrals to available jobs or WIOA Title I training, if appropriate. If the claimant has not complied with the Work Search and Claims Filing requirements, the Division of Employment Security is notified of the non-compliance and the case is referred for adjudication.

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

The Division of Workforce Solutions and the Division of Employment Security, which administers the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program, work very closely together to meet the employment needs of UI recipients. As described in questions (b) and (c) above, Wagner-Peyser funded staff in NCWorks Career Centers meet face-to-face with UI recipients within the first four weeks of receiving benefits, document that they are registered for work, review their job search activities, and make referrals to available jobs or WIOA Title I training, if appropriate. If the claimant has not complied with the Work Search and Claims Filing requirements, the Division of Employment Security is notified of the non-compliance and the case is referred for adjudication.

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.

North Carolina is a farm labor demand state primarily for the period from April through November. NCWorks Career Centers are committed to serving the agricultural industry in the state by recruiting North Carolinians for agricultural job openings, with the goal of full utilization of all local and intrastate (within North Carolina) workers whom desire agricultural employment. As needed, interstate or migrant farm workers and H-2A temporary foreign guest workers are brought in using the Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) to supplement the existing workforce in agriculture. Local, seasonal, and year round farm workers are permanent customers with whom DWS staff serves throughout the year. Migrant and H-2A workers will be in North Carolina in varying numbers much of the year, primarily for harvest operations. Additionally, migrant and H-2A workers are brought in to supplement local workers in transplanting operations. H-2A workers should comprise a larger percentage of the agricultural workforce during the next four years due to an increased number of Farm Labor Contractors (FLC's) using the program. The Division of Workforce Solutions will continue working with other service providers and adhering to the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the Wagner-Peyser Act at sections 20 CFR, parts 651, 652, 653, 655, and 658. As such, MSFWs will be offered and provided the full array of employment and training services equitably and quantitatively comparable to that offered and provided to non-MSFWs. Outreach activity will be conducted statewide by 16 Agricultural Employment Consultants as well as 6 temporarily funded MSFW Outreach staff. All six temporarily funded MSFW Outreach staff members hired each growing season will be bi-lingual

English/Spanish speaking staff. The six MSFW Outreach staff will be co-funded through an ongoing and very successful Cooperative Outreach Services Agreement between Department of Commerce, Division of Workforce Solutions and the North Carolina Telamon Corporation.

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.

1. The following are North Carolina's five most labor intensive crops:

- Tobacco Harvest (July, Aug., Sept., Oct.) — Statewide
- Sweet Potato Harvest (Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov.) — Northeast, Southeast, Piedmont
- Blueberry Harvest (May, June, July) — Southeast
- Pickle Cucumber Harvest (June, July, Sept., Oct.) — Northeast, Southeast
- Christmas Tree Harvest (Nov., Dec.) — Western

2. As needed, migrant farm workers and H—2A temporary foreign guest workers are brought in using the Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) to supplement the existing workforce in agriculture.

2.Local seasonal and year round farm workers are permanent customers with whom Division of Workforce Solutions staff serve throughout the year. Migrant and H—2A workers will be in North Carolina in varying numbers much of the year, primarily for harvest operations. Additionally, migrant and H—2A workers are brought in to supplement local workers in transplanting operations. H—2A workers should comprise a larger percentage of the agricultural workforce during the next four years due to an increased number of Farm Labor Contractors (FLC's) using the program.

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.

Throughout North Carolina MSFWs generally live in rural isolated areas of the state. They have a number of barriers to employment to include transportation, childcare, limited English speaking abilities, limited education, and job training limitations. All of these barriers are major reasons for their lack of economic mobility. The State's estimated 100,000 farm workers during peak harvest season reveals that approximately 95% are of Hispanic/Latino origin, primarily from Mexico, and many are primarily monolingual in Spanish.

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:

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

Outreach will be conducted primarily through personal contact. State laws and ETA policy on right of access will be adhered to in making contacts. Outreach workers, as well as other agricultural services staff, will visit living areas, work sites, and local labor centers to explain the full range of services provided by NCWorks Career Centers and other partner agencies. Unemployed and underemployed farmworkers will be advised of agricultural and non—agricultural job opportunities. Outreach workers will meet migrant crews upon arrival in the area to prepare crew manifests and to escort them to assigned camps. Outreach workers will also provide information on and refer MSFWs to supportive services, as well as assist in securing aid such as food stamps, clothing, blankets, health supplies, and migrant shelter when needed.

All media, including Hispanic radio, TV, and newspapers, will be utilized, as funds allow, to ensure positive recruitment of agricultural workers and to ensure enhanced outreach services. Pamphlets will be distributed in Spanish and English at churches and other public gathering places.

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 compliance with Federal Regulations 20 CFR 653.107, 653.113, 655 Subpart B and 658 Subpart B, training for outreach worker activities will be provided by the following Wagner—Peyser funded staff: Agricultural Field Supervisors, Ag. Employment Consultants, and the State Monitor Advocate. Training will consist of basic orientation to the full range of employment services, Unemployment Insurance (UI) program, application and order—taking, recruitment and referral procedures, complaint processing procedures, recognition of apparent violations, farm worker's rights, supportive services, coordination of outreach efforts with other community—based organizations, completion of outreach logs and reports, and MSFW outreach contacts. Outreach staff will also receive training in computer usage so that they will be able to access NCWorks Online automated services via desktop or notebook computers. The Monitor Advocate will perform a general review of the training provided, with special emphasis on the portion of the training that addresses processing complaints and apparent violations.

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.

As referenced above, outreach workers will receive training concerning all programs that could benefit the MSFW.

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.

All state merit outreach staff will be provided access to necessary information from a variety of sources of professional development, including trainings, conferences, webinars, etc.

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

As a partner in the state's NCWorks Career Center system, Telamon Corporation, the National Farmworkers Jobs Program (NFJP) operator, provides/offers basic core services to the greater population and a wide variety of education and job training programs that are developed for migrant and seasonal farmworkers, adults and youth according to their needs, interests and experience. Telamon Corporation provides WIOA employment and training services to eligible migrant and seasonal

farmworkers, adults and youth. All Telamon staff are co—located in the NCWorks Career Centers in the service areas. This collaboration ensures the universal access for farmworkers to the workforce system. Being a partner with Telamon allows local NCWorks Career Centers, including all other local partnering service providers, the opportunities for enhancing core services of recruitment, referrals, and job placements. Equally important; the bilingual English/Spanish speaking abilities and expertise of full time co—located Telamon staff in seven NCWorks Career Center locations is essential to providing an array of intensive services.

Agricultural Employment Consultants (AECs) work with community—based organizations and other service providers who can help MSFWs obtain supportive services such as classes in English as a second language, school programs for children, etc. AECs are encouraged to attend area migrant council meetings and where a council with other service provides does not exist, attempt to create one.

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:

- HOW CAREER AND TRAINING SERVICES REQUIRED UNDER WIOA TITLE I WILL BE PROVIDED TO MSFWS THROUGH THE ONE-STOP CENTERS;
- HOW THE STATE SERVES AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS AND HOW IT INTENDS TO IMPROVE SUCH SERVICES.

All NCWorks Career Centers provide core, intensive and training services. Staff will determine the service needs of the MSFW customers and either provide those services or direct these customers to staff who can provide the needed services. Bilingual English/Spanish speaking staff within NCWorks Career Centers are key to successfully servicing North Carolina's increasing numbers of Hispanic/Latino job seekers, farmworkers, and employers who depend increasingly on a diverse workforce. The Division of Workforce Solutions has 43 permanent employees who speak Spanish fluently. These employees are strategically located to serve all NCWorks Career Centers, especially those offices that have been designated by the U.S. Department of Labor as significant in serving Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker (MSFW) customers.

ii. How the State serves agricultural employers and how it intends to improve such services.

Agricultural employers who are expected to utilize MSFWs will be identified through coordination with various providers of workforce development services, Agricultural Soil Conservation Service offices, Agricultural Extension Service offices, the North Carolina Farm Bureau, and various growers' associations. Services to these employers will be marketed by performing the following activities: (a) approximately 5,000 employer visits, (b) promotional telephone contacts, and (c) staff participation in grower's meetings and training seminars. Staff will continue to organize Farm Labor Contractor Workshops in association with the U. S. Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division and the North Carolina Department of Labor to educate, train and assist Farm Labor Contractors on compliance with various state and federal regulations.

B. MARKETING THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE COMPLAINT SYSTEM TO FARMWORKERS AND OTHER FARMWORKER ADVOCACY GROUPS.

As discussed in Question (1)(B), the training of outreach workers includes an understanding of the state's employment service complaint system This knowledge is shared freely with the MSFWs.

C. MARKETING THE AGRICULTURAL RECRUITMENT SYSTEM TO AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS AND HOW IT INTENDS TO IMPROVE SUCH PUBLICITY.

Agricultural Employment Consultants and temporary Agricultural Outreach Specialists are strategically assigned to NCWorks Career Centers for the purpose of providing labor exchange services to agricultural employers. Collectively, this staff reaches out to agricultural employers and workers in rural areas throughout North Carolina, assisting employers in their pursuit of agricultural workers and helping workers in their search for jobs. Annual training on the Agricultural Recruitment System (ARS) ensure that staff will continue to promote the ARS to employers and utilize the clearance order system.

4. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

A. COLLABORATION

Describe any collaborative agreements the state workforce agency (SWA) has with other MSFW service providers including NFJP grantees and other service providers. Describe how the SWA intends to build upon/increase collaboration with existing partners and in establishing new partners over the next four years (including any approximate timelines for establishing agreements or building upon existing agreements).

The annual Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Department of Commerce, Division of Workforce Solutions and Telamon Corporation has been executed for 2015—2016. Additionally, for several years a Cooperative Outreach Services Agreement has been in place between these two entities to co—fund six MSFW temporary outreach staff during the primary growing

season. The use of these bi—lingual English/Spanish speaking staff has been a very successful collaboration.

The Division of Workforce Solutions continues to expand relationships with other groups that provide services to MSFWs.

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.

Comments, suggestions, and feedback on the draft state Unified Plan was solicited from the following organizations:

Telamon Corporation, N.C. Department of Labor Agricultural Safety and Health Bureau, N.C. Migrant Education, Farm Bureau Federation of N.C., N.C. Rural Economic Development Center, Governor's Council for Hispanic/Latino Affairs, N.C. Cooperative Extension Services, Legal Services of N.C., Farmworker Unit Farmworker Advocacy Network (FAN), N.C. Agromedicine Institute, U.S. Department of Labor — Wage and Hour Division, N.C Justice Center, Elpueblo, Down East Partnership, Wayne County Extension Farmworkers Health and Safety Education, Rural Advancement Foundation, NC FIELD, AFL—CIO Farm Labor Organizing Committee, and N.C. Council of Churches.

No comments were received on the Agricultural Outreach Plan.

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.

Year after year, North Carolina continues to meet the MSFW Equity Performance Standards. All five of the Equity Service Indicators of Compliance and all seven of the Minimum Service Indicators, required by the U.S. Department of Labor at 20 CFR 653.109, are met annually in the Migrant Indicators of Compliance statewide report. The agency is fully committed to providing high quality customer service to employers, MSFW applicants, partners, and the agricultural community to help meet the goals of this plan.

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.

While all goals from the previous Agricultural Outreach Plan were met, the Department of Commerce, Division of Workforce Solutions is continuously seeking ways to improve services and expand partnerships. Excellent customer service to both the MSFW and employer groups is extremely important and will always be the focus of the division's agricultural activities.

E. STATE MONITOR ADVOCATE

The plan must contain a statement confirming the State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved the AOP.

The State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved the AOP and has offered valuable suggestions that were incorporated into the final AOP.

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 Unified or Combined 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)).

The North Carolina Community College System College and Career Readiness Adult Education Standards were originally aligned to NC Department of Public Instructions' state adopted content standards. The process involved developing and field testing by adult educators from across the state during 2007 to 2010. With the introduction of the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education by the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) in April 2013, the NCCCS College and Career Readiness Adult Education Standards were reviewed and aligned to reflect these new standards. The fundamental goal of NC standards is to provide a coherent approach to instruction and assessment so that all learners have equal opportunity to reach their academic and career goals. These standards ensure instruction across all NC providers meet the academic rigor and provide consistent content to prepare students to transition to postsecondary education, occupational training programs, and or employment. The standards provide a clear outline of what a learner needs to be able to do within a specific content area. The process of developing these standards was highly participatory and involved input from many adult educators across the state. The standards project began in 2007 with statewide implementation in 2011. The Appalachian State University Adult Basic Skills Professional Development Project (ABSPD) facilitated the development. Phase 1, 2007: Teams of adult educators met to write the first draft of the reading and writing content standards and then continued to provide review, feedback, and comments for improvement. These teams consulted a variety of resources from other states and the standards were informed by those states' existing standards. The writing teams included local and state Adult Basic Skills educators from a variety of disciplines. Phase 2, 2008—2009: Forums were held at three sites across the state for review and feedback. Each reviewer was given review forms and a draft copy of the standards document so that adult educators from their program could also complete reviews and mail them to ABSPD. The edits and suggestions received during this phase were integrated into a third draft. Additionally, teams of adult educators met to write the first draft of the mathematics and technology content standards. These team members continued to provide review, feedback and comments for improvement. In 2009, ABS educators reviewed the mathematics and technology content

standards and provided feedback via an online survey. Phase 3, 2010: Development of teaching activities to correspond to each benchmark was begun in January 2010. All Adult Basic Skills program and Community—based Literacy organization directors were invited to send a Certified Resource Specialist to Advance Institute in May to begin the piloting process for the NC ABE Reading and Writing Content Standards. The Certified Resource Specialists developed additional real—life applications and an implementation plan for their programs. Professional development for trainers was held in Fall 2010. Revisions were made and online and face—to—face training was designed. Phase 4, 2011: Statewide implementation training began across the state. Instructor training continues through the Applying Content Standards: GPS for Success training offered by the North Carolina Community College System College and Career Readiness Department and the Adult Basic Skills Professional Development Project at Appalachian State University. Phase 5, 2013—2014: The standards were revised and given a new name, North Carolina Community College System Adult Education Standards. The standards are now aligned with College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education released by the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE), US Department of Education in April 2013. core" that is most important for our adult students. The North Carolina Adult Education Content Standards document now includes standards for grade level equivalencies from beginning level through adult secondary education. The standards are housed on the Adult Basic Skills Professional Development (ABSPD) website: http://www.abspd.appstate.edu. Professional development on how to use the standards is offer through a training, Applying Content Standards: GPS for Success. Phase 6, 2016-2020: NC will focus on providing training and professional development opportunities to faculty on how to align curriculum to content standards. New training will be developed for contextualized instruction aligned to content standards. English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) In 2016, to address English language learners needs, OCTAE disseminated the English Language Proficiency Standards for Adult Education (ELP). The ELP standards support the development of academic language as key for preparing adults learning English for college and careers. They outline the language demands needed to access or meet the CCR standards. In summary, these standards outline the need and suggest a process for using the standards to develop English language skills needed to build knowledge across academic areas. NC will develop a series of professional development for faculty to understand how the standards are organized and how to use them to meet needs of ELL learners.

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 any of the following adult education and literacy activities identified in section 203 of WIOA, including programs that provide such activities concurrently. The Unified or Combined State Plan must

include at a minimum the scope, content, and organization of these 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—
  - Provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, and
  - Is for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

North Carolina will provide funding to eligible providers to offer the following: Adult education is an academic instruction and education services below the post-secondary level that increase the an individual ability to read, write and speak in English and perform mathematics or other activities necessary for attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equipment: transition to postsecondary education and training and obtain employment. • English Language Acquisition (ELA) is a program of instruction assist immigrants and other individuals who are English language learners in—— (A) improving their—— (i) reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension skills in English; and (ii) mathematics skills; and (B) acquiring an understanding of the American system of Government, individual freedom, and the responsibilities of citizenship. • Workplace Adult Education and Literacy Activities are offered in collaboration with an employer or employee organization at a workplace or an off—site location that are designed to provide adult education and literacy activities to improve the productivity of the workforce. • Family Literacy programs provide activities that are of sufficient intensity and quality, to make sustainable improvements in the economic prospects for a family and that better enable parents or family members to support their children's learning needs, and that integrate all of the following activities: (a) Parent or family adult education and literacy activities that lead to readiness for postsecondary education or training, career advancement, and economic self—sufficiency; (b) Interactive literacy activities between parents or family members and their children; (c) Training for parents or family members regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children; and (d) An age—appropriate education to

prepare children for success in school and life experiences. • Correctional Education programs offer education services to criminal offenders in correctional institutions and for other institutionalized individuals. Allowable programming includes -adult education and literacy activities; -integrated education and training; -transition to re—entry initiatives and other post—release services with the goal of reducing recidivism. Priority of services will be given to individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within 5 years of participation in the program. • Integrated Education and Training, means a service approach that provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement. • Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education means education services provided to English language learners who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries that enable such adults to achieve competency in the English language and acquire the basic and more advanced skills needed to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens in the United States. Such services shall include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation, and must include Integrated Education and Training.

NCCCS will allocate AEFLA funds for multiyear awards for three years with a re-application process for continued funding in year two and three for grantees in good standing. The NCCCS will require all eligible providers' use the same application process for sections 231, 225, and 243. All three programs will use the same grant application and process. Per Section 231(e) of WIOA, the application will be designed to ensure programs address and describe how they will meet the required 13 considerations listed below: (1) the degree to which the eligible provider would be responsive to—— (A) regional needs as identified in the local plan under section 108; and (B) serving individuals in the community who were identified in such plan as most in need of adult education and literacy activities, including individuals—— (i) who have low levels of literacy skills; or (ii) who are English language learners; (2) the ability of the eligible provider to serve eligible individuals with disabilities, including eligible individuals with learning disabilities; (3) past effectiveness of the eligible provider in improving the literacy of eligible individuals, to meet State—adjusted levels of performance for the primary indicators of performance described in section 116, especially with respect to eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy; (4) the extent to which the eligible provider demonstrates alignment between proposed activities and services and the strategy and goals of the local plan under section 108, as well as the activities and services of the one—stop partners; (5) whether the eligible provider's program—— (A) is of sufficient intensity and quality, and based on the most rigorous research available so that participants achieve substantial learning gains; and (B) uses instructional practices that include the essential components of reading instruction; (6) whether the eligible

provider's activities, including whether reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, and English language acquisition instruction delivered by the eligible provider, are based on the best practices derived from the most rigorous research available and appropriate, including scientifically valid research and effective educational practice; (7) whether the eligible provider's activities effectively use technology, services, and delivery systems, including distance education in a manner sufficient to increase the amount and quality of learning and how such technology, services, and systems lead to improved performance; (8) whether the eligible provider's activities provide learning in context, including through integrated education and training, so that an individual acquires the skills needed to transition to and complete postsecondary education and training programs, obtain and advance in employment leading to economic self—sufficiency, and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; (9) whether the eligible provider's activities are delivered by well—trained instructors, counselors, and administrators who meet any minimum qualifications established by the State, where applicable, and who have access to high quality development, including through electronic means; (10) whether the eligible provider's activities coordinate with other available education, training, and social service resources in the community, such as by establishing strong links with elementary schools and secondary schools, postsecondary educational institutions, institutions of higher education, local workforce investment boards, one—stop centers, job training programs, and social service agencies, business, industry, labor organizations, community—based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and intermediaries, for the development of career pathways; (11) whether the eligible provider's activities offer flexible schedules and coordination with Federal, State, and local support services (such as child care, mental health services, and career planning) that are necessary to enable individuals, including individuals with disabilities or other special needs, to attend and complete programs; (12) whether the eligible provider maintains a high—quality information management system that has the capacity to report measurable participant outcomes (consistent with section 116) and to monitor program performance; and (13) whether the local areas in which the eligible provider is located have a demonstrated need for additional English language acquisition programs and civics education programs.
Timeline and Submission Instructions

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:

- Adult education and literacy activities;
- Special education, as determined by the eligible agency;
- Secondary school credit;
- Integrated education and training;
- Career pathways;
- Concurrent enrollment;
- Peer tutoring; and
- Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.

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

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. 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. The North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) will use no more than 20 percent of the 82.5 percent of the state grant allotment to fund local programs for activities listed under Section 225 of WIOA. NCCCS will allocate AEFLA funds for multiyear awards for three years with a re¬application process for continued funding in year two and three for grantees in good standing. The NCCCS will require all eligible providers' use

the same application process for sections 231, 225, and 243. All three programs will use the same grant application and process. 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. NCCCS will fund: 1. Adult education and literacy activities (ABE, ASE, ELA,), 2. Integrated education and training. 3.Concurrent enrollment, 4. Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism. NC Community College system will not fund Career Pathways, Secondary school credit.

On average, NCDPS admits over 38,000 offenders. Historically, approximately 34% of adults enter a North Carolina prison without a high school diploma, or a high school equivalency credential, or score below the sixth-grade level on either the reading or math NRS approved assessment. NCCCS will use the same application process as referenced in Common Elements, Distribution of funds for Core Programs, section 5 B of the NC Unified State Plan, to ensure direct and equitable access for all eligible providers. All providers will use the same competitive process and application for sections 231, 225 and 243. The 13 considerations in section 231(e) will be used as evaluative criteria.

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.

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IEL/CE) is defined as "education services provided to English language learners who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, that enables such adults to achieve competency in the English language and acquire the basic and more advanced skills needed to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens in the United States. Such services shall include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation, and may include workforce training." NCCCS provides IEL/CE by requiring programs to provide Civics Education that instructs on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation integrated with literacy and English language instruction. Instruction may also include workforce preparation activities and workforce training. Services must be provided to English language learners including those who are professionals with degrees or credentials in their native countries.

Programs funded under WIOA section 243 will be required to create a program whose purpose is for educational and career advancement and instruction in English Language activities and are based on NC Content Standards and contextualized to the identified occupation. Programs must demonstrate that instruction includes: Literacy and English language activities, workforce preparation and occupational training and that services are coordinated to be offered concurrently. Instruction must be contextualized to the identified occupation and with a single set of learning objectives. Programs must provide a program schedule demonstrating coordinated instructional services, sufficient intensity and duration and sample lesson plans to document contextualized instruction.

NCCCS will use the same application process as referenced in Common Elements, Distribution of funds for Core Programs, section 5 B of the NC Unified State Plan, to ensure direct and equitable access for all eligible providers. All providers will use the same competitive process and application for sections 231, 225 and 243. The 13 considerations in section 231(e) will be used as evaluative criteria.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL FUND, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF TITLE II, SUBTITLE C, AN INTEGRATED ENGLISH LITERACY AND CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAM AND HOW THE FUNDS WILL BE USED FOR THE PROGRAM.

NCCCS will use the same application process as referenced in Common Elements, Distribution of funds for Core Programs, section 5 B of the NC Unified State Plan, to ensure direct and equitable access for all eligible providers. All providers will use the same competitive process and application for sections 231, 225 and 243. The 13 considerations in section 231(e) will be used as evaluative criteria.

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.

NC Community College System, Title ll will use not more than 12.5% of funds to carry out State Leadership activities under section 231.

The College and Career Readiness Unit, Adult Education will use funds made available under section 222(a)(2) to improve NC adult education to support the transition of students into postsecondary and or employment in high-demand industries by: a) aligning and coordinating services and activities with core partners, b) developing a professional development system based on annual needs assessment and input from a provider advisory committee, c) providing targeted technical assistance with continuous monitoring of providers capacity in meeting performance standards and fulfilling obligations associated with being a one-stop partner, providing quality

instruction that is backed by research and d) implementing a risk based monitoring process to include data analysis, site visits and program improvement process for low-performing providers.

A. The NC Community College System Office, CCR unit will work with NC Workforce Development Board Association to build a working relationship with local Boards to collaborate and coordinate services for program participants. The CCR unit will dedicate staff to lead the activities to include an annual Core Partner Town Hall to disseminate best practices, to provide cross training to facilitate the intake/orientation/ referral services, develop a employee informed employability training, and collaborate on the development of bridge programming using the integrated education and training model to serve as onramps for NC Career Pathways and apprenticeships.

B. The System Office, CCR unit's professional development plan focuses on improving instruction based on rigorous research, improving the use of technology to enhance distance education, to improve the use of tools data for continuous improvement and to meet performance outcomes, and improving instruction to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The System Office, contracts with Appalachian State University's Adult Basic Skills Professional Development Department to provide to provide research-based ongoing professional development for instructional staff. A series of credentials have been developed which provide training specifically in core instructional strategies like contextualizing instruction, and in using the NC Adult Education Content Standards. The State office created the NC Core Credential certification program to ensure all instructors had foundational knowledge and methods to instruct adults in contextualized, standardized based instruction. The NC Core Credential is a collection of PD training opportunities that includes STAR reading, Standards Based Instruction, Contextualized Instruction, Math, Writing. These courses are currently being revised to be offered as a hybrid, cohort model and to be in keeping with current requirements.

The CCR Professional Development planning is informed by Literacy Information and Communication System Professional Development Self-assessment tool. A NC PD committee will be convened to get providers' input and feedback on annual PD planning to include coordinating activities and evaluation. A key priority is developing an evaluation system that measures PD impact on improvement of student outcomes. Another key element is to offer several methods of delivery including: webinars, face-to-face workshops, learning communities, regional conferences, monthly newsletters and quarterly webinars. Courses leading to a credential are also offered in Adult Secondary Education content areas, English Language Acquisition, and in the essential components of evidence-based reading instruction. CCR Professional Development targeted training provides training for specific student communities to include serving learners with disabilities and creating career pathways to support transition to employment and English language learners. C. The System Office, CCR unit

will deliver technical assistance to providers to enhance program effectiveness, increase the ability of providers to meet established performance standards, and fulfill obligations associated with being a one-stop partner. A set of required training is being developed to focus on: NRS data quality and accuracy, technology use for data collection and reports, New Director Training, Core Credentials Basics and One-Stop partners. A collection of online resources will be developed to provide just in time training.

D. The System Office, CCR unit will provide grantee oversight activities to include data analysis, onsite visits and a program improvement system to assist low performing programs. CCR Regional Representatives will be responsible for regions and will perform continuous monitoring activities and provide assistance as needed.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT PERMISSIBLE STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA, IF APPLICABLE.

The System Office, CCR unit will use funds to carry out permissible state leadership activities to support state wide initiatives to promote the purpose of this title to include: a. The development and implementation of programs and services to support workplace adult education and activities by identifying curriculum frameworks for employability skills training. The System Office will partner with community college Human Resource Development program to develop standardized employability skills training which is informed by employers, includes workforce preparation activities and can be offered with online access. b. We will partner with the NC Community College System Office, Requisite Instruction for Student Excellence project to develop and implement a system to assist in the transition to postsecondary education. Working in partnership, this project will identify and align standards to academic requirements for enrollment in nonremedial, courses in postsecondary institutions. The goal is to create transition centers that target math and English skills to ensure readiness into gateway postsecondary math and English courses and provides support services and career advising. c. The development and implementation of programs and services to meet the needs of adult learners with learning disabilities to include career pathways with workplace experience. d. Provide assistance and training in using data to inform practices and programing to improve the meeting of State adjusted levels of performance including piloting new data management system.

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.

Assessing Quality: The North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) will assess the quality of all sub-grant recipients through a variety of continuous program monitoring and oversight activities. The NCCCS team will evaluate the overall viability of all sub-grant recipients — both from fiscal and programmatic perspectives. The NCCCS team will also develop and provide technical assistance training for programs that struggle to meet goals and objectives. If a sub-grant recipient fails to meet performance goals or other programmatic requirements, the NCCCS office will take specific action to assist the program in improving the quality of the program.

The staff have been reorganized to include positions to specifically address monitoring and evaluation for program quality. Their duties include: • Coordinates and provides technical assistance to local providers aimed at improving program compliance, quality, performance and accountability • Tracks compliance, quality, performance, and accountability of assigned providers. • Provides trainings in an assigned content area specialty.

As part of our federal compliance process, we are required to conduct a Risk Assessment on each provider before grant funds can be awarded. As the pass-through entity, the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) Office must assess the risk of a subgrantee not complying with Federal statues, regulations and the terms and conditions of subawards. The purpose of this assessment is to furnish the NCCCS state staff with information which will help in monitoring potential risk factors associated with grants awarded to providers. These risk factors are based on federal guidelines. The focus of the Risk Assessment is to ensure that providers meet the following requirements: • Adhere to the grantor's guidelines and agreements, • Remain within the budget, • Capable of carrying out the scope of service and, • Ensure that proper internal controls are in place.

A risk assessment for eligible subgrantees will be performed by the NCCCS System Office on an annual basis prior to grant award disbursements. Risk factors will include, but will not be limited to: • Audit Findings • New Personnel • Prior Experience • Performance • Size and complexity of program • Number of years the program has been in existence • Late Reporting • Allocation Amount • Overpayments/Refunds • Data Submission Errors • Lapsed Funds/Carryover Amounts • Financial Distress • Indications of Fraud and Abuse • Impending Provider closures

Upon completion of the risk assessment and program evaluation, all Providers will be classified as high, moderate or low risk. Each level of risk will have various levels of programmatic and fiscal monitoring that will be implemented during the program year. The purpose of the monitoring reviews will be to confirm that programs are expending and obligating the funds as stated in the initial approved grant application. The different types of programmatic and fiscal monitoring may include: • On-Site Monitoring • Desktop Monitoring • Submission of Additional Documentation • Required Attendance at Trainings/Technical Assistance

As a requirement of the federal award, the pass-through entity, which in this case would be the NCCCS System Office and auditors are to have access to the subgrantees records and financial statements as necessary for the pass-through entity to meet the requirements. In most circumstances, the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of the institution will have all the required financial documentation. Documents that should be available for review may include: • General Ledger Chart of Accounts • Prior Year General Ledger that includes monthly expenditures • Maintenance of Effort (MOE) Documentation • Payroll information to document the staff paid out of the federal award • Time and Effort Documentation • Cash Management Procedure • Allowability Procedure • Travel Policy • Procurement Procedure

Upon completion of the monitoring, a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) may be required to resolve the issues located during the evaluation. The Provider will be required to submit a plan detailing how the incorrect programmatic and/or fiscal practices will be amended within the required time frame. If there are unresolved CAP(s), further action may be taken to include: • Specific award conditions/restrictions

Technical Assistance and training will be provided during the program year, to help mitigate and alleviate some of the factors that constitute as risk. All Providers will receive information about the information sessions that will be facilitated via the System Office Compliance team.

Additional program quality evaluation will be based on: Program Practices • number of years that the program administrator has been in the position • number of years that the data administrator has been in the position • percentage of instructors who are credentialed • if there has been a Corrective Action Plan in the last five years and how many findings • how many years since an onsite review Performance and Assessment • what is the agency's retention rate for the preceding year • what is the agency's post-test rate • what is the agency's overall MSG rate by POPs • does the agency have a trained, fulltime data manager • does the agency have a trained assessment specialist An evaluation system will be developed to measure the effectiveness of both the professional development offerings and technical assistance provided by NCCCS. All professional development and technical assistance will be systemically evaluated. An impact analysis of this data will be performed each quarter assessing instructor credential attainment to student measurable skill gain. NCCCS will also examine program data to gauge the impact of professional development and technical assistance conveyed to individual programs. This systematic evaluation will provide a holistic lens through to view the impact of the instructor credentialing system and provider technical assistance.

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 **North Carolina Community College System**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Jennifer Haygood**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Acting President NCCCS**

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

7. The eligible agency agrees that in expending funds made available under title II of WIOA, the eligible agency will comply with sections 8301 through 8303 of the Buy American Act (41 U.S.C. 8301-8303). Yes

SECTION 427 OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISIONS ACT (GEPA)

In the text box below, describe the steps the applicant proposes to take to ensure equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally-assisted program for students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs provide the information to meet the requirements of Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA), consistent with the instructions posted at https://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/gepa427.doc.

NCCCS requires all applications responding to the Title ll, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act describe steps to meet the requirements of Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA). Examples of steps taken to meet GEPA requirements include: Removing barriers to access by providing access to grants, financial aid and counseling, instruction and services in various locations in the community. Provide counselling and advising, academic accommodations and other support services to ensure needs of traditionally underrepresented students are met. Programs are committed to the policies of equal opportunity and affirmative action for employees and will actively recruit applicants from traditionally underrepresented groups and seek to develop a diverse faculty and staff. Providers disseminate anti-discrimination policies through employee and student handbooks and other official materials. Provide all activities in ADA accessible facilities. Disseminate program fliers and information in multiple languages. Coordinate and offer cultural sensitivity, ADA and related training for program faculty and staff. The NCCCS staff will periodically review provider's programs to assess compliance with GEPA as outlined in their plan. The NCCCS office has an EEO policy.

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;

DVRS, SRC members provided input through various venues as follows:

- The Council's Executive Committee addresses State Plan development, implementation, and progress towards both Plan goals and SRC goals within the Goals, Priorities and Strategies section of the State Plan during meetings with the Division's director and staff. During the quarterly meetings, the full council also provides input for the VR portion of the Unified Plan (formerly the State Plan) and the comprehensive statewide needs assessment planning processes.
- The SRC Consumer Input and Public Outreach Committee monitor and jointly conduct with DVRS the VR client satisfaction survey. The Consumer Input and Public Outreach Committee also plans and conducts two town-hall style public forums per year. The location rotates to ensure statewide coverage and stakeholder inclusion. The SRC has facilitated Spring and Fall listening forums in various locations across the state. In recent years, listening forums have been held as follows: March 2016 - Wilson, NC; September 2016 - Fayetteville, NC; March 2017 - Hickory and September 2017 - Greenville, NC. Stakeholder input from these and prior-year sessions are incorporated within and influence the Council's recommendations.
- The SRC's Policy and Rules Committee reviews and provides feedback on policy drafts regarding client services and other agency policies, including agency policies required for compliance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. DVRS policy changes or revisions since the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, July 1, 2014 include: Pre-Pre-Employment

Transition Services Policies and Procedures; the requirement to develop an individualized plan for employment for a VR client within 90 days of eligibility determination, with certain exceptions; extension of eligibility or IPE development extension documentation requirements; competitive integrated employment closure standards and review processes; medical technologies or consultations including FES devices; hepatitis C treatments; sponsorship of GED testing fees; phase-out of transitional employment services; post-secondary learning support services and rates; moped-related policies; subpoena policy; revised internship policy; consent for release of resume electronically; voter registration; clarification of the request for quote (RFQ) and purchasing process for durable medical equipment and non-medical equipment purchases, and equipment and vehicle repairs; invoice processing and sponsorship of prescription medication; sponsorship of vocational evaluations and community based assessments for work adjustment and supported employment services; client financial need survey requirements; sponsorship of individual placement and supports (IPS) model supported employment; adjustment to the supervisory approval required for case service authorizations of $500 or less; sponsorship of post- secondary academic training; required verification of client identity and employment eligibility prior to the development of an individualized plan for employment; and revisions to the process for client self-employment evaluation and direction setting.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS DVRS RECEIVED FROM THE NORTH CAROLINA STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL:

In March, 2017, the SRC developed an updated strategic plan (2017-19) comprised of five strategic goals and sub-strategies, which provide guidance when formulating SRC meetings and establishing committee priorities and shape the agency's approach to policy development implementation. The five goals are:

1) To sustain service capacity of the NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

2) To ensure individualized services planning is client driven

3) To improve marketing, communication and outreach

4) To improve the efficiency of the vocational rehabilitation process

5) To improve or create transportation options for vocational rehabilitation consumers

Recommendation 1: In support of their strategic plan pertaining to improved marketing, communication, outreach and legislative advocacy to ensure service capacity is sustained, the Council recommended again this year for the Division to prepare for their distribution, customized reports for

each NC legislative district featuring the beneficial return on investment that the VR program has on consumers and on the economy of each district within NC. The DVRS Planning and Evaluation unit will continue to support this request, revising the customized reports based on input and also added success stories to provide a human element to the data presented. The reports will be prepared and distributed to NC Legislators during the short session.

Recommendation 2: The Council recommends to improve the efficiency of the vocational rehabilitation process through the exploration of ways to expedite the provision of consumer services, including client purchases; conduct reviews of processes for increased efficiencies; explore ways to involve staff in identifying and addressing inefficiencies, and, in general, increase capacity to serve consumers who use English as a second language. DVRS supports all components of this recommendation and are currently addressing them.

Recommendation 3: The Council recommended for the quarterly full council meetings to contain a standing item for the Client Assistance Program to give an activity update. Further, the council recommended for a standardized set of questions and topic areas to be provided as a standard guideline to be used for regional director and/or a regional unit manager reports during quarterly meetings to allow managers to provide updates for local activities, developments and to express any concerns to the Council. DVRS has incorporated the recommended changes and will continue with these standing topics until the Council recommends further adjustments.

Recommendation 4: The Council recommended to continue to jointly conduct consumer input sessions to be held twice annually collecting input from various communities across the state and to strongly encourage staff attendance at such sessions whenever possible. DVRS will continue to actively support jointly conducted input sessions twice annually canvassing various communities across the state focusing on how the VR program is addressing consumers' VR needs through its service provision.

Recommendation 5: Whereas the Council is concerned about providing responsive services to consumers and realizes the Division's abilities in this area are impeded when high vacancy rates occur within the Division, the Council recommends that DVRS provide regular updates regarding key vacancies, including direct service positions such as counseling positions, so that the Council may advocate appropriately as included within the Council's current strategic plan. DVRS supports this recommendation and will continue to work with Council members to regularly provide updates through statewide and regional vacancy reports.

Recommendation 6: Whereas the SRC Consumer Input and Public Outreach Committee acknowledged decreasing response rates on client satisfaction self-administered written questionnaires, the Council recommends that DVRS continue the use of the telephonic client satisfaction survey. Further, the Council recommends extending the survey to clients in active status and

employing a weighted sampling method to maintain costs and better ensure representation across disability types, minority status, age, and gender. The Division supports this recommendation and will adjust its sampling practices, contracts, and purchase orders accordingly.

Recommendation 7: Whereas the Council acknowledges the importance that reliable transportation solutions serve in assisting consumers in preparing for, obtaining, and maintaining employment, the Council recommends the Division to actively explore partnerships focusing on creative transportation solutions that will better meet the needs of all individuals with disabilities within the state. The Division also acknowledges the significance of this need and supports this recommendation. The Division director serves on a council with NC Division of Transportation that is working to address these needs at the systems level; while other means of individualized solutions are also being explored.

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

Recommendation 1: (annual report on return on investment by legislative district) The DVRS Planning and Evaluation unit will continue to support this request, revising the customized reports based on input and also added success stories to provide a human element to the data presented. The reports will be prepared and distributed to NC Legislators during the short session.

Recommendation 2: (improving efficiency of the vocational rehabilitation process) The DVRS supports all components of this recommendation and are currently addressing them.

Recommendation 3: (regular reports from the Client Assistance Program at SRC meetings) DVRS has incorporated the recommended changes and will continue with these standing topics until the Council recommends further adjustments.

Recommendation 4: (jointly conducted public input sessions) DVRS will continue to actively support jointly conducted input sessions twice annually canvassing various communities across the state focusing on how the VR program is addressing consumers' VR needs through its service provision.

Recommendation 5: (regular reports on direct service position vacancies) DVRS supports this recommendation and will continue to work with Council members to regularly provide updates through statewide and regional vacancy reports.

Recommendation 6: (telephonic client satisfaction surveys) The Division supports this recommendation and will adjust its sampling practices, contracts, and purchase orders accordingly.

Recommendation 7: (actively explore partnerships focusing on creative transportation solutions) The Division acknowledges the signficance of this

need and supports this recommendation. The Division director serves on a council with NC Division of Transportation that is working to address these needs at the systems level; while other means of individualized solutions are also being explored.

3. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S EXPLANATIONS FOR REJECTING ANY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT OR RECOMMENDATIONS.

DVRS did not reject any of the Council's input or recommendations.

B. REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS

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

1. A LOCAL PUBLIC AGENCY WILL PROVIDE THE NON-FEDERAL SHARE OF COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WAIVER REQUEST;

This attachment will not apply to the North Carolina VR Programs for the program years covered under the State Unified Plan.

2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL APPROVE EACH PROPOSED SERVICE BEFORE IT IS PUT INTO EFFECT; AND

This attachment will not apply to the North Carolina VR Programs for the program years covered under the State Unified Plan.

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.

This attachment will not apply to the North Carolina VR Programs for the program years covered under the State Unified Plan.

C. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH AGENCIES NOT CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES UNDER THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM.

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

1. FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS;

DVRS extensively collaborates with and utilizes the services of federal, state, and local entities to achieve its mission on behalf of NC citizens with disabilities. DVRS routinely pursues improving its overall effectiveness through working relationships, partnerships, contracts and formal or

informal agreements with entities at all levels. DVRS maintains written cooperative agreements with various federal, state, and local agencies. These include but are not limited to the Social Security Administration; the United States Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs; the DHHS Division of Medical Assistance; Division of Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Office of Long-Term Services and Supports; Division of Social Services; Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse; and numerous local school systems, hospitals, and physical medicine and rehabilitation centers. The Easter Seals / United Cerebral Palsy Society of North Carolina, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, the American Heart Association, and the North Carolina Arthritis Foundation are examples of consumer and advocacy groups for individuals with disabilities with which the Division has maintained agreements to facilitate the maintenance of the highest feasible level of communication and coordination in the joint development and implementation of operational methods including, where applicable:

- Assisting consumers, their families, and advocates in accessing services from DVRS and from the other agencies and entities;
- Referral of individuals who have disabilities and especially those who have severe disabilities to DVRS for services;
- Referral by DVRS to other agencies or entities for the various supportive services and assistance available;
- Determination of the responsibility of each agency or entity in making referrals, in serving individuals jointly, and in identifying resources;
- Provision of educational information regarding the services, including equipment and assistive technology, available and eligibility criteria of the Division and of the other agency or entity;
- Joint training of staff in areas pertaining to services available and procedures of DVRS and the other agency or entity;
- Shared funding DVRS positions and program costs and the co-location of DVRS staff with staff from the other agency or entity where co-location would be effective and feasible;
- Developing means to promote greater awareness and greater utilization of the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act;
- Provision for the sharing of information between agencies as required by law or upon receipt of client permission and with regard to maintaining confidentiality;
- Establishing an evaluation system to determine levels of competency of paraprofessionals such as interpreters for the deaf who wish to serve as vendors for DVRS;
- Enhancing post-secondary training supports to assist in the transition to employment;
- Improving the public image of the employment capabilities of individuals in various disability groups;
- Assessing the effectiveness of the cooperative agreements;

- Jointly promoting improvement in the quality of life through comprehensive approaches to the improved health of consumers jointly served and through services to family members;
- Jointly promoting ethical research practices to develop improved medical and other disability related interventions;
- Promoting systems change through collaborative projects;
- Expanding services and community resources for unserved and underserved groups;
- Promotion of collaboration at the community office level offices between the Division and other agencies and entities;
- Through joint planning councils, providing joint input from the Division and from other agencies and entities for budgeting, service delivery, and policy changes for block grants, special demonstration projects, and other grants;
- Providing input regarding formulation of vocational services provided by other agencies and entities.

Additionally, DVRS local Vocational Rehabilitation, Independent Living Program and NC Assistive Technology Program staff work with the Centers for Independent Living (CILs) in North Carolina to coordinate services for specific individuals and to address areas of broader systemic impact such as community education/awareness and outreach to various disability groups. The CILs are consumer- controlled, cross-disability, community-based non-residential, private non-profit organizations that provide programs and services for people with all types of disabilities and their families. The goal of CILs is to promote and support opportunities for people with disabilities to fully participate in an integrated community and search for the possibilities to live as they choose. These centers are funded through Title VII of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. Information and referral, independent living skills training, advocacy, and peer counseling are the four core services each center provides. In addition to these core services, the centers may provide additional services which are tailored to serve individuals with disabilities in their service area.

The Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) is an independent non-profit council (not an entity within a state agency) that is established under Section 705 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. The majority of its members are individuals with disabilities. The SILC is responsible for jointly developing and endorsing the State Plan for Independent Living in conjunction with the designated state unit (DVRS and DSB). The duties of the SILC are to monitor, review, and evaluate the implementation of the State Plan for Independent Living. Further, the SILC is mandated to coordinate activities with the State Rehabilitation Council and other councils that address the needs of specific disability populations.

DVRS is also actively collaborating with the USDA-funded statewide AgrAbility program whose mission is to educate and assist NC farmers, ranchers, farmworkers and their family members who have disabilities to

enable them to remain actively engaged in production agriculture. The collaborative involves NC Agricultural and Technical State University, NC State University Bio and Agricultural Engineering Department, East Carolina University Agromedicine Institute, and NC Cooperative Extension,

Further, DVRS consumers benefit through the expertise and access to USDA programs, program funding and loans available through the NC Rural Center, which is represented through the Division's Small Business Advisory Committee (SBAC).

At this time, DVRS does not directly engage in formally established state use contracting program, where commodities or service determined to be of use to state agencies are purchased from community-based rehabilitation programs employing and training individuals with significant disabilities. DVRS does sponsor activities through several community rehabilitation programs that provide training services to DVRS consumers through contracts with entities such as the NC Department of Transportation for maintenance of facilities and distribution of safety campaign materials. DVRS does promote training and employment practices that align with competitive integrated employment standards.

2. STATE PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

Assistive Technology services and devices are provided to eligible individuals statewide who require them. Rehabilitation technology and assistive technology services are sponsored and provided to the degree necessary to complete the rehabilitation program. Included are services and devices which can supplement and enhance an individual's functions such as adapted computer access, augmentative communication, specialized seating and mobility, vehicle modifications, and services which can have an impact on the environment, such as accessibility, job re-design, work site modification and residence modification. Application of the available engineering and assistive technology services and technologies is important when making determinations of eligibility particularly for individuals with significant and most significant disabilities. Rehabilitation engineering evaluations and services are not subject to an individual's financial eligibility; however, devices, equipment and modifications recommended by the engineer are subject to financial eligibility. Applicants during the assessment phase, and consumers determined to be eligible for services in need of and who can benefit from rehabilitation engineering services, devices and assistive technology services can be referred to providers of these services, and these services can assist to assist with assessment processes. Presently within the state, these services are made available statewide by Rehabilitation Engineers, Assistive Technology Consultants, and other agency staff as well as through outside Assistive Technology Suppliers and Providers.

The Division is fortunate to have the North Carolina Assistive Technology Program as a vital program component. The program increases access and the provision of services to individuals served within the VR program and supports the Division mission of increasing independence for clients in the home, post- secondary school and work setting. In addition, this affords clients of the Division with fast access to the programs array of services which includes: technical expertise in selecting the most appropriate device; hands-on demonstration and try-out of low tech and high tech devices for people with disabilities; information on a variety of technology options; funding resource information and strategies; short-term loan of equipment to consumers, families and professionals who serve them; training to consumers, families and professionals; technical assistance to local organizations, schools, and programs to expand assistive technology local service delivery capacity; awareness and outreach activities to inform the public about equipment and devices people with disabilities can use for greater independence.

DVRS collaborated with the North Carolina Assistive Technology Program (NCATP) to purchase iPads to train DVRS and community rehabilitation program (CRP) field staff in the use of technology to overcome specific barriers to employment. Staff learned different software applications (apps) as well as different ways to communicate to employers during job development. A team member from the Employment and Program Development Section will present at the National TASH Conference in Portland, Oregon in December 2015 where NC's project with the iPads will be highlighted. NCATP provides a professional development program available to all VR staff who provide evaluation, assistive technology equipment and assistive technology services for the consumers they are serving. NCATP has twenty staff serving the state of North Carolina, which includes the Director, Funding Specialist, AT Information and Referral Specialist, Intake Coordinator, 2 Processing Assistants, 4 Speech Language Pathologists (SLP) and 10 Assistive Technology Consultants. The 10 AT Consultants and 4 SLPs provide direct one-on-one services in the Assistive Technology Centers.

Since 2015 DVRS has progressively increased their collaborative efforts with NCATP and other AgrAbility partners to provide assistive technologies and related services to farmers and farmworkers within the state. There have also been joint outreach efforts to Veterans with disabilities who may be interested in pursuing agriculturally-oriented occupations.

Additionally, the current interagency agreement between DVRS and education agencies, including the DPI and Local Educational Agencies (LEA)/School Boards, stipulate the financial responsibilities of education agencies, which include the provision of assistive technology required and included in an individual's IEP, without cost to the DVRS. Both DVRS and DSB share information about provides technical assistance and consultation to DPI, LEAs, and schools regarding accommodations and assistive technology that will help facilitate the education and vocational

rehabilitation of students with disabilities, including students who are deaf or hearing impaired, blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired.

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

DVRS is collaborating with the USDA-funded statewide AgrAbility program whose mission is to educate and assist NC farmers, ranchers, farmworkers and their family members who have disabilities to enable them to remain actively engaged in production agriculture. The collaborative involves NC Agricultural and Technical State University, NC State University Bio and Agricultural Engineering Department, East Carolina University Agromedicine Institute, NC Cooperative Extension, and the NC network of Centers for Independent Living. Additionally, DVRS consumers benefit through the expertise and access to USDA programs, program funding and loans available through the NC Rural Center, which is represented through the Division's Small Business Advisory Committee (SBAC).

4. NONEDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH; AND

DVRS VR staff work with the Centers for Independent Living (CILs) to coordinate services for specific individuals and also to address areas of broader systemic impact such as community education, disability awareness, and outreach services to various disability groups, including out-of-school youth. The CILs are consumer-controlled, cross-disability, community-based non-residential, private non-profit organizations that provide programs and services for people with all types of disabilities and their families. The goal of CILs is to promote and support opportunities for people with disabilities to fully participate in an integrated community and search for the possibilities to live as they choose. These centers are funded through Title VII of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. Information and referral, independent living skills training, advocacy, and peer counseling are the four core services each center provides. In addition to these core services, the centers may provide additional services which are tailored to serve individuals with disabilities in their service area.

5. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS.

At this time, DVRS does not directly engage in formally established state use contracting program, where commodities or service determined to be of use to state agencies are purchased from community-based rehabilitation programs employing and training individuals with significant disabilities. DVRS does sponsor activities through several community rehabilitation programs that provide training services to DVRS consumers through contracts with entities such as the NC Department of Transportation for maintenance of facilities and distribution of safety campaign materials.

DVRS does promote training and employment practices that align with competitive integrated employment standards.

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 NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and NC Division of Services for the Blind are currently renewing their state level memorandum of agreement (MOA) with DPI. The revised MOA will reflect the updated requirements of the final federal regulations on Title IV of WIOA. The purpose of the MOU is to outline a collaborative partnership between the two agencies to provide state level approval and support for enhanced transition services to students with disabilities. The revised MOA with DPI will also specify the manner in which Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) will be coordinated and provided within NC schools as well as how students with disabilities, including those who are potentially eligible for VR services, will be identified and served in compliance with federal regulations. The DVRS and DSB Program Specialists for Transition Services compile annual reports for DPI, as requested according to our MOA, summarizing VR activity for the state fiscal year.

In addition to a state level MOA, the DVRS and DSB local offices and local education agencies (LEA) customize a local Third Party Cooperative Agreement (TPCA) to outline how the agencies will work together to ensure that VR services are administered to students with disabilities. The TPCA stipulates administrative funding to support VR staff, outlines procedures for information sharing, and requires a process for referring students with disabilities to VR in order for the Divisions to carry out the VR process. DVRS TPCAs with 99 of the 115 LEAs in North Carolina contribute funding towards 202 positions including VR counselors, business relations representatives, vocational evaluators and additional VR support staff including casework assistants and casework technicians available to provide VR transition services in the local community. In areas where a TPCA has not been established, the local manager has designated a VR counselor to directly serve the students with disabilities in the local schools. Since 2003, DVRS has implemented strategies for serve transition-aged youth. Under WIOA and as the Title IV regulations are finalized, DVRS will be enhancing programs and services to transition-aged youth with increased focus on students with disabilities and PETS. New programs are intended to align the Division with federal requirements under the Workforce Innovation and

Opportunity Act, namely PETS, as well as provide improved transition services to students while they are in high school. DVRS expects that NC public schools will see a value-add for investing in the VR partnership.

Plans for Coordination with Education Officials

DVRS plans to maintain and strengthen its programmatic relationships with school transition services through its continued active participation by the Division's Transition Program Specialist on the State Capacity Building Team for Transition. This team, including DPI leadership, DVRS, University Center for Development and Learning, Parent/Child Advocacy Agency, Career and Technical Education, and NC Community Colleges System representation was formed in recent years to develop statewide goals and provide better coordinated transition activities for students with disabilities to achieve better results with post-school outcomes, including obtaining employment or attending post-secondary education. Currently, NC's Capacity Building Plan is focused on improving student involvement in the individualized education program (IEP) process so that planning is more meaningful and associated with a student's

post-school goals. The state is continuing to work on a Transition Toolkit for teachers and anticipates the development of toolkits for parents, students, and agencies that will be individualized at the local level.

DPI consultants are providing transition training to LEAs to promote student-led IEPs, and NC DVR plans to provide training to VR counselors and LEA representatives in the Spring of 2016 to focus on the role of the VR Counselor in the IEP process.

DVRS plans to continue collaboration with DPI leadership on technical assistance grants that focus on improving transition services and employment outcomes for transition-aged youth, including re- submission for the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) Intensive Technical Assistance grant.

DESCRIPTION OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

As the Title IV regulations are finalized, VR plans to increase transition service offerings to students with disabilities through partnerships with NC public schools. Some areas of program development and service enhancement being considered by DVRS are:

- Summer internships for students/youth with disabilities
- Increased utilization of On-the-Job Training (OJT) with students and youth
- Utilizing *Transition Navigators* to identify and serve students with disabilities who are potentially eligible and/or to provide VR PETS services to groups
- Increasing Project Search sites

- Hosting Self-Advocacy summer summits, camps, or school-based workshops
- Enhancing vocational evaluation tools and allocating increased vocational evaluation staff to serve students with disabilities in exploring career options
- Increasing work-based experiences for students with disabilities who require on-the-job supports, such as job coaching, by partnering in innovative ways with community rehabilitation programs.

DVRS plans to re-brand and revise marketing materials and communications about VR services to students with disabilities to highlight PETS offerings to both students and school personnel. This effort will include targeted marketing for youth disability groups whose incidence within DVRS is declining despite remaining steady or increasing within the public schools (e.g., students with learning disabilities). DVRS will revisit policies related to post-secondary training and learning disability eligibility to ensure that the needs of all eligible students with disabilities as well as those students for whom we are mandated to provide PETS are being met in terms of preparing students to obtain competitive integrated employment in such a way to promote advancement and ongoing career development.

By enhancing and incorporating new programs that promote and support work-based experiences, the Division will continue its commitment to students in pursuit of a high school diploma through the Occupational Course of Study (OCS), a pathway established by the NC Board of Education for students with IEPs to achieve a high school diploma by completing occupational coursework and work experiences. DVRS has recently revised policies for In-School Work Adjustment services to students with significant or most significant disabilities. The service is coordinated through school-based agreements to incentivize a student's participation in school-coordinated work experiences by providing guidance and counseling as well as an incentive payment to students for improvements in work behaviors and attitudes. The Division continues to offer internship and OJT services to students, but hopes to increase utilization and improve feasibility for students, schools, and partnering businesses through policy and procedure revisions and collaboration with workforce system partners. Other PETS programs/services under consideration are intended to address students' expectations around pursuing employment and to improve their preparedness for participating in additional rehabilitation services, such as training and placement.

DVRS requires each local VR office with VR counseling staff serving on a local school transition services team to send an annual report to the school systems with which the Division has a TPCA. This report includes data about services and expenditures for students with disabilities provided by the Division, and addresses how VR staff members worked with school staff in transition planning for students with significant and most significant disabilities.

DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL OF INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT (IPE) FOR TRANSITIONING STUDENTS

The Division's casework policies addressing the provision of transition services defines transition services as a coordinated set of activities for a student designed within an outcome-oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post- secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. Furthermore, DVRS policy states that the coordinated set of activities must be based upon the individual student's preferences and interests, and must include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. Finally, DVRS casework policies require that transition services must promote or facilitate the achievement of the employment outcome identified in the student's individualized plan for employment. In order to plan effectively for the transition needs of students with disabilities in collaboration with other agencies and organizations, DVRS rehabilitation counselors are expected to be active participants addressing the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting transition issues when possible. Counselors are expected to participate both directly in IEP meetings and indirectly by other means in planning for the needs of VR consumers. A copy of the transition portion of the IEP is required to be maintained in the case record. Prior to developing the IPE, the VR counselor reviews the Individual Transition Plan (ITP) component for the Individual Education Plan and records any relevant ITP objectives as part of the IPE. The intent of this review is to coordinate educational programming and vocational programming for the benefit of the VR consumer. Additionally, the Division's policy stipulates that the development of the IPE with a student must be based on interests, aptitudes, capabilities, strengths and informed choice. The job choice on the IPE for a student in transition may indicate a family of jobs rather than a specific job code, for example, Health Care Worker, Office Work, and Protective Services such as police, firefighter, or security guard. DVRS policy does require career exploration to be provided and documented in order to determine a more specific goal, and this process and expectation has been further emphasized by recent policy revisions concerning development of the IPE within 90 days of the VR eligibility determination. Amended job choices, including amendments at closure, must be accompanied by documentation reflecting the process and services that had an impact on the final job choice, including job shadowing, job sampling, guidance and counseling. Moreover, DVRS casework policy stipulates that the development and approval of an individualized plan for employment must be completed as early as possible during the transition planning process but, at the latest, by the time each student determined to be eligible for VR services leaves the school setting. This includes students with disabilities who are eligible for VR services including eligible students served by the school under an IEP.

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;

In order to ensure effective facilitation of the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of VR services, DVRS maintains both a joint formal agreement with the Exceptional Children and Career Technical Education Divisions of DPI and also maintains 99 separately held TPCAs with local education agencies (LEA's) or school programs. The agreement with DPI will be revised upon issuance of the final regulations for Title IV to account for new mandates concerning PETS, serving the "potentially eligible," Section 511 impacts on contracted services between schools and programs operated under a subminimum wage certificate, and a number of other new requirements. Additionally, in that the agreement is not only with the Exceptional Children's division of the SEA, but also the Career and Technical Education division, NC DVR hopes to leverage partnerships that create more opportunity for students with disabilities to advance along a career pathway and to participate in work-based experiences beginning in high school. Within the current formal interagency agreement between DVRS and DPI, mutual interagency responsibilities include:

• Mutual participation of appropriate personnel in the development of the transition component of the Individualized Education Program and the Individualized Plan for Employment for students with disabilities.

• Designation of an individual from Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Exceptional Children and Career Technical Education Divisions to serve as liaison with each other to represent the services of the two agencies.

• Exchange of information deemed pertinent and of mutual concern regarding service delivery. • Interagency cooperation in transition planning for students with disabilities.

• A mutual system to be developed and maintained to ensure that appropriate referrals are made to each party.

(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

A description of DVRS responsibilities pertaining to this area

Within the current formal interagency agreement, the DVRS has responsibility to ensure the provision of an appropriate program of VR services to each perspective VR client by:

• Providing administrative, technical and consultative services when needed through local, regional and state VR services' staff to local school

administrative units serving students with disabilities in transition programs. DVRS' Program Specialist for Transition Services and the state Program Consultant for Intellectual Disabilities and Secondary Education with DPI, cooperatively provide programmatic information, training and support to local school systems and to VR transition staff to maintain and enhance the quality of transition services for successful post-school outcomes for students with disabilities. The DVRS specialist provides regular technical support to schools by participating in and presenting at transition training institutes regarding transition services and adult service agencies. The DVRS specialist also visits and provides consultation and training to local schools with transition teachers, coordinators, job coaches, and other professionals.

• Screening students with disabilities referred to DVRS by the local school administrators to determine eligibility for VR services. Eligibility for VR services is based on the presence of a physical or mental impairment which for the individual constitutes a substantial impediment to employment. The student must require VR service to prepare for, secure, retain or regain employment. The determination of eligibility for VR services provided by DVRS is the sole responsibility of DVRS and is not delegated.

• Administering all aspects of the DVRS VR program services including the determination of eligibility, diagnostic and evaluation services, rehabilitation planning, transition services and the provision of a program of VR services. Some services are subject to the student's financial eligibility and/or comparable benefits.

• Providing vocational assessment trial work and adjustment services to students with disabilities who have an identified need and meet eligibility requirements.

• Providing appropriate data to the Exceptional Children Division about the number of school age students served by DVRS, by disability, age, types of services provided and post-school employment outcome through annual reporting.

• Promoting the development of cooperative agreements between DVRS and local school administrative units that include the following components: Roles of each agency; Financial responsibilities; VR staffing and supervision by the DVRS; Procedures for outreach, referral, liaison staff between the parties, eligibility, delivery of services, dispute resolutions, sharing of appropriate client information and student involvement; Joint staff development and training; Services to students with disabilities who are not receiving special education services; Assurances of compliance with Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (P.L. 105-17), Carl Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act (P.L. 105-332), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended; and, with the local educational agency (LEA), provide and implement an ongoing evaluation of the cooperative efforts with a formal annual review of the proposed budget and any necessary interagency agreement updates.

A description of Exceptional Children Division's responsibilities pertaining to this area

Through the formal interagency agreement in place, the Exceptional Children Division of the DPI has the following responsibilities with respect to the provision of technical assistance and consultation with local educational agencies:

• Provide technical assistance to local school administrative units to ensure access for students with disabilities in appropriate Career and Technical Education Programs based on recommendations of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team.

• Assist local school administrative units in the planning, development and implementation of transition services for students with disabilities.

• Inform local school administrative units of services available from DVRS and promote referral generation.

• Promote the provision of psychological, vocational, therapeutic (e.g., speech-language, occupational and/or physical therapy services), assistive technology, and work adjustment services and educational assessment in collaboration with local educational agencies (i.e., school districts) for students with disabilities having an identified need.

• Promote the development of cooperative agreements between Vocational Rehabilitation Services and local school administrative units in keeping with 34 C.F.R. Section 361.38 Protection, Use, and Release of Personal Information.

A description of Career Technical Education Division's responsibilities pertaining to this area

Through the formal interagency agreement in place, the Career Technical Education Division of the NC DPI has the following responsibilities with respect to the provision of technical assistance and consultation with local educational agencies:

• Provide needed consultation to ensure the initiation of cooperative career/technical education and internship programs for students with disabilities involved in local school administrative units and other state agencies.

• Provide consultative services to local school administrative units and other state agencies and institutions to ensure initial placement and maintenance of eligible students with disabilities in Career and Technical Education Programs.

• Provide needed consultation to ensure the initiation of cooperative career/technical education and internship programs for students with disabilities involved in local school administrative units and other state agencies.

• Provide consultative services to local school administrative units and other state agencies and institutions to ensure initial placement and maintenance of eligible students with disabilities in Career and Technical Education Programs.

• Promote the provision of vocational/technical assessment services, career-decision making training, vocational instruction, and transition planning for students with disabilities in local school administrative units.

• Promote career/technical education counseling, cooperative work experience, internships and job placement of students with disabilities by local school administrative units.

• Assist local school administrative units in the planning, development, collection of data, and implementation of transition services for students with disabilities.

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 current interagency agreement between DVRS and the state education agency stipulates that transition planning for students with disabilities will be a cooperative effort. Furthermore, the agreements specifically require mutual participation of appropriate personnel in the development of the transition component of the Individualized Education Program and the Individualized Plan for Employment for students with disabilities. The sharing of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs) at the local level is strongly encouraged. DVRS VR counselors are required to review a student's transition component of the IEP and incorporate, as appropriate, a description of relevant objectives in the IPE. Furthermore, a comprehensive evaluation will be completed by the State agency on each eligible individual, to the degree necessary, to determine the vocational goal and scope of VR services to be included in the IPE. The agreements state that the student with the disability is expected to fully participate in the development of the plan and any plan amendments. The agreements specify that the DVRS VR counselors will provide the individuals with information sufficient to make an informed choice among alternative goals, objectives, services, entities providing such services and methods to procure such services. Additionally, the agreement requires that the VR counselor is to review the IPE with the individual or his/her representative at least once each year.

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 current interagency agreement between DVRS and the state education agency stipulates that transition planning for students with disabilities will

be a cooperative effort. Furthermore, the agreements specifically require mutual participation of appropriate personnel in the development of the transition component of the Individualized Education Program and the Individualized Plan for Employment for students with disabilities. The sharing of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs) at the local level is strongly encouraged. DVRS VR counselors are required to review a student's transition component of the IEP and incorporate, as appropriate, a description of relevant objectives in the IPE. Furthermore, a comprehensive evaluation will be completed by the State agency on each eligible individual, to the degree necessary, to determine the vocational goal and scope of VR services to be included in the IPE. The agreements state that the student with the disability is expected to fully participate in the development of the plan and any plan amendments. The agreements specify that the DVRS VR counselors will provide the individuals with information sufficient to make an informed choice among alternative goals, objectives, services, entities providing such services and methods to procure such services. Additionally, the agreement requires that the VR counselor is to review the IPE with the individual or his/her representative at least once each year. (c) Roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services Summary of Roles and Responsibilities of DVRS under the current agreement:

• Provide a program of VR services to eligible individuals referred by the third party and to other individuals found eligible for services.

• Collaborative development of the transition component of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) for students with disabilities.

• Provide effective and appropriate supervision of the VR activities and VR staff assigned to provide the services.

• Provide administrative and consultative support, in the area of its program responsibilities, to the local education agency.

• Share statistical and fiscal reports to other parties as deemed mutually necessary to ensure open communication and good administrative practices.

• As part of the agreement, DVRS Rehabilitation Counselors will provide individuals with information sufficient to make an informed choice among alternative goals, objectives, services, entities providing such services and methods to procure such services. The counselor is to review the IPE with the individual or his/her representative at least once each year. The VR counselor will provide each eligible individual an IPE Handbook wherein there is an appeals process outlined. Information pertaining to the Client Assistance Program (CAP) is included in the handbook. The VR counselor agrees not to close an individual's record as having achieved a successful

employment outcome until the person exits school and is determined that the individual has successfully completed the IPE.

• Conduct an annual survey of students in the school system.

• The VR counselor will place major emphasis on students who are juniors, seniors, or potential dropouts.

• Screen referrals from other sources within the school system to enable students with disabilities who do not have an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) to be considered for VR services.

• Mutually agree to utilize appropriate staff development personnel in the planning and implementation of joint inter-disciplinary team training and/or staff development for purposes of effectively providing transitional services to students with disabilities.

• Liaison personnel appropriate and qualified for the provision of transitional services, recommending needed changes and implementing the agreement will be appointed by the administrative units of the parties named in the agreement with the educational agencies.

Summary of financial responsibilities of each agency

The current interagency agreement between DVRS and Education Agencies including the NC Department of Public Instruction and Local Educational Agencies/School Boards stipulate the financial responsibilities of each party. Financial responsibilities of respective parties are described in more detail within the TCPAs between DVRS and the LEA's, since this satisfactorily addresses the need. Summary of financial responsibilities of DVRS under the agreements:

• Provide Federal funding in the amount of 78.7% of the agreed-upon annual budget depending on the availability of Federal funds and the program arrangements.

• Maintain accounts and supporting documents that will permit an accurate determination at any time of the status of State and Federal participation of expenditures incurred in operation of the rehabilitation program.

• Assume responsibility, within the limitation of resources, for the cost of services included in the student's Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) according to DVRS' established policies and fee schedule.

• Within the limitations of available resources, provide case service funds necessary to the delivery of VR services

• Accept financial responsibility for the cost of DVRS' portion of cooperative training efforts and maintain proper accounts and records of these activities. Summary of financial responsibilities of the Educational Agency partners under the agreements:

- Parties entering into an agreement contribute to DVRS an annual cash amount of 21.3% of the agreed-upon annual budget. Whereas DVRS must provide funds equal to the State's share of planned expenditures as specified in the Federal Act. The local per centum match funds are to consist totally of non-Federal funds that have not or will not be used to match Federal funds other than Federal Vocational Rehabilitation funds used in this program.
- Any contribution of funds is made available for expenditure at the sole discretion of the DVRS. It is understood that such funds must be spent for rehabilitation services and for the administration of those services; that expenditures must be made under the approved agency State plan; and that expenditures must be made under the control and supervision of the DVRS.
- Provide all individuals determined eligible for VR services with those services that are its legal and traditional responsibility, e.g., assistive technology required and included in an individual's IEP, without cost to the DVRS. The cooperative program is utilized to provide services which represent new services or new patterns of services when compared to existing services.
- Provide and maintain adequate facilities and office space that is accessible to both staff and individuals with disabilities, private for individual counseling, with conditions that are conducive to confidentiality and counseling.
- Accept financial responsibility for the cost of their party's portion of cooperative training efforts and maintain proper accounts and records of these activities.

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

DVRS ensures that students with disabilities who are not receiving special education services have access to and can receive VR services, if appropriate, by ensuring outreach to and identification of these students. Outreach to these students occurs as early as possible during the transition planning process and must include, at a minimum, a description of the purpose of the VR program, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and scope of services that may be provided to eligible individuals. DVRS VR counselors are required to contact persons in the schools responsible for coordinating services to students under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and 504 plans and are instructed to conduct high school surveys in order to identify eligible students with disabilities. The Program Specialist for Transition Services has put forth effort at the state level to formulate relationships with pertinent staff with DPI to ensure strong working knowledge of DVRS and to encourage staff development programs to include a VR component. The importance of completing outreach to students through non-traditional means to identify students is emphasized in the Division's casework policy. Furthermore, in order to generate appropriate referrals, DVRS counseling staff members are encouraged to contact other

resource personnel within the local schools including social workers, school nurses, occupational, physical and speech therapists. One of the primary goals of the Division's provision of transition services is to work with youth with disabilities who are at risk of dropping out of school. Factors to consider for "potential dropout" referrals include: (a) verbal indications by the student of intent to leave school, (b) students with disabilities failing half of course work, and (c) students in danger of not receiving course credits due to excessive absences. DVRS will be revising policies as the Title IV regulations are finalized to further define the point at which PETS and transition services to eligible clients may begin in order to ensure that PETS services are available to students at the age at which the student is eligible to receive transition services in NC under IDEA. There are differences in available staff and in numbers of students with disabilities in LEAs and DVRS, which impacts the methods by which the Division with approach this goal, but the Division is committed to using innovative programs and methods to meet its mandates.

Other Evidence and Historical Information on Collaboration with Education Officials

Since 2003, the Division's Transition Specialist and a school counselor have served together with NC Department of Public Instruction representatives and others to form a statewide capacity building team to develop and provide coordinated transition activities for students with disabilities to achieve better results with post-school outcomes, including obtaining employment or attending post-secondary education. The Division's VR staff participates in an annual Exceptional Children's Conference and regularly scheduled cross training regarding the provision of services at the local level. Specialized cooperative training activities, workshops and conferences have existed over the years and will continue to occur periodically, including both Vocational Rehabilitation staff and educators in conjunction with the requirements of the state's Comprehensive Plan.

DVRS remains active with several organizations serving transitioning youth. With a regular presence on our State Transition Team, grant efforts such as Reaching the Summit of Success, Post-Secondary Education Alliance, and NC Division of Career Development and Transition, DVRS is well represented in our state. DVRS will host transition training in Spring 2016 that will include presentations by many of our partnering agencies and will focus on policy changes and program development as a result of WIOA. Our Program Specialist for Transition Services continues to provide extensive outreach to our transition counselors and provides in service training as requested to ensure consistency, encourage creativity in service delivery, and to provide updated information. In addition to improving Pre-Employment Transition Services offerings, the Division continues to expand Project SEARCH™ in NC, with a total of fourteen (14) sites supported this year.

Additionally, the Division continues to be a stakeholder in NC's College Supporting Transition, Access and Retention (STAR) program, which

provides transition services to secondary students with learning and executive functioning disabilities as they transition to their early years of college. We look forward to continued innovation and partnerships that will improve the quality of transition services to transition-aged youth.

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.

Private non-profit providers of rehabilitation services are necessary and valuable partners in the delivery of the array of services needed by the individuals eligible for VR services within the state. DVRS routinely seeks out such partnerships especially in geographic areas where additional services and/or service provider choices need to be established. DVRS establishes and maintains contracts or agreements with over 120 private for profit and non-profit VR service providers providing an array of services to DVRS consumers. One hundred two (102) private-non-profit VR service providers have established performance-based contracts with the Division, where the organizations are administered funds when an individual receiving services within their program has achieved designated goals or "milestones" on their way toward their ultimate goal of competitive employment. During federal fiscal years 2014 nearly all supported employment and work adjustment services provided through community rehabilitation programs were transitioned from a fee for services hourly rate payment system to a milestone payment system. Additionally, performance-based cooperative agreements engaging non-profit organizations encompass brain injury support services, multiple (currently 14) Project SEARCH™ sites and the provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services. Details of this system and its implementation were developed in collaboration with the community rehabilitation provider community through representation via the CRP-DVRS steering subcommittee and through feedback solicitations made via web-based feedback mechanisms.

In federal fiscal year 2017, DVRS phased out transitional employment programs as new legislation prohibited the successful closure of an individual employed in transitional employment. Consumers were encouraged to consider Individual Placement and Support Services as an alternate employment service.

DVRS and DSB have jointly collaborated to engage non-profit organizations through an ongoing RFA (Request for Application) advertised through the DHHS website, which is the method of procuring business with non-profit organizations for a variety of services. An interested non-profit service provider who successfully applies can enter an agreement or contract with DVRS once it has gone through the Division's vendor approval process, by which a candidate service provider demonstrates its ability to provide services that meet established standards while fully compliant with all

applicable state and Federal requirements. Site reviews are conducted to ensure that programs and services are accessible to individuals served by DVRS. Service rates are based largely on program costs, rates that have been established through researching regional market rates, or through competitive processes. Contracts are implemented through the Division's Center of Excellence Committee (COE), which is a committee established by the NC DHHS Office of Procurement and Contract Services. The committee's purpose is to identify and approve program needs, produce clear meaningful data, identify and approve outcomes, train and assist division/office program staff regarding the contractual procurement of services and reassessment of contract services. The COE includes senior management (director, section chiefs, budget officer) support and involvement. In addition to senior management, the COE includes subject matter experts in contracting, budgeting, programming, policy-making, and technology as applicable. The COE provides continuity to maintain a knowledge base about programs that can include evaluations of several contract services over extended periods of time. This approach shifts the focus from contract processing to program management, ensuring that the scope of work for the service provider is tied to results.

COLLABORATION WITH THE LUMBEE TRIBE AND EASTERN BAND OF CHEROKEE INDIANS

During federal fiscal year 2008, both the Lumbee Tribe and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians became recipients of RSA's American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services (AIVRS) discretionary grants.

From July 2009 - June 2015 and again since October, 2016, the program director for the Lumbee Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation program (LTVRS) became a participating member of the State Rehabilitation Council and regularly attends quarterly meetings. Most of the collaborative activity between LTVRS and DVRS occurred in the south central geographical region of the state, where the tribe is established. DVRS managers located within that region and LTVRS staff developed strategies for interagency referral and information sharing that assists with eligibility determinations and the development of individualized plans for employment for individuals within the covered population. Referrals are regularly made between both agencies. In order to strengthen and clarify the procedures and expectations of both agencies relating to casework, resource, and training collaboration, an interagency agreement was developed, implemented on September 28, 2009 and remains in effect.

Much of the collaboration between the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) and DVRS occurs through Vocational Opportunities of Cherokee, Inc., the community rehabilitation program that provides vocational evaluation, work adjustment, and other vocationally-oriented training services for individuals with disabilities who reside on the Cherokee Reservation (Qualla Boundary). DVRS contracts with Vocational Opportunities of Cherokee, Inc.

(VOC) for the purchase of these services when it is appropriate for DVRS VR clients who are not members of the EBCI.

DVRS also employs rehabilitation counselors that serve as liaisons with the Cherokee Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Program, which helps maintain communication channels. Recently, DVRS has worked closely with the Cherokee Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation program to effectively meet the VR needs of eligible individuals in their service area through a collaborative relationship. From July 2015 through August 2016, the Executive Director of VOC/CTVRP served on the DVRS State Rehabilitation Council as the mandatory representative for the AIVRS. DVRS and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians updated their memorandum of agreement October 19, 2009, which also remains in effect.

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

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.8(b)(4)). Describe the designated State agency's efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services and extended employment services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

The North Carolina Division of Vocational Services (DVRS) has developed a cooperative agreement with both NC Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services (DMHDDSAS) and NC Division of Medical Assistance (DMA) for the purpose of establishing cooperative guidelines to ensure individuals with disabilities have equal access to employment services, a continuum of employment services, and independent community living. The relationship among the divisions continues to improve services for both individuals with mental illness and substance abuse disorders and individuals with developmental disabilities has been enhanced over the past several years through changes in personnel at DMHDDSAS as well as a change in their focus towards a recovery oriented system of care which incorporates employment as a goal for consumers. Due to continuously changing staff, ongoing efforts are required to maintain an effective working relationship between both divisions.

NC DHHS reached an agreement with the US Department of Justice to address the needs of persons with severe mental illness living in adult care homes or were at risk of residing in an adult care home. This agreement became known as Transitions to Community Living Initiative (TCLI). TCLI resolves to address the needs of those who would like to live independently within their community versus an institutional setting by utilizing evidence based practices. DVRS, DMHDDSAS, and DMA are partnering to implement the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model of supported employment in this state. In 2012 DMHDDSAS received a four-year grant from Dartmouth Supported Employment Center to implement IPS SE. A fifth research site was added in July 2015. Outside of the five research sites is a statewide

network of employment providers who are also partnering with clinical behavioral health providers to implement this program. During federal fiscal year 2017, the state's IPS team leaders attended the annual meeting of the Johnson & Johnson/Dartmouth IPS Learning Community meeting in Cleveland, OH along with representatives from the other 17 states, Alameda County, CA, the District of Columbia, and three international countries to learn more about and discuss implementation of the IPS model of SE. DMHDDSA has also developed a state definition for supported employment and long term vocational support using the IPS model of supported employment as well as increased the hourly rate to meet the needs of the providers. North Carolina's definition calls for the inclusion of Peer Support Services as a mandatory service available to individuals with services paid through funds from the local management entity. Through this definition, if an individual with mental health disabilities chooses DVRS as their supported employment provider and the person is served through the Local Management Entity/Managed Care Organization (LME/MCO) system, they will be able to receive long term vocational supports (LTVS). Each VR office will have a liaison specifically for those CRP agencies providing IPS model of SE.

In response to the statewide need for adequate funding of IPS supported employment services, DVRS developed a milestone-based contract for all teams who are contracted by the LME/MCO. Currently, thirteen (13) IPS contracts have been developed. For those providers who have a contract with DVRS to provide supported employment services and also provide IPS model services, the standard supported employment milestones can be accessed until further IPS model contracts are implemented.

Through long term collaborative efforts between DVRS and the community rehabilitation program (CRP) providers developing ways in which consumers can be better served through supported employment, the

LME/MCOs, will have a dedicated and experienced system of providers to rely on as this state moves forward in developing and funding employment services within the state.

Another partnership NCDVRS has with DMHDDSAS is educating the LME/MCO, VR field staff, and IPS contracted providers concerning the IPS model of supported employment (SE) Representatives from both DVRS and DMHDDSAS are assisting with education and collaboration among all entities to help with implementation throughout the state. LME/MCO systems have increased the number of contracted SE providers as this model becomes more familiar and systems change to include this model.

The established CRP-DVRS steering committee continues to review the provision of supported employment services in North Carolina to ensure that funding is optimally utilized so that adequate funding will be available for ongoing extended services. The steering committee continues to address the issues that surround long term support funding such as inconsistencies in the levels of disability-type funding and shortages as well as looks at other

best practices that can be incorporated into the NC service delivery system. In recent years, NC DMHDDSAS has partnered with DVRS to implement an ODEP grant for technical assistance. The goal of this grant was to assist NC in establishing an employment first policy, implement a plan for employer engagement, and develop a unified workforce plan. Executive leadership from DVRS met with other executive leaders from DMHDDSAS, DMA, the Department of Commerce, NCCCS, and DPI to develop the initial objectives and plan for an employment first initiative. DVRS mounted the employer engagement work group that focused on the use of technology, specifically iPads to address barriers to employment. A national subject matter expert met with select DVR and CRP staff who learned to use the iPad and related apps as well as how to speak with employers on meeting their business needs.

The DVRS Program Specialist for Statewide Community Rehabilitation Programs and six (6) Regional Community Rehabilitation Specialists provide oversight for CRP's to verify that supported employment services provided by the Division will include a transition period in which extended services will be provided jointly by DVRS to assess the individual's performance within their job choice and their individual adjustment and success in their position. This time allows any observed issues to be resolved and an extension of the stabilization phase if necessary.

The continued growth of the statewide network of supported employment service providers has resulted from collaboration between the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and entities such as the North Carolina Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, the North Carolina International Association of Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services, NCCDD and the Mental Health Consumers' Organization. In addition, the North Carolina Association for Persons Supporting Employment First (NCAPSE) provides a forum for focusing on supported employment standards and expanded choices for individuals with the most significant disabilities in the state.

The North Carolina Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (NCARF) and NCAPSE have been heavily involved in the continued development of supported employment services, specifically for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. DVRS, NCARF, and NCAPSE have collaborated on training

events and the development of new supported employment programs across the state as well as new service models. Community rehabilitation programs, which include facility-based and free-standing programs, provide the majority of supported employment services for persons with the most significant disabilities. New community-based options are expanding through collaboration with NCCCS, the Post- Secondary Education Alliance, DMHDDSA, and with the addition of contracting private providers. Brain Injury Support Services continue to operate within the state in Greenville, Winston Salem, Raleigh, and Charlotte areas with an interest in expanding to underserved areas of the state. DVRS has recently released a Request for

Applications to solicit proposals from providers to provide brain injury services, particularly in areas of the state that are underserved. Selected providers are in negotiations to modify existing models for brain injury services with DVRS and will add at least one additional location for the next federal fiscal year that is currently not served.

Beginning in 2012 and through 2017, the NCCDD funded training and technical assistance for the development of Project SEARCH™ sites across the state of NC. DVRS has been a core partner of each of the fourteen (14) Project SEARCH™ programs developed in NC and contributes to the braided model by funding internship, job placement, and job training services for program participants. DVRS has committed to funding a statewide Project SEARCH™ specialist position to support continued growth and collaboration for this evidenced-based model of supported employment. Finally, DVRS maintains active membership on several statewide advisory boards, including on the NC Brain Injury Statewide Advisory Council and the Mental Health Planning Council. Established through legislative mandate in the 2003 General Assembly, the NC Brain Injury Advisory Council's mission is to review the current definition of traumatic brain injuries, promote interagency collaboration among state agencies serving this population, study the needs of persons with traumatic brain injuries and their families, make recommendations regarding a comprehensive service system for this population, and promote and implement injury prevention strategies across the state. The Mental Health Planning Council meets quarterly to review the annual Mental Health Block Grant Plan and to submit to the state any recommendations of the Council for modifications to the plans. The Planning Council also serves as an advocate for adults with a serious mental illness, children with a severe emotional disturbance, and other individuals with mental illnesses or emotional problems; and monitors, reviews, and evaluates the adequacy of mental health services within the state.

In addition, DVRS represents the agency on the "Governor's Working Group on Service Members, Veterans, and their Families," which is a collaborative monthly meeting that serves as a resource clearinghouse for addressing issues of returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan and other service members. Outreach efforts between DVRS, the Veterans Administration, and other military operations have occurred to ensure that veterans and their family members are aware of services available to them through DVRS.

An agreement between DVRS and Veterans Administration's Vocational Rehabilitation Program was implemented in late 2014, which is intended to maximize mutual services for Veterans and ensure a more streamlined referrals process between the two agencies.

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

Coordination with Employers: General Overview

DVRS continues to utilize a dual customer approach by providing services to both businesses and individuals with disabilities. The Division emphasizes the definition and marketing of business services to ensure the dual customer approach is recognized and implemented. Business services include recruitment, hiring, consultation on Section 503 compliance, sensitivity/diversity training, accessibility consultation, internships, On-the-Job Training (OJT), education on tax incentives, and follow-up and job retention services. NC DVR continues to market business services by employing 67 business relations representatives (BRRs) that serve as employment specialists across the state. These individuals often have education and experience in a business-related field, such as human resources and marketing, so that DVRS is equipped with personnel who understand the needs of employers. In addition to providing individualized job seeker services, the business relations representatives connect with local industry through participation in networking events and working relationships with workforce system partners.

The performance of business relations representatives is measured, in part, by assessing relationships with business as evidenced by direct and indirect placements of eligible jobseekers with disabilities. DVRS believes that relationships with employers is the essence of creating positive connections between jobseekers and business, and that providing follow-up and technical assistance to business fosters these relationships so that they can have a sustainable impact on the supporting individuals with disabilities in finding, maintaining, and advancing in employment.

DVRS services to job seekers intersects with business services in the areas of vocational evaluation and career development, job seeker preparation, and job development and job placement of individuals with disabilities who are ready to work. DVRS staff continue to be trained in the dual customer approach and employment outcomes in order to identify these intersection points between the VR services that DVRS provides to jobseekers and those services provided to business. The unique role of the business relations representatives highlights this intersection well.

In 2016, DVRS incorporated several changes to our internship program to better meet the needs of interns and business. Changes included providing worker's compensation coverage for interns, internal management and distribution of funds for internship wages, and improved guidance on selecting internship opportunities that promote training and preparation across a variety of industries and levels of employment. As a result of these changes, DVRS' utilization of internship services (funding) increased by 800%. DVRS plans to continue promoting the use of internships as a means for exposing the diverse talent pipeline of individuals with disabilities to business in our community.

DVRS staff, including business relations representatives, will continue to develop relationships with business based on the individual placement needs of eligible individuals with disabilities who are placement-ready. Employers will be engaged in the individual preparation of job seekers with disabilities by involving them in Employment Marking Skills training classes as well as Job Clubs. Employers participate in job interview preparation of job seekers in addition to information-sharing with job seekers about employer expectations in general and within their specific industry.

Additionally, DVRS will be investing in disability sensitivity training in 2018 to promote the transition of students with disabilities to employment after high school. DVRS BRRs will receive Windmills Sensitivity Training with special focus on promoting the diversity and talent of students with disabilities as they exit high school and embark on career pathways. Furthermore, DVRS will continue to pursue customized training partnerships like one developed with Fenner Drives in 2016. This project engaged high school students with significant disabilities in semester-long employer-based training at the Fenner Drives facility, located in Wilmington, NC. The students earned school credit while they gained career exploration and specific skills in the manufacturing industry and were provided internship wages and on-the-job supports. DVRS aims to identify additional opportunities to prepare workers for local jobs using a combination of supports and employment training services and by engaging with other workforce partners (e.g., community colleges).

DVRS plans for continued emphasis on the number and depth of our business relationships. DVRS is making steps to procure a replacement case management system by 2020 and has developed requirements for an account management component of this system. The objective of account management features is to provide improved customer service and strategic planning towards services to business. DVRS hopes to be a part of regional initiatives around engaging with business and aims to be participatory and responsive to business needs across internal organizational boundaries.

2. TRANSITION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, FOR STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES.

While youth and students with disabilities have access to the same VR services as adults, there are some VR services reserved for or targeted to transition-aged youth for the purposes of assisting them with leaving high school and preparing for competitive employment. DVRS continues to work towards meeting its 15% required spending allocation for Pre- Employment Transition Services (PETS) to students with disabilities.

Since 2014, DVRS has worked towards implementing Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) in the following ways:

- Enhancing existing PETS service-delivery models and developing tracking and reporting mechanisms consistent with federal regulations. For example, as a result of changes to our internship program, more students with disabilities have participated in work-based learning through internship opportunities. Additionally, work-based learning and workplace readiness components of the Project SEARCH™ model continue to be provided to students with disabilities in eight (8) of the fourteen (14) sites across NC.
- Contracted PETS services: At the time of this report, thus far in FFYs 2017 and 2018, DVRS effected sixteen (16) PETS service contracts with community rehabilitation programs and community agencies for the provision of two or more of the five (5) pre-employment transition services required activities. Through these contracts, DVRS has the capacity to reach 2000 students with disabilities.
- Local transition planning to identify opportunities for DVRS staff to provide PETS in a way that best meets the needs of students with disabilities in each local education agency
- Developed agreement with the Juvenile Education Services Division of the state's Department of Public Safety to provide PETS to students with disabilities in NC's four youth development centers serving adjudicated youth. DVRS has also committed funds to a PETS Coordinator who will directly provide PETS services to these students.

Through the mechanisms described above and others, DVRS will continue to work towards meeting its 15% spending obligation for PETS. Additionally, DVRS is pursuing a number of pre-employment transition services authorized activities to build capacity for effective and innovative practices for transitioning students with disabilities from school to postsecondary education and competitive integrated employment outcomes. Authorized activities being pursued include: informational fairs; training opportunities for VR, education, and community agency staff; research on PETS service outcomes; and model demonstration projects for innovative pre-employment service delivery methods.

DVRS will continue to coordinate with local and state education agencies under revised formal agreements to best align resources and services to students with disabilities across the state in the areas of pre-employment transition and transition services. DVRS' agreements with local school districts enables DVRS to employ approximately 130 staff who are dedicated to providing, coordinated, and arranging for PETS and transition services to students in the partnering districts. These agreements enable DVRS to provide expertise on VR transition services to students in these districts through coordinated service delivery strategies as well as local systems-level consultation, coordination, and planning.

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;

The NC DHHS Division of Medical Assistance (DMA) is the state agency responsible for administering the State Medicaid plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act. DVRS is currently developing a cooperative agreement with DMA to ensure that individuals with the most significant disabilities have equal access to VR and best practice employment services. DMA is a lead partner agency, in addition to the DVRS and DMHDDSAS, for the implementation of the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model of supported employment in North Carolina, as described in Section F of the General VR Portion of the Unified Plan. Additionally, the case management system for the VR program has an interface with the State's Medicaid information system, "NC Tracks," for the purpose of identifying rates to support the purchase of medical equipment and services for VR participants as part of their vocational rehabilitation program.

2. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES; AND

DVRS is partnering with the DMHDDSAS and other divisions and departments in developing competitive, integrated employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities through initiatives such as the recent technical assistance grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Policy (ODEP). With ODEP funded technical assistance from a national subject matter expert, progress was made in modifying service definitions which will lead to much greater supports and sharing of resources. Through this technical assistance grant, the DMH/DD/SAS is exploring a pilot project with LME/MCOs where a select group of providers of IPS services for individuals with mental illness will model the DVRS milestone format for contracted outcomes. DVRS continues to contract with providers to provide specialized services for traumatic brain injuries in the Charlotte, Winston-Salem, Raleigh, and Greenville areas and surrounding counties. This service model consists of a blend of cognitive rehabilitation therapy along with career exploration, job placement and extended services. DVRS will continue to look toward expanding availability of such services in unserved and/or underserved areas of the state. DVRS is represented at the NC Statewide Brain Injury Advisory Council.

Staff from the Employment and Program Development Section continues to represent DVRS at the Governor's Working Group on Veterans, Service Members and their Families. DVRS is actively engaged with other resource

groups to promote DVRS as a resource for veterans and service members and their families.

3. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

DVRS continues to partner with the DMHDDSAS in implementing individual placement and support supported employment (IPS SE) throughout the state. Currently, there are 35 IPS SE programs throughout the state and DVRS contracts with 13 of them. DVRS offers such programs the opportunity to apply to become and IPS contractor through an ongoing RFA. DVRS also works alongside the DMHDDSAS and the University of NC Chapel Hill Institute for Best Practices staff to conduct onsite fidelity reviews of the IPS SE programs, training of IPS Teams, including DVRS field staff, statewide IPS learning collaborative, provider steering committees, monthly calls with the Rockville Institute (formerly the Dartmouth Supported Employment Center), as well as the annual IPS SE Rockville Institute's Learning Collaborative. DVRS also works with DMHDDSAS to inform providers and beneficiaries on the impact of employment on federal and state benefits and have collaborated in efforts to increase capacity of benefits counseling experts in the state.

I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT; DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

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

1. DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

A. QUALIFIED PERSONNEL NEEDS.

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

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

DVRS utilizes the state human resource and payroll system called Building Enterprise Access for North Carolina's Core Operations (BEACON), which was fully implemented in 2008. Reports on staff positions and vacancies pertaining to the Unified Plan are customized from this system. Data on the number of VR program participants are provided through the BEAM case management and service payment system.

The table below shows the number of personnel employed in the provision of VR services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category. In total, the ratio of VR counselors to individuals served is 53,013 served / 370 total counselor positions or 143:1 for DVRS.

Number of personnel who are employed in the provision of VR services in relation to the number of individuals served, and vacancies by personnel category:

Job Title	Total positions
Rehabilitation Counselor I	213
Rehabilitation Counselor II	98
Rehabilitation Counselor in Charge	59
Rehabilitation Admin Counselor I	3
Rehabilitation Admin Counselor II	14
Rehabilitation Admin Counselor III	14
Vocational Evaluator II	42
HR Placement Specialist (BRR)	70
Human Services Coordinator I	0
Human Services Coordinator II	4
Rehabilitation Casework Tech	117
Processing Assistants	101
Total	735

ii. the number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and

Currently, DVRS has funded the following VR service positions:

Job Title	Total positions
Rehabilitation Counselor I	213
Rehabilitation Counselor II	98
Rehabilitation Counselor in Charge	59
Rehabilitation Admin Counselor I	3
Rehabilitation Admin Counselor II	14
Rehabilitation Admin Counselor III	14
Vocational Evaluator II	42
HR Placement Specialist (BRR)	70
Human Services Coordinator I	0
Human Services Coordinator II	4
Rehabilitation Casework Tech	117
Processing Assistants	101
Total	735

iii. projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the State agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

The total number of individuals served through the DVRS VR Program has not increased in the past several years and an increase in funded positions is not expected. The number of positions is not expected to change. At this time we project the number of positions as follows:

Job Title	Total positions
Rehabilitation Counselor I	213
Rehabilitation Counselor II	98
Rehabilitation Counselor in Charge	59
Rehabilitation Admin Counselor I	3
Rehabilitation Admin Counselor II	14
Rehabilitation Admin Counselor III	14
Vocational Evaluator II	42
HR Placement Specialist (BRR)	70
Human Services Coordinator I	0
Human Services Coordinator II	4
Rehabilitation Casework Tech	117
Processing Assistants	101
Total	735

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;

DVRS works closely with all of North Carolina's Rehabilitation Counseling university programs of study through advisory board participation, internships, and partnerships in conferences and training events. Institutions of higher education in NC that are preparing VR professionals include:

- ***NC A&T University***: Mental Health Counseling - Rehabilitation Program Master's program; Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Rehabilitation Counseling & Rehabilitation Counselor Education; Certificate in Rehabilitation Counseling & Behavioral Addictions; Certificate in Rehabilitation Psychology & Behavioral Medicine; and Certificate in Vocational Evaluation & Work Adjustment;
- ***Winston Salem State University***: Masters of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling with program focus specialization offered in Deaf & Hard of Hearing, Rural Transition, Vocational Evaluation, as well as Public VR;
- ***University of NC at Chapel Hill***: Master of Science in Clinical Rehabilitation & Mental Health Counseling;
- ***East Carolina University***: Masters of Science in Rehabilitation & Career Counseling; Certificate in Rehabilitation Counseling; Certificate in Vocational Evaluation; Certificate in Substance Abuse Counseling; and Certificate in Military & Trauma Counseling.

ii. the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and

- ***NC A&T University***:
  - Mental Health Counseling - Rehabilitation Program Master's program, **36 students**
  - Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Rehabilitation Counseling & Rehabilitation Counselor Education, **28 students**
  - Certificate Rehabilitation Counseling & Behavioral Addictions, **22 students**
  - Certificate in Rehabilitation Psychology & Behavioral Medicine, **8 students**
  - Certificate in Vocational Evaluation & Work Adjustment. **0 students**
- ***Winston Salem State University***:
  - Masters of Science in Rehabilitation: **40 students**
- ***UNC at Chapel Hill***:
  - Master of Science in Clinical Rehabilitation & Mental Health Counseling: **42 students**
- ***East Carolina University***:
  - Masters of Science in Rehabilitation & Career Counseling: **18 students**
  - Certificate in Rehabilitation Counseling: **12 students**

- Certificate in Vocational Evaluation: **26 students**
- Certificate in Substance Abuse Counseling: **unknown**
- Certificate in Military & Trauma Counseling: **32 students**

iii. the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

- ***NC A&T University:***
  - Mental Health Counseling - Rehabilitation Program Master's program, **8 graduates (2 hired between DVRS and DSB)**
  - Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Rehabilitation Counseling & Rehabilitation Counselor Education, **4 graduates**
  - Certificate Rehabilitation Counseling & Behavioral Addictions, **10graduates**
  - Certificate in Rehabilitation Psychology & Behavioral Medicine, **unknown**
  - Certificate in Vocational Evaluation & Work Adjustment, **unknown**
- ***Winston Salem State University***:
  - Masters of Science in Rehabilitation: **16 graduates**
- ***UNC at Chapel Hill***:
  - Master of Science in Clinical Rehabilitation & Mental Health Counseling: **18 graduates**
- ***East Carolina University***:
  - Masters of Science in Rehabilitation & Career Counseling: **14 graduates (2 hired between DVRS and DSB)**
  - Certificate in Rehabilitation Counseling: **3 graduates**
  - Certificate in Vocational Evaluation: **2 graduates**
  - Certificate in Substance Abuse Counseling: **unknown**
  - Certificate in Military & Trauma Counseling: **20 graduates**

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.

DVRS implemented a paid internship program in January of 2005. This program was coordinated from our Staff Development section with the support of management, Human Resources, and counselors across North Carolina. Due to budget restrictions, this program became an unpaid internship program. This change in the program did have impact in the initial involvement of students, but participation is improving overall. The benefit of hiring interns into vacant positions is that we have a sense of the person's strengths and weaknesses prior to being hired. The 24-month probationary period that every new employee undergoes does allow the Division better assess a proper job match. If the person is not successful during this time, the person is released from the job during probationary status. This is not viewed the same as a dismissal. It is considered an extension of the hiring process and not disciplinary action. A majority of our interns hired by DVRS have been from the two Historically Black Universities in our state; NC Agricultural & Technical State University and Winston-Salem State University.

DVRS personnel participate in the university Rehabilitation Counseling program advisory boards within the state. The type of personnel representing DVRS within these advisory boards varies; however the Division is well represented and our role well respected within these programs. Our partnerships with these institutions are fortified through our staff enrolled in many of these programs, which include the historically black schools. Further, the unit offices are encouraged to participate in partnering local career fairs at the partnering universities and colleges. Marketing displays and brochures have been provided to every unit office so that marketing materials remain available for the unit offices' activities.

A broader perspective on retention includes a comprehensive, timely and effective onboarding/orientation program that is in progress. The Division recognizes that getting off to the right start can make the difference in retaining an employee. A comprehensive overview of the Division-its mission, staff, organizational structure, processes and relevant information-can ensure a good start. The Staff Development section is working with an advisory board that includes different job classifications throughout the agency to structure an onboarding program that will be effective for all levels of employees. The program will not begin with the first day of employment; it will begin as part of the hiring process and will extend throughout the career of each employee. An onboarding program helps a person feel that the agency is prepared to help new employees gain information necessary for their job at the right time. The intent is not to flood a new employee with so much information that it becomes useless. The program will be presented largely in an on-line tutorial or distance learning

format, enabling employees to be at different places within the process at one time.

Nationwide recruitment is now done by posting positions in NeoGov, an Internet Human Resources Application Provider for Government Agencies. NeoGov has eliminated the need for numerous individual contacts to advertise available positions and has expanded the available applicant pool. A section on DSB's website labeled, "Career Opportunities" links browsers to NeoGov listings. Plans have also begun to begin to alert the universities with Rehabilitation Counseling Programs to openings as posted to further encourage qualified applicants.

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

While DVRS modeled the counselor personnel standard after the CRCC, the Division also initiated its own comprehensive standard with more specific listing of degrees that it will accept.

Effective October 1, 2008, this standard-related requirement for a Rehabilitation Counselor hire included:

- Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling;
- Master's degree in a closely related field such as Counseling, Social Work, Psychology, Special Education, Communication Disorders, Human Services;
- Current certification as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor or Licensed Professional Counselor;
- Current enrollment in a qualifying master's degree program AND graduation occurs prior to the date of hire.

As of December 21, 2009, all employees in the Rehabilitation Counselor I and Rehabilitation Counselor II roles met the CSPD mandate. Although the mandate has been lifted, DHHS has not at this time changed its policies regarding minimum requirements for the VR counselor position but has explored using the minimum credentialing standard as a preferred recruiting standard for positions that are in locations particularly difficult to recruit for. This is allowable as per the Workforce Innovation and

Opportunity Act. Currently, employees that do not meet the minimum education requirements serve in trainee status and not function as a Rehabilitation Counselor, and must progress toward attaining the necessary requirements outlined in a Memorandum of Agreement within the specified timeframe. If the employee does not meet the specified requirements or they are not progressing at an acceptable rate, the employee is separated during their probationary status period.

The VR program currently averages around 10 qualified applicants for each vacancy, which is primarily attributable to the current economic climate. This means that recruitment for Rehabilitation Counselor I and Rehabilitation Counselor II positions have not been as challenging as in years past. DVRS does find it more challenging to find individuals prepared to serve a Deaf and Hard of Hearing caseload, but these vacancies have not been impossible to fill.

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.

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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

DVRS provides a comprehensive system of staff development for VR professionals and paraprofessionals, particularly with respect to service delivery, assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, transition services, rehabilitation technology, employee engagement, and leadership development. This includes training provided by the DVRS Staff Development team, Rehabilitation Education Specialists, and Quality Development Specialists, as well as agency participation in collaborative training events and statewide conferences. Individuals may also participate in training offered through the NC Department of Health and Human Services as well as the NC Office of State Human Resources.

Agency training sessions are conducted through customized instructor-led sessions and online learning experiences. Continuing education units are provided in the form of CEU and CRC credit for all internal training programs. More than 2500 participants engaged in 67 training events, including the classroom sessions and webinars listed below.

A total of 46 internal instructor-led sessions were provided during this timeframe, providing 196 classroom contact hours, as follows:

- Medical Records Training (4 hours, delivered 3 times)
- Influence: Making Things Happen in the Workplace (1 hour)

- Leading at all Levels-Supervisory Foundations (14 hours, delivered 3 times)
- Do you have the Right Stuff? (performance) (3 hours)
- Valuing Individual Performance: VIP Training (2 hours)
- Transference & Countertransference (3 hours)
- Disability Awareness (4 hours)
- Training Needs - Strategic Office Planning (2 hours, delivered 3 times)
- PowerPoint Coaching (4 hours)
- Effective Communication (3 hours)
- Components of Effective Case Management (2 hours, delivered 2 times)
- Employee Engagement (3 hours, delivered 2 times)
- Procrastination & Avoidance (2 hours, delivered 2 times)
- Employment Strategies for Vocational Placement (5 hours)
- Positive Behavioral Intervention & Supports (1 hour)
- Documentation and Collaboration: Let's work together! (3 hours)
- NCDVR-NCDPI 2017 Joint Regional Transition Trainings (1-day, delivered 6 times)
- Ethical Issues for Rehabilitation Counselors, provided by UNC-CH (4 hours)
- Teambuilding (14 sessions ranging from 2-5 hours in length)

Twenty-one online learning webinars were provided for a total of 24.5 contact hours, as follows:

- De-escalation (1 hour)
- Career Counseling: Exploring Job Options (2 hours)
- Customer Service in VR: Back to Basics (1 hour)
- Get Set with PETS Part I (1 hour, delivered 2 times)
- Get Set with PETS Part II (1 hour, delivered 2 times)
- NC VIP-Completing the Interim Review (1 hour)
- Office Support-Back to the Basics with Outlook (1 hour)
- Coaching for Peak Performance (2 hours)
- Create a Great Place to Work (1 hour)

- Skype for Business (1 hour)
- Magic with Word (1 hour)
- Communication Strategies that Engage Your Team (1 hour)
- Effective Delegation (2 hours)
- Excel 101: Mission Not So Impossible (1.5 hours)
- OneNote (1 hour)
- WIOA Compliance, Policies & Procedure Requirements (1 hour, delivered 2 times)
- Internship Policy (1 hour)
- Annual Benefits Enrollment (1 hour)

DVRS also sponsored 868 staff to attend 20 different professional conferences during this timeframe, including:

- NC Foundation for Alcohol and Drug Studies, Summer School (30)
- NC Foundation for Alcohol and Drug Studies, Winter School (20)
- NCARF Conference (10)
- NCAPSE Annual Fall Conference (24)
- NCAPSE Spring Conference (7)
- NC Works Pre-Conference (56)
- NC Workforce Development Conference (80)
- SERID (South East Regional Institute on Deafness) (12)
- The GREAT Conference, a collaboration between NCATP, NCRA, and SERNRA (224)
- NC VEWAA Fall Conference (20)
- NC VEWAA Spring Conference (13)
- Traumatic Brain Injury Conference (10)
- Rehabilitation of Racial and Ethnic Minorities with Behavioral Addictions (REMBA) Conference (45)
- NC Division on Career Development and Transition conference (31)
- Vocational Evaluators National Issues Forum (20)
- UNC TEACCH Autism Program Conference (30)
- IPS Training for VR Counselors & Supervisors (webinar) (50)
- 2016 NC DVR & DSB Joint Transition Counselors Conference (165)

- NRA & Georgia Rehabilitation Association Conference (3)
- 21st Century Building Expo & Conference (18)

In addition to the above, individuals are sponsored to attend local training events and conferences upon approval of their manager and utilizing office administrative funding. Some of these sponsored events included Winston-Salem University Mental Health & Substance Abuse Training, the Trinity Conference, the Kanuga Conference, the Carroway Conference, the NC Employment & Training Association (NCETA) Conference, the NC Exceptional Children's Conference, and the System Administrator WIOA Changes Training.

New employees receive both mandatory and optional training opportunities. Mandatory training includes "Understanding Harassment in the Workplace"; "HIPAA training"; "Investigating Workplace Violence'; "Bloodborne Pathogen Awareness Training"; "NCVIP Employee Performance Management" training curriculums; "Be a Hazard Hero Safety Training"; "Slips, Trips & Falls Safety Training"; "OSHR Safety: Incident Investigation & Reporting Procedures"; and "DHHS Active Shooter" training. Suggested training for non-supervisory staff includes the Leading at All Levels (LAAL) program curriculum for individual contributors, which includes "Individual Contributor Foundations"; "Communicating with your Team"; "Dealing with Change"; "Out of the Box Thinking" and "Exploring Supervision: Is this the role for me?"

New supervisors and managers receive both mandatory and optional training opportunities. Mandatory training includes: "Grievance Overview"; "Equal Employment Opportunity & Diversity Fundamentals"; "Effective Hiring"; "Introduction to Recruitment and Selection" and the "NCVIP Performance Management" training curriculums. Suggested training includes "Coaching the NCVIP Way"; "Disciplinary Action Process"; "Stress Awareness for Supervisors & Managers"; and the Leading at All Levels (LAAL) program curriculums for supervisors or managers, which includes "Supervisory Foundations"; "Managerial Foundations"; "Leading Teams for Supervisors"; "Coaching for Supervisors"; "Managing Work for Supervisors"; and "High Performance Coaching for Managers". Furthermore, more experienced managers were supported in participating in the "Advanced Skills for Managers" and the "Certified Public Manager" programs provided by the NC Office of State Human Resources.

Additional training is provided at the agency's annual Statewide Manager's Meeting. The March 2017 meeting theme was "Create the Great: Growing Together", and training was provided on disciplinary action, EEO situation awareness as well as team and employee development.

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.

DVRS staff acquire and disseminate information, including knowledge from research and other sources, through conferences and trainings as described in the preceding section, 4(a), and through regularly scheduled meetings, in-person and online trainings, reports and publications, email distribution, monthly and quarterly newsletters, and through posting information on its intranet site, which includes sectional areas, policy updates, reports, case management system changes, and links to other information sources. Information is also shared at collaborative meetings among staff and leaders across the state. At the 2017 Statewide Manager's Meeting previously referenced, presentations were provided on the NC Partnership Plus Implementations, the WIOA Performance Accountability System, Poverty and Disability, and WIOA: Where We've Been, Where We're Headed. Online learning is facilitated through online meeting and video conferencing technology and online presentations through the NC Learning Center web portal. DVRS also retains subject matter experts on its staff who serve as statewide program specialists in the areas of deaf and hard of hearing; mental illness and substance abuse; developmental disabilities and brain injury; transition-age youth and business relations; community rehabilitation programs; and rehabilitation engineering. Domain-specific knowledge is shared by the program specialists with regional specialists and local office staff at meetings, trainings, reports and presentations.

In 2016 a Peer Advisory Leader (PAL) Mentoring Program was developed and implemented through the Professional Development and Training section to assist new employees with knowledge and understanding of the agency's mission and goals, and to aid in employee retention. New employees are paired with a more experienced peer mentor located in a different office for a period of six-months to assist in the employee's successful adjustment to their new position. The PAL's program helps new employees build an optimistic attitude and motivation for job performance, productivity and acceptance of responsibility with confidence. PAL's also encourages socialization, networking beyond their local office, and a sense of belonging in professional and customer service relationships. Our PAL's Mentors provide continuous accessibility to NC DVRS resources in support of all employees. The first group of Peer Advisory Leaders successfully completed orientation on February 16, 2016. Seventy-three Peer Advisory Leader Mentor relationships were developed with new hires across the state in FY16-17. The second class of 42 PAL Mentors is currently underway. While the program is still new, it is deemed to be very valuable to our organizational success, and the results thus far are notable. Plans to continue the PAL's program is supported at the highest levels of the organization.

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.

DVRS acknowledges communication as a vitally important aspect of the rehabilitation process from start to culmination and remains committed to the provision of services that enable individuals who have specific communication needs to participate in their rehabilitation program. Further, these interpreting and translation services have been identified as essential for quality and success in the delivery of VR services.

DVRS counselors have the responsibility for determining the individual's preferred language and providing a qualified foreign language interpreter/translator at the earliest possible opportunity, before or after the initial contact with the Division. This translation service is provided at no cost to the person with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). A specific budget (budget code 1292) is designated solely for the provision of this service. The interpreters/translators for all languages, including American Sign Language, must be qualified and trained with demonstrated proficiency in both English and the native language of the client. The Membership Directory of the Carolina Association of Translators and Interpreters at http://www.catiweb.org/ is presently used; however, it is not required that all qualified interpreters/translators be listed in this directory. All fundamental VR and IL forms are available in Spanish for individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). The DVRS public website is also in Spanish for the section regarding VR Services to Consumers.

During federal fiscal year 2016-17, DVRS employed 14 counselors proficient in American Sign Language with caseloads specifically serving deaf and hard of hearing individuals. There were also 10 technicians, 3 Business Relations Representatives, 1 Human Service Coordinator, 1 Program Specialist, and 1 Assistive Technology consultant for the deaf who support these counselors and the consumers being served. Approximately 11 interpreting agencies and over 159 independent licensed interpreters contract with the Division and are paid out of this budget.

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.

North Carolina's Secondary Education and Transition Services team consisting of members from DVRS, NC Department of Public Instruction (DPI) representatives, university representatives and parents developed a state transition plan which includes a goal to accomplish a system of personnel development in support of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) and the Rehabilitation Act for collaboration to increase transition services to students with disabilities.

The NC Secondary Education and Transition Services planning team began in SFY 2011 with the purpose to execute the original transition training objective identified in the state plan. The purpose of the resulting Transition Capacity Building Summit was to replicate the state planning process at the local level to facilitate training and teambuilding for the local school systems and cooperative VR offices that attended. This collaboration centered on building capacity for participating local community level transition teams to implement student-focused transition planning through interagency collaboration. The framework of transition-focused education provides a structure for educational planning that is outcome-oriented and promotes greater involvement and ownership in the decision-making process by key stakeholders, particularly students and their families. The initiative that began in 2011 continues today, and several transition training and collaborative events were held in SFY 16-17. VR hosted a two-day 2016 NC DVR & DSB Joint Transition Counselors Conference in February 2016, which was attended by 165 state VR and DSB employees, and 69 local education agencies (LEA's) and community partners. This conference agenda offered plenary sessions on WIOA & PET, Workforce Development for Youth, a State-of-the-State report on transition, and Creating Opportunity for Transition-Aged Youth with Disabilities. Concurrent sessions were available on topics including Career & Technical Education for Special Populations, Innovations in Adult Basic Education, Career Pathways and Community College, Disability Advocacy, Budgeting and Counseling, Asset Building and the ABLE Act, Evaluation Tools for Transition-Aged Youth, Internship Innovations, College STAR, MH/DD/SAS Services and Managed Care, and Juvenile Diversion. Six additional one-day sessions, the NCDVR-NCDPI 2017 Joint Regional Transition trainings, were co-hosted with the NCDPI and held in a variety of locations across the state between February and April 2016. Prior to these Joint Regional Transition trainings, 4 one-hour webinars were also provided as a two-part series to familiarize staff with transition services. The NCDVR-NCDPI 2017 Joint Regional Transition Trainings accommodated more than 445 attendees, and the training agenda covered PETS & 511 Overview, PETS Resource Mapping, PETS & Transition Flow of Services, and Action Planning. In addition, agency staff participated in the yearly NC Division on Career Development and Transition conferences, and the NC Exceptional Children's Conferences. The State planning team has a continuous goal to include other LEAs in additional summits, conferences and training for 2018.

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 findings presented in section (j) Statewide Assessment are summarized from the Triennial Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment submitted in the State Plan for program year 2014. A Statewide Assessment is currently in process and is expected to be completed by June 30, 2018.

The survey data presented in this report includes two sets of surveys: one set of surveys was conducted from mid-August through mid-September 2013 specifically for the purpose of the CSNA. These surveys were sent electronically to VR program participants, VR staff members, and also to leaders of consumer advocacy groups and WDB Directors, who served as key informants. Other survey data incorporated into the CSNA report were collected for other program development, planning, and evaluation purposes that were applicable to the CSNA. Survey responses were supplemented with data on the demographics of people with disabilities, employment and labor statistics, other components of the North Carolina's Workforce Development System, and community rehabilitation programs.

The CSNA survey for VR program participants asked respondents to: (a) Identify their top three most critical VR needs for getting a job and keeping a job; (b) Rate the ability of the VR Program to help them with each of these needs; and (c) Let DVRS know what they think the VR Program could do to help with each of these needs. In total, 684 VR participants provided responses that identified one or more specific needs. The proportion of respondents with significant or most significant disabilities was 86%, which approximated that of the total population of eligible VR participants served that year. The most frequently mentioned critical needs of individuals with significant or most significant disabilities, as identified by VR participants were: job search and placement assistance (42%), followed by training services (26%); transportation (20%); physical and mental restoration services, including medication and medical supplies and equipment (16%); on-the-job supports, such as peer mentors and job coaches (5%); and other supports, such as help with housing, utilities, childcare, and work clothes and shoes (5%).

The CSNA survey for VR staff members and advocacy groups was presented in two sections. The first part of the survey requested that respondents: Identify the three most critical needs of people with disabilities in North Carolina towards becoming employed or continuing employment and for each: (a) rate how DVRS responds to that need; (b) identify the major gaps/barriers DVRS experiences when fulfilling this need; and (c) recommend a solution for DVRS to overcome these barriers. The second survey component requested that the respondents identify special populations of people with disabilities in North Carolina they considered to be unserved or underserved, the specific VR needs of these populations, and what DVRS can do to increase outreach to these unserved or underserved populations.

The most frequently reported need of individuals with significant or most significant disabilities, as identified by advocacy groups (n = 22) was the

need for employer willingness to hire and retain workers with disabilities (82%) followed by the need for job supports, including long-term supports (36%); the need for transportation services (36%); and the need for staff development and more empathy for VR consumers by providers (14%). The most frequently cited need of individuals with significant or most significant disabilities, as identified by VR staff members (n = 370), was transportation (56%), followed by employer and community awareness (46%), training services (26%), VR counseling and guidance, including benefits counseling (25%), access to healthcare, including mental healthcare (25%), and the overall labor market and economy, which has disproportionately impacted many rural areas in North Carolina (24%).

Major service gaps and barriers identified and recommended solutions from VR staff were as follows:

Transportation Services

Public transportation services: Lack of funding and no public transportation in rural areas. Many NC cities do not have public transportation available, and those that do, do not serve rural areas. In cities that do have transportation, the system only operates on a fixed schedule and doesn't meet the needs of consumers that have to work weekends or the night shift. Work locations may not be close to bus routes.

Private transportation services: There is a lack of private providers willing to provide transportation at a reasonable rate, and consumers do not have the money to pay someone to drive them to and from work.

Personal transportation: Many VR consumers don't have a license and/or vehicles, and have no family member or friend to provide transportation. They have lost their license due to previous substance dependence, cannot obtain a license due to their disabling condition, cannot drive due to their condition, and/or cannot drive due to the side-effects of necessary medications. Some VR consumers who are able to drive cannot afford to because they are on limited income (SSI, SSDI, etc.) or have not had income due to their condition.

Vehicle modifications: The current policy regarding agency contribution toward the cost of vehicles for modification purposes is the major barrier to someone who needs to purchase a modified vehicle.

VR policy isn't adjusted for geographical differences: Tighter policy controls on transportation costs/payment which disregard individual geographical needs. When cases are looked at for compliance and fiscal management it is with a critical eye toward this and other types of maintenance expenses which may or may not occur in other geographical or economic conditions/situations.

VR sponsorship of transportation is a short-term solution: DVRS is not presently set up to provide ongoing transportation services for individuals

after they have been employed. Sponsored transportation is meant as a short-term solution.

VR sponsorship of transportation is a time-consuming process, and sometimes unreliable: Even when we can justify sponsorship of public or private transportation services, often the process is time consuming and the provider unreliable, thus creating a major delay in requested and agreed upon services.

Recommended solutions for DVRS to overcome a lack of transportation as a barrier to employment for people with disabilities included: (a) Increase vendorships with private transportation companies: Engage in more vendorships with private transportation companies to assist in helping employees with disabilities get to/from work; (b) Promote small business opportunities for consumers: Encourage clients who are interested in small business to invest in transportation to become VR vendors. Help consumers that are able to start their own business in supplying transportation services in those rural areas that are underserved. We could use state vehicles and pay consumers as drivers, and consumers could also be employed to do maintenance and repairs on the cars -- the process could be used for training clients; (c) Collaborate with local transit authorities: The local areas will have to develop affordable transportation, so work closely with the local transit authority staff. Partner with local transportation authorities to provide free or reduced fares to people with identified disabilities to and from work, and to provide services at nights and on weekends. Advocate on behalf of people with disabilities regarding the need for accessible transportation. DVRS can serve on a task force or community forum to address concerns pertaining to transportation, and inform their counties of potential grants or express concerns pertaining to transportation for people with disabilities and see how the community can come up with a solution; (d) VR Policy Changes: Separate transportation costs for clients from the general 'maintenance' category. This could be a more flexible expense that truly reflects a regional or local need. Make the policies specific and eliminate the gray areas so that they are consistently applied. Increase funding to expand the purchase of vehicles for modification purposes; and (e) Speed-Up the Process: Reduce time to approve special transportation requests.

The Need for Community and Employer Education and Employer Willingness to Hire and Accommodate Workers with Disabilities

Negative perceptions towards people with disabilities: Based on experiences of VR staff, they observe that public and employer perceptions of individuals with disabilities were a major barrier. This included VR consumers with an obvious disability who can't get past human resources because it is assumed that individual can't perform the required functions of the position based on physical appearance. Other reasons included that people are not familiar with, therefore not comfortable around individuals with disabilities. This barrier of negative attitudes and perceptions is described in terms of

misinformation, myths, stigma and discrimination, and also risk -- that employers feel that it's a risk to hire someone with a disability because the person may become a liability to their business. The issue of risk was said to be more applicable to smaller employers that were resistant to taking chances or making accommodations. The preference for an employee without a disability was also said to relate to higher job competition in areas where unemployment was higher, in which there were many applicants for one job opening, placing our consumers at a considerable disadvantage.

Limited VR resources for dual customer approach, and employer outreach and education: VR staff members wrote that implementation of the dual customer approach, and other employer outreach and education efforts were limited by VR resources, including limited use of social media. Staff members wrote that the business relations representatives were essential to their efforts, but that their catchment areas were too large, and that they could not do it all themselves. VR staff wrote that they needed more assistance with the employer outreach and did not have enough time to market VR and services to employers as they should. They also wrote they needed more leadership for this function in DVRS, best practices in its implementation, and more effective management and teamwork in many offices to effectively use the resources they have. Currently, there is no outreach plan, unit offices have little or no funds for advertising to employers, and that the materials they do have are out-of-date. This sentiment wasn't across the board, as some staff members noted that some counselors are actively building relationships with employers and educating them, but that it was not being consistently done by everyone.

Recommended solutions for DVRS to reduce negative public and employer perceptions and attitudes toward people with disabilities, and increase employers' willingness to hire our consumer included:

Having an outreach plan and expanding the outreach and disability awareness and education for employers and the community. Recommendations included educating policymakers, and increasing involvement with business associations, chambers of commerce, workforce boards, and other organizations;

Marketing VR to employers through traditional and newer channels of communication, including social media; and increasing outreach capacity through counselors and business relations representatives, including in-person and electronic networking activities. The means of increasing outreach capacity included paperwork reduction and increasing the number of counselors and casework technicians to reduce caseload size and allow counselors more time for outreach activities, in addition to increasing the number and availability of business relations representatives.

The Need for More Jobs and Higher Paying Jobs in a Changing Economy

Major service gaps or barriers DVRS experiences when fulfilling this need were related to high unemployment and changes in the types of jobs that are

available, which is often unfavorable for VR consumers with work limitation. VR staff members also reported that employers can be more selective in their hiring, and may be resistant to taking the time or assess the costs for job carving, on-the-job training, job coaches, or additional healthcare coverage. A common theme was that many of these factors were due to economic conditions.

Recommended solutions for DVRS to increase employment opportunities for our consumers in the face of a declining job market for low-skill workers and workers with employment limitations or who require accommodations: (a) employer incentives and advocacy for workforce development, including employer education on the value of hiring workers with disabilities and incentives, such as subsidized insurance, that would motivate employers to hire VR consumers and tax breaks that would attract new businesses to NC; and (b) increased networking, outreach and business relations to make the connections between employers and VR consumers receiving job search assistance and placement services.

The Need for Job Skills Training and Education for VR Consumers

Major service gaps or barriers DVRS experiences when fulfilling this need most generally in terms of: (a) lack of resources: funding, staff, and programs within DVRS to assist individuals with obtaining the necessary skills to transition into employment; (b) procedural barriers, mainly policies on transferrable work skills, the vendor approval process, and the approval process for training services, which was described as "layered"; (c) the short-term measure of a successful outcome rather than a focus on career employment; and (d) client motivation to participate in training programs.

Recommended solutions for DVRS to increase or improve training services included: (a) increase collaboration with community colleges and have a VR representative on campus; (b) expand training programs, including those administered through WorkSource East and WorkSource West; (c) sponsor GED completion for adult high-school dropouts, and provide assistance with mileage to for clients to travel to GED/HSD sites, and also assistance with loan of computer/laptop or assistance with onsite computers at VR offices for consumers to access training; (d) help consumers identify resources for training or companies that are willing to provide training; (e) review vendor approval policies and evaluate the criteria for vendor approval, especially schools or training sites; and (f) develop business relationships with employers and provide incentives for on-the-job training and internships.

The Need for Access to Healthcare and Mental Health Services

Major service gaps or barriers DVRS experiences when fulfilling this need most generally in terms of: (a) lack of resources, mainly community resources and the NC mental health system; (b) the trend of employers hiring part-time workers to avoid having to provide medical insurance; (c) VR policies and focus, which include limitations on the provision of

restorative services, although staff members also reported an increased emphasis on placement over restoration.

Recommended solutions for DVRS to increase access to healthcare and mental healthcare services: (a) VR staff training on restoration policies; (b) tele-psychiatry for lower cost mental health services; (c) advocacy; (d) VR staff awareness about companies that assist with prescriptions, grant writing, and the newer processes/eligibility requirements for certain services through social services and local management entities; and (e) increased collaboration with providers and the development of new programs.

The Need for Counseling and Guidance, Including Benefits Counseling

Major service gaps or barriers DVRS experiences when fulfilling this need most generally in terms of: (a) consumers' needs for VR services, but lack of motivation to become employed, some of which is driven by disincentives to work, including the potential loss of SSI, SSDI or other public benefits; and (b) the lack of resources, including time, additional counselor positions, and expertise required for better counseling and guidance. The lack of resources was said to be in part due to counselor vacancies, lack of support staff, and attention to non-counseling related activities, such as focusing on meeting performance measures and processing paperwork.

Recommended solutions for DVRS to increase its capacity for counseling and guidance and help further motivate consumers to enter or reenter the workforce, particularly those receiving SSI or SSDI benefits included increasing VR counseling capacity through: (a) smaller caseloads; (b) paperwork reduction; (c) a decreased focus on performance measures and increase attention to holistic counseling; (d) hiring additional counselors and support staff; and increasing the quality of VR counselors through training and higher salaries. These were said to attract and retain high quality counselors and allow the counselors more one-on-one time with the consumer to provide counseling and guidance, including motivational counseling. The most frequently mentioned solution for increasing client motivation for our consumers receiving public benefits, such as SSI or SSDI, was to increase benefits counseling services.

B. WHO ARE MINORITIES;

With regard to the needs of individuals who are minorities individuals of Hispanic or minority racial background accounted for 259 (38.5%) of the CSNA survey respondents and the needs of minorities group were similar and inclusive of those of individuals of non-minority backgrounds with significant or most significant disabilities described in section (j)(a)(i). The most frequently mentioned critical needs of VR participants of minority backgrounds were: job search and placement assistance, followed by training services and transportation. Additionally, the second component of the CSNA survey described in section (j)(a)(i) requested that the respondents identify special populations of people with disabilities. Ethnic

minorities, particularly Hispanics/Latinos, immigrants and non-English speaking VR participants were identified as an underserved population of individuals with disabilities in North Carolina. Of the 370 staff survey respondents, 26 (7%) identified people with disabilities of minority backgrounds as underserved, 24 of which identified Hispanic or Latino non-English speaking individuals, although other racial and ethnic minorities, including individuals of Hmong, American Indian, and Muslim backgrounds were also mentioned in four of the responses. Examples of responses include:

The most frequently mentioned VR needs specific to this population were identified as follows:

Language Communications: 13 (57%) of the 23 responses identified language communications, and the need for interpreter services or bilingual VR staff as the specific need for this population:

Outreach Services: 4 (17.4%) of the 23 respondents responded that a cultural barrier existed and that there is not enough outreach to these populations. This relates to language communications in that one respondent wrote that it was the reason this population was overlooked.

Other Needs: single responses indicating basic education, interviewing skills, transportation, and loss to follow-up due to seasonal work.

An additional assessment with regard to access to services was conducted through comparison of the 2013 ACS estimated population of North Carolinians with disabilities and eligible VR clients served during federal fiscal year 2013 by minority race and ethnicity and disability type, and the population penetration rate or percent of the state's population of individuals with disabilities served by the VR Program in federal fiscal year 2013.

In federal fiscal year 2013 about 52% of all eligible VR consumers were of a minority race or ethnicity, and 90% of minorities were Black or African American. The prevalence of disability among African Americans, ages 16-64, is estimated at 13.9%. The penetration rate for the population of African Americans with disabilities is 14.7% for any disability; 27.7% for cognitive disabilities; 7.9% for ambulatory disabilities; and 3.9% for hearing disabilities.

Comparatively, the prevalence of disability among American Indians is the highest at 15.7%, and the penetration rate for this population is lower than for African Americans, with 9.6% for any disability; 16.2% for cognitive disabilities; 5.0% for ambulatory disabilities; and 2.7% for hearing disabilities.

The prevalence rates for Hispanics and Asians are considerably lower than for African Americans and American Indians, at 5% and 3.8%, respectively. The reason for this was explored in the 2010 CSNA, which identified US nativity as a factor associated with higher prevalence of disability. However,

although the prevalence rates are low, the penetration rates for these populations are also very low. For Hispanics, the penetration rate is 6.4% for any disability; 11.3% for cognitive disabilities; 4.2% for ambulatory disabilities; and 2.1% for hearing disabilities. For Asians, the penetration rate is 5.1% for any disability; 12.5% for cognitive disabilities; 4.4% for ambulatory disabilities; and 4.6% for hearing disabilities. VR Staff members identified non-English speaking populations, including Hispanics and Asians, as unserved, and these data identify these groups has having the lowest population penetration rates.

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

DVRS Staff Survey Part 2: Identifying Underserved Populations

The second component of the CSNA survey described in section (j)(a)(i) requested that the VR staff and advocacy groups identify special populations of people with disabilities in North Carolina they considered to be unserved or underserved, the specific VR needs of these populations, and what DVRS can do to increase outreach to these unserved or underserved populations.

Of the 370 VR staff members that completed the survey, 320 (86.5%) identified one or more specific populations of individuals with disabilities that were unserved or underserved, including 9 (2.4%) staff members who indicated that all populations of individuals with disabilities were underserved. The remainder included 16 (4.3%) that indicated that there weren't any underserved populations and 34 (9.1%) that either didn't answer the question or responded that they didn't know or were unsure. The following section shows the specific populations of North Carolinians with disabilities that staff members identified as underserved.

People with Mental Illness

Of the 370 staff respondents, 76 (21%) identified individuals with mental illness as an underserved population. This category includes mental illness, in general, and also individuals where mental illness is concurrent with another disabling condition, such as substance abuse disorder, or particular demographic characteristics, such as being of younger or older age, having low income or being homeless, and having a criminal background.

The three most frequently mentioned VR needs specific to this population were identified as follows:

• Mental Health Services: 40 (53%) of the 74 VR staff members who identified people with mental illness as an underserved population indicated the need for additional mental health services. The NC mental health system was said to be both fragmented and limited, and clients may not receive ongoing treatment needed for stable employment. Mental healthcare is not always available for the client, and timeliness of services was said to be an issue: It can take months to get an appointment with another agency. Responses in this category included a need for community-based, outpatient

care that is more comprehensive and affordable, with continuity of care, including medications and counseling from licensed professionals. This includes mental health evaluations by medical professionals; psychotherapy, as appropriate; and long-term monitoring and medication management to stabilize them so they can work and have productive lives.

• Support Services: 22 (29%) of the 74 VR staff members who identified people with mental illness as an underserved population indicated the need for additional support services, including support to their families and employers. Staff members indicated that this population often has basic needs that are unmet including housing, transportation, and food, but also that there was a need for long-term vocational supports.

• Willingness of Employers to Hire and Make Accommodations: 19 (26%) of the 74 VR staff members who identified people with mental illness as an underserved population indicated the need for overcoming the stigma of mental illness for employers. Responses in this category related stated a need for "open-mindedness" among employers, regarding their willingness to hire and flexibility in scheduling and other workplace accommodations. As one respondent put it, "too many employers see them as just "crazy." Also included in these responses was the need for better trained client advocates and job coaches to help with job placement and to educate employers.

• Other:

o Outreach: The VR programs would receive additional appropriate referrals if they were aware of the many broad disabilities that can receive assistance through this employment program and not think narrowly of VR as a service for individuals with sensory or physical disabilities. Expanded educational efforts to referral sources serving individuals with more less evident disabilities such as psycho-social and medical disabilities that limit work activities. Further, language used with the general public needs to be easily understood as they often do not understand language such as impairment, impediment, limitations to employment, and chronic conditions.

Individuals with Cognitive Impairments and Developmental Disabilities

Of the 370 staff respondents, 55 (14.9%) identified people with cognitive impairments and developmental disabilities as an underserved population. This population was identified more often from casework supervisors (30.3%) than from VR managers, counselors, and specialists and consultants (group average = 16.9%). For the purpose of classification, this population includes people with autism and brain injuries, including individuals who are high functioning but still in need of support.

The VR needs specific to this population were fairly diverse, and inclusive of most every service provided or sponsored by the VR Program. This is likely because, as a few staff members indicated, the needs of this population "varied according to the nature of the disability," and were highly individualized: "one size does not fit all." The most frequently mentioned VR needs specific to this population are identified as follows:

• Education, training, job coaching and related supports: The need for training and training-related supports was the most common need mentioned: The needs in that category include traditional education, but also other types of training, including job skills development, work adjustment training services, and specialized cognitive training and interpersonal skills training.

• Supported Employment and increased CRP service capacity: Respondents wrote there was a need to continue existing programs and increase service capacity through additional programs.

• Employment Services, job availability and employer willingness to hire and make accommodations: Responses in this category related to the need for job placement services, the lack of availability of jobs for this population, the need to educate employers and have employers willing to hire and make accommodations for individuals with cognitive impairments and developmental disabilities, including autism and those resulting from brain injuries.

• Training for VR and CRP Staff, and more individual attention: There were a few responses that indicated a need for additional training and specialization for VR and CRP staff. This category also includes the related need of more individual attention.

Offenders

Of the 370 staff respondents, 36 (9.7%) of the 3 identified people with disabilities and criminal records, particularly those with felony convictions, inmates, and individuals on probation or parole as an underserved population. Descriptions of this population included concurrence with mental illness and substance abuse disorder, but were not limited to these populations. The distribution of the staff members that identified this population is shown in the table below, which indicates that the perception that ex-offenders and inmates were an underserved population was considerably less frequent among VR managers, supervisors, and counselors than VR staff members in other roles.

The most frequently mentioned VR needs specific to this population were identified as follows:

• Willingness of Employers to Hire: 17 (47%) of the 36 VR staff members who identified people with disabilities and a criminal background as an underserved population indicated the need to find employers willing to hire them, regardless of their criminal history, which may require additional employment services, including additional job search assistance and selective placements. • Training and job readiness: 13 (36%) of the 36 VR staff members who identified people with disabilities and a criminal background as an underserved population indicated the need for job skills training, education, and other skills development, including the need to develop interviewing and social skills.

• Other needs: Single responses indicating a need for case management assistance, peer supports, transition services, and support systems.

People with Substance Abuse Disorder

Of the 370 staff respondents, 27 (7.3%) identified people with a substance abuse disorder as an underserved population.

The specific needs of this population were not neatly identified because they were most frequently mentioned in concurrence with the needs of other the populations, such as individuals with mental illness, consumers that were homeless, those with a criminal backgrounds, or some combination of these. The most frequently mentioned VR needs that seemed most specific to this population were identified as follows:

• Treatment and relapse prevention services: These services include placing a priority on treatment first so that the client can pass a drug screening test, with mention of recovery houses and Narcotics Anonymous and Alcohol Anonymous meetings, counseling and relapse prevention.

• Support services: These include all types of support services provided through the VR program, including transportation services.

• Employment services and employer willingness to hire and provide accommodations: Examples of responses include:

Advocacy Key Informant Survey Part 2:

Of the 22 respondents, 16 (73%) identified one or more populations of people with disabilities they considered to be unserved or underserved in North Carolina.

People with Mental Illness

Five respondents identified individuals with mental illness as an underserved population. The specific VR needs of this population were identified as follows:

• Job supports on a regular basis.

• Training on how to do task from start to finish; how to evaluate when task is done properly; how to receive judgment and criticism and redirection.

• Higher learning or high school/GED completion, job skills training, résumé writing, interview skills.

• Clear expectations, by VR, Community Rehabilitation Programs, other government agencies, parents, teachers, and employers. Then, a supportive philosophy, with accompanying policies, practices and funding.

People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Five respondents identified people with intellectual and developmental disabilities as an underserved population. The specific VR needs of this population were identified as follows:

• As with people with mental illness, clear expectations from VR, other involved agencies, parents, schools, and employers.

• Cost-effective, perhaps group services for those who with limited skills and the potential to work independently.

• Educating employers to help them understand that physical disabilities don't limit other abilities. • Employment resources and training to find jobs that interest them.

Other groups identified in single responses

• People with brain injury: This population is challenging to service because of multiple needs and issues. These individuals often need job coach opportunities and help finding the right job match. • People with autism: This population needs pre-vocational skills training, and training on how to find and keep a job, including proper workplace behaviors.

• People with substance abuse disorder: This population needs for providers to learn the most up-to-date treatment issues for this population

• High school students with disabilities: This population needs VR services while in school, and more VR training before the student becomes an adult.

• People with disabilities who qualify for Medicaid or state funded services: This population includes the uninsured working poor. Such individuals may need more education to be able to apply for jobs that can be more rewarding. Individuals in this category who are ex-offenders may need to be able to clean up criminal records at times. They need counselors who will believe in their aptitude and connect them with resources.

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

The VR Needs of Individuals with Disabilities Served through other Components of the Statewide Workforce Development System State and Local Improvements Needed for Workforce Development System Integration and Accountability This section is named after the title of a complete evaluation of North Carolina's entire workforce development system, which was published in March 2012 by the North Carolina General Assembly Program Evaluation Division. NC DHHS and DVRS participated in the evaluation at various stages. The full document is accessible online through the North Carolina General Assembly website: http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/PED/Reports/documents/Workforce/WFD_Report.pdf. The summary of the report's findings are that state and local program coordination of workforce programs have failed to create an integrated, effective workforce development system. Among its findings, the report notes that the services offered at local NCWorks sites and level of integration varies across the state, and that the centers do not apply information technology to the extent available, and that despite investments in a data system to track participants, there are no statewide performance measures for the workforce development system. The recommendations

were that the NC General Assembly should streamline the workforce development system, enhance accountability, strengthen the NCWorks system (One-Stop Centers), require increased use of technology, and create a legislative oversight committee to oversee the reforms. These changes would benefit all job seekers, of which individuals with disabilities are a disadvantaged subgroup. The recommendation toward increased use of technology was said to be particularly applicable to North Carolinians with disabilities in making services more accessible. For example, in the report (p.25), a Workforce Solutions administrator explained that NCWorks were conceptualized as a physical location but that remote access could facilitate the virtual presence of specialized staff that do not need to be at NCWorks full time for customers with disabilities, thereby avoiding the need for a return visit on a day when staff is on site. An important recommendation of the above reference Workforce Development System evaluation report was to improve the NC Common Follow-up System (CFS), which is currently undergoing implementation. Data from the CFS show that of 60,105 DVRS VR program clients included in the cross-program match for PY 2013, 4,497 (7.5%) were served through the Division of Adult Corrections and Juvenile Justice; 4,025 (6.7%) were served through the Department of Public Instruction; 74 (0.1%) were served through the DSB VR Program; 10,455 (17.4%) were served through the Division of Social Services; 18,232 (30.3%) were served through the Division of Workforce Solutions; 13,400 (22.3%) were served through the North Carolina Community College System; and 854 (1.4%) were served by a University of North Carolina constituent university. Over a five year period, of nearly 120,000 individuals served by the VR program in an eligible case status, 82% were provided services or participated in a program provided through another CFS agency. Nearly 1 in 5 VR consumers was served through the Division of Adult Corrections, which is slightly more than those in DPI. More than half of VR Consumers are served through DWS, and just under half receive services through the NCWorks Career Center System, and just under half were enrolled in the NC Community College System. The need for collaboration in service provision is suggested by the volume of our VR consumers served through one or more of these other agencies.

Challenges the NC Workforce Development System on Whole Experiences When Fulfilling the Needs of Individuals with Disabilities

Five Workforce Board Directors served as key informants for the CSNA. Each was asked to (a) Identify challenges the NC Workforce Development System as a whole faces when fulfilling the needs of people with disabilities; (b) Identify what they thought could be done to overcome these challenges; and (c) Identify what they thought DVRS and the State Rehabilitation Council could do to help in overcoming these challenges. The top ranked challenges identified were: (a) client training and job skills development; employer willingness to hire and accommodate people with disabilities; (b) transportation and other support services; and (c) training and resources related to assistive technology for NCWorks Career Centers. Barriers to

client training and job skills development were: (a) the system doesn't specialize in serving folks with disabilities; (b) getting employers who allow flexible working schedules; lack of partnerships with vocational rehabilitation to serve people with disabilities; and (c) clients may not be aware of the other services available. Solutions proposed included: (a) training for ncworks staff in the different types of disabilities; (b) continue to market services to employers; (c) NCWorks Career Center staff can refer customers to VR, continue to build rapport with our other workforce partners, and bridge the gap with employers; and (d) VR could present information about NCWorks Career Centers workforce partner programs to VR participants. With regard to the need for more employers to hire and accommodate people with disabilities, barriers included: (a) lack of funding to educate business on the hidden workforce available; and (b) lack of employer knowledge of available accommodations that can be made. Solutions proposed included: (a) continued partnerships with agencies that specialize in providing services for individuals with disabilities; and (b) for other workforce agencies to train staff, educate employers, and promote hiring of individuals with disabilities to employers. With regard to the need for transportation and other Support Services, the barrier was mainly limited funding and lack of coordination. The proposed solutions were to leverage additional funding sources and improve coordination of services. Lastly, the barrier regarding the need for training and resources related to assistive technology for NCWorks Career Centers was a lack of funding and the solution proposed was to leverage resources to purchase, build infrastructure, and install technology that assist individuals with disabilities.

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

CSNA VR participant survey respondents included 121 (18%) clients who were transition age youth. This group was underrepresented in the responses in that transition age youth comprise 38% of the population of eligible VR participants that year. However, when assessing the needs reported by this group, they were similar to that of the population on whole, with the top needs being training, job placement, and support services. An analysis of the 2013 American Community Survey (ACS) data found that for North Carolinians ages 16 to 20, the prevalence of disability is 5.8%. A comparison with eligible VR clients served during federal fiscal year 2013 by age group found that among 16-20 year-olds, the population penetration rate is 28.5% overall, and 34.6% for youth with cognitive disabilities, which is a large VR consumer population segment, accounting for 18% of all VR clients. The population penetration rate is less than 1% for youth with visual disabilities, though this may be due to services available through other programs, including the NC DHHS VR Program offered through the Division of Services for the Blind. The penetration rate is 6.5% for youth with hearing disabilities, which may suggest additional efforts could be made to serve this

population, although services provided through the North Carolina School for the Deaf, and DSDHH may also be available.

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

The Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) directly provide, or facilitate the provision of one or more VR services to individuals with disabilities as one of their major functions. The purpose of these services is to enable those individuals to maximize their opportunities for employment. DVRS extends its services for people with disabilities through partnerships with the CRPs. The CRPs provide one or more of the following services to people with disabilities to help them prepare for and obtain employment: community-based assessment, vocational evaluation, work-adjustment training, supported employment, and job coaching. Toward the start of federal fiscal year 2015, DVRS held contracts or memoranda of agreement with over 135 CRPs across the state. For an organization to become a CRP with DVRS, the organization must be accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), the Council on Accreditation (COA), or the Council on Quality Leadership (COL) in the area of service provision and adhere to criteria set forth in rules by the Division. CRPs are periodically reviewed by DVRS Regional CRP Specialists, which are located throughout the state. The DVRS directly administers two community rehabilitation programs WorkSource East in Goldsboro and WorkSource West in Morganton. In federal fiscal year 2015, more than 7,800 VR participants received services from a CRP, of which approximately 39% received supported employment (SE) services. Of those provided CRP services that year, 2,804 achieved their employment objectives in the same year, including 1,110 individuals that were placed in employment in an integrated setting with supports, while many others continued to progress towards employment. The requirement that the CSNA include an assessment of the need to establish, develop or improve Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) is not satisfied by an individual, isolated activity. Rather, DVRS hold regularly scheduled DVRS/CRP Steering Committee meetings expressly for this purpose. Members include DVRS staff, including rehabilitation program specialists, office managers, the Chief Accountant for CRP services, and representatives from the NC DHHS Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services (MH/DD/SAS), and representatives from the CRP community appointed by DVRS, NC Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE), and the NC Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (NCARF). The steering committee meets on a quarterly basis and focuses on budgetary and program issues and makes recommendations to the DVRS Director. The overall goal of the committee is to help ensure the delivery of quality services with informed choice by our consumers. The committee's goals and recommendations along with the Division Director's feedback are posted on the DVRS public web site. Examples of activities cited in the CSNA submitted

in the FFY 2014 State Plan included: • Review and ongoing revisions to rules and standards, including qualifications standards for CRP staff providing or supervising direct services to consumer, which were developed to address the need for service quality and uniformity. • The development of a new evaluation instrument to assist with monitoring the quality of services being provided by CRPs, and also address the need for service quality and uniformity. • The development of a website specific to CRP resources, such as vendor applications and rules and standards, which now includes a description of the process for becoming an approved vendor. This was done to address the need to communicate this information and make it more accessible to the public. The website with this information is: http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dvrs/employ/rehab.htm. • An evaluation of fair rates and methods of compensation for CRPs and supporting activities such as transportation services provided to consumers, which addressed the need for fiscal responsibility in providing these services efficiently, yet fairly. • The development of effective collaborative efforts with the NC DHHS-Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services (DMHDDSAS) to provide consistent funding for extended supported employment addressed the need for VR Program participants to receive follow-along services, even after their case was successfully closed. • Information provided by CRPs and the steering committee was assimilated to help identify innovative activities and expansion projects using ARRA funding, including the maintenance of the CRP infrastructure during periods of high unemployment. Milestone System The most impactful changes with regard to the need to establish, develop or improve Community Rehabilitation Programs have so far resulted from a structured service delivery model that replaced the VR purchase of hourly-rate fee-for-services for work adjustment and supported employment with contracted outcome-based milestone system. Although some CRP services were already being purchased on performance-based contracts, most were not. The need for a milestone system arose from a combination of inconsistent or incomplete placement records for some providers; billing irregularities; feedback from VR staff on surveys pertaining to CRP services, the documentation and level of accountability required, and constraints on the resources required for monitoring and processing authorizations for hourly rate services. Having a milestone system was to address these issues: reduce billing irregularities, paperwork, and the need for documentation and monitoring, and to hold CRPs accountable for VR consumer outcomes. Implementation of a milestone payment for work adjustment and supported employment job development and placement services was first initiated October 2012, following stakeholder input, internal cost analyses, and an evaluation of how other state VR programs had successfully implemented similar milestone payment systems. Once the job development milestone was in place, a sample of 62 VR counselors who used CRP services were surveyed on their level of understanding of VR policy as it pertained to the CRP services. Of the 62 respondents, 23 (37%) indicated that they have excellent understanding while 36 (58%) indicated they had a good understanding, and 3 (5%)

indicated an average understanding. In this survey, the counselors were asked about their current training needs as related to different CRP services categories, and about 24% indicated that they need training in policy and procedures; 21% said that they need training in follow-along services; and 19% wanted to have training in job development. Individual responses also indicated that DVRS should have more qualified staff working with the CRP so they can stay abreast of changes and the need for their services, and that there was a communication gap between the CRP and DVRS. Regarding their relationship with the CRPs in their catchment area 40% indicated that they have "excellent" relationship with the CRPs while 48% rated "good" relationship. This study resulted in the greater clarification of policies, a practice that carried over to the full implementation of the milestone system. The complete milestone payment system for SE and work adjustment services was developed collaboratively with CRPs through the CRP Steering Committee and became effective November 1, 2013. As applicable, there are payments at the point of intake; for supplemental evaluation; job development and retention; training and stabilization; and successful case closure after at least 90 days employment. Evaluations of the new milestone payment system as it pertains to the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs will continue through the next CSNA cycle. Individual Placement and Supports (IPS) Another recent initiative is the Individual Placements and Supports (IPS) model of supported employment for individuals with serious mental illness (SMI), serious persistent mental illness (SPMI) and co-occurring disorders. Research into this model began in July 2012 and initiated discussions to become a part of Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center's IPS learning collaborative. In August 2012, the Transitions to Community Living (TCL), the US Department of Justice (DOJ) Settlement Agreement with North Carolina, further established that people with SMI must be provided evidenced-based practice Supported Employment services. The Dartmouth research on IPS shows that implementing IPS to fidelity doubles the number of people in competitive employment at a rate of up to 60%, and the initiative is expected to provide NC additional resources to help overcome some of the barriers to employment for individuals with SMI and increase their participation in the labor market. The between DVRS and DMHDDSAS for collaboration for its implementation began in July 2013. DMHDDSAS is the agency responsible for LTVS, which provides assistance with maintaining a job for participants, age 16 and over, who no longer need the intense level of Supported Employment Services. LTVS are provided because of specific needs of the consumer, including medical and behavioral needs, and supports regarding the social or environmental issues that are a part of successful employment. North Carolina's state definition of supported employment (SE) is now based on the SE-IPS model, and SE/Behavioral Health providers that have since signed contracts with their LME/MCO will be providing the IPS model of evidence-based SE as part of the TCL/DOJ initiative. These include the more than 130 VR supported employment providers throughout North Carolina. There will be an ongoing assessment

of the impact of the IPS model, and all sites providing evidence-based SE will be evaluated with a research-based fidelity measure, and will receive a rating and quality improvement report, not duplicative of monitoring; meaning that for the next needs assessment, VR will know the level of fidelity each site as implemented to guide further training, technical assistance, and quality improvement measures, and will be able to quantify the number of CRPs providing evidence-based supported employment to people with serious- or severe and persistent mental illness.

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 .

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 will be included in the next needs assessment. Preliminary data with regard to actual services provided in FFY 2015 suggest that the DVRS VR program current expends approximately $5.5 million or 34% the mandated level on PETS services, with regard to direct cost services and staff time allocated to required PETS activities. The transition services specialist recently convened a PETS conference with focus groups and discussions on ideas for developing PETS programs, such as expanding the number of Project SEARCH sites, summer internship and work experience programs, and self-advocacy workshops with involvement from the CILS. Strategies are currently being developed to accurately track staff time allocated to PETS and incorporate documentation in the VR program's case management system.

K. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

Describe:

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

DVRS estimates 48,000 individuals with a disability who have been determined eligible for VR services, exclusive of pre-employment transition services, will be in-service with the VR program in each of the federal fiscal years 2019 and 2020 (i.e., 10/1/18 - 9/30/19 and 10/1/19 - 9/30/20). This estimate includes (a) cases where purchased services are provided in accordance with the consumer's individualized plan for employment; (b) cases where purchased services are provided toward the development of the consumer's individualized plan for employment (e.g., diagnostic and assessment services provided by a community rehabilitation program); and

(c) cases where non-purchased services are provided in-house by DVRS staff or as a comparable service or benefit.

2. THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL RECEIVE SERVICES UNDER:

A. THE VR PROGRAM;

Of this population of 48,000 individuals determined eligible for VR services, DVRS estimates a subgroup of approximately 20,700 individuals will receive direct cost services provided with funds under the basic support grant during each of the federal fiscal years.

B. THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM; AND

In federal fiscal year 2017, DVRS paid for 2,858 individuals to receive supported employment (SE) services at total cost of nearly $11 million and an average cost of $3,824 per case. For federal fiscal year 2019 and federal fiscal year 2020, an estimated 2,900 individuals with most significant disabilities (MSD) will each year receive supported employment services funded through Title I Part B (basic support grant), for a projected total cost estimate of $11 million per federal fiscal year.

C. EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION;

DVRS does not expect to implement an order of selection process during federal fiscal year 2019 nor federal fiscal year 2020. Services will be available both years for all client service categories.

3. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR VR SERVICES, BUT ARE NOT RECEIVING SUCH SERVICES DUE TO AN ORDER OF SELECTION; AND

The North Carolina VR Program is not currently under an order of selection and does not expect to be during federal fiscal years 2019 and 2020.

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.

For federal fiscal year 2019 and federal fiscal year 2020, DVRS estimates total basic support grant expenditures of approximately $82 million per year, exclusive of pre-employment transition services. This includes administrative costs, counseling and placement, and all purchased services, including supported employment.

In federal fiscal year 2017, DVRS paid for 2,858 individuals to receive supported employment (SE) services at total cost of nearly $11 million and an average cost of $3,824 per case. For federal fiscal years 2019 and 2020, an estimated 2,900 individuals with most significant disabilities (MSD) will each year receive supported employment services funded through Title I

Part B (basic support grant), for a projected total cost estimate of $11 million.

Category	Title I or Title VI	Estimated Funds	Estimated Number to be Served	Average Cost of Services
Title I (Except Supported Employment)	Title I	$71,000,000	45,000	$1,578
Title I Supported Employment	Title I	$11,000,000	3,000	$3,667
Totals (not including pre-employment transition services)	Title I	$82,000,000	48,000	$1,708

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.

Goals and priorities were jointly developed with the State Rehabilitation Council. On March 17, 2016, the State Rehabilitation Council's subcommittee on Consumer Input and Outreach approved revisions to the Consumer Satisfaction Survey, which also revises the wording in the goals and objectives associated with Priority 3, Increase Client Satisfaction.

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

Priority 1. Improve Client Outcomes• Goal 1.1. Increase the number and proportion of individuals exiting the VR program in employment after services were provided under an individualized plan for employment.• Objective 1.1.1. The total number of individuals exiting the VR program in employment will exceed that of the prior year.• Objective 1.1.2. Increase the rehabilitation rate for individuals exiting the VR program after receiving services under and individualized plan for employment from 50.4% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 55.8% in program year 2019.• Goal 1.2. Increase the number and proportion of individuals with significant or most significant disabilities exiting the VR program in employment after services were provided under an individualized plan for employment.• Objective 1.2.1. Maintain that at least 75% of VR consumers who achieved competitive employment will be individuals with significant or most significant disabilities.• Goal 1.3. Increase earnings for individuals exiting the VR

program in employment.• Objective 1.3.1. Increase average hourly earnings for individuals who exit the VR program in competitive employment from 48% the statewide average for all North Carolinians in federal fiscal year 2013 to at least 52% in program year 2019.• Objective 1.3.2. Increase the proportion of clients exiting the VR Program in competitive employment whose own income is their primary source of support at closure compared to the percentage whose own income is the primary source of support when they applied for VR services from 62.7% in federal fiscal year 2013 to at least 65% in program year 2019.Priority 2. Improve Outcomes for Minorities and Populations Identified as Underserved or Hard to Place in Employment• Goal 2.1. Increase the number and proportion of individuals with mental illness and substance abuse disorder exiting the VR program in employment after services were provided under an individualized plan for employment.• Objective 2.1.1. The total number of individuals with mental illness exiting the VR program in employment will exceed that of the prior year. The rehabilitation rate for individuals with mental illness exiting the VR program after receiving services under and individualized plan for employment from 47.7% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 52% in program year 2019.• Goal 2.2. Increase the number and proportion of individuals with most significant disabilities exiting the VR program in employment after services were provided under an individualized plan for employment.• Objective 2.2.1. The total number of individuals with most significant disabilities exiting the VR program in employment will exceed that of the prior year.• Objective 2.2.2. Increase the rehabilitation rate for individuals with most significant disabilities exiting the VR program after receiving services under and individualized plan for employment from 44.8% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 50% in program year 2019.• Goal 2.3. Increase the number and proportion of individuals with disabilities of minority racial backgrounds exiting the VR program in employment after services were provided under an individualized plan for employment.• Objective 2.3.1. The total number of individuals with disabilities of minority racial backgrounds exiting the VR program in employment will exceed that of the prior year.• Objective 2.3.2. Increase the rehabilitation rate for individuals with disabilities of minority racial backgrounds exiting the VR program after receiving services under and individualized plan for employment from 50.1% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 55.8% in program year 2019.• Goal 2.4. Increase the number and proportion of individuals with disabilities with criminal backgrounds exiting the VR program in employment after services were provided under an individualized plan for employment.• Objective 2.4.1. Increase the rehabilitation rate for individuals with disabilities and criminal backgrounds exiting the VR program after receiving services under and individualized plan for employment from 47% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 52% in program year 2019.Priority 3. Increase Client Satisfaction• Goal 3.1. Increase client satisfaction with their counselor's understanding of their VR needs.• Objective 3.1.1. Increase the percent of clients who are satisfied or very satisfied with their counselor's understanding of their VR needs from 84.7% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 90% in program year 2019.•

Goal 3.2. Increase client satisfaction with their counselor in terms of being easy to contact.• Objective 3.2.1. Increase the percent of clients who are satisfied or very satisfied that their counselor was easy to contact from 86.0% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 90% in program year 2019.• Goal 3.3. Increase client satisfaction with their counselor in terms of working with them as an equal partner.• Objective 3.3.1. Increase the percent of clients who are satisfied or very satisfied that their counselor worked with them as an equal partner from 85.3% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 88% in program year 2019.• Goal 3.4. Increase client satisfaction with their counselor in terms of offering options that meet their work-related needs.• Objective 3.4.1. Increase the percent of clients who are satisfied or very satisfied that their counselor offered options that met their work-related needs from 79.9% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 84% in program year 2019.• Goal 3.5. Increase client satisfaction with their level of involvement in their VR program.

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

The goals and priorities jointly developed with the State Rehabilitation Council were developed from the results of (a) the most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates; (b) the DVRS VR program's performance under the performance standards and indicators in place prior to the passage of WIOA (performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA had yet to be assessed as half of the WIOA measures have not yet been finalized at the time of this plan's submission); and (c) other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program.

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

The goals and objectives for priority 2, Improve Outcomes for Minorities and Populations Identified as Underserved or Hard to Place in Employment, were developed jointly with the State Rehabilitation Council in response to findings from the most recent comprehensive statewide assessment.

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

The goals and objectives for Priority 1, Improve Client Outcomes, were developed jointly with the State Rehabilitation Council based on the DVRS VR programs performance on standards and indicators. Performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA will be measured beginning PY 2017 and the goals and objectives under Priority 1 were revised accordingly.

C. OTHER AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON THE OPERATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE VR PROGRAM, INCLUDING ANY REPORTS RECEIVED FROM THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL AND

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MONITORING ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED UNDER SECTION 107.

The goals and objectives under Priority 3, Increase Client Satisfaction, were jointly developed with the State Rehabilitation Council based on prior year client satisfaction survey results and recommendations from VR program staff. The goals and objectives for Priority 3 were revised with the State Rehabilitation Council's approval of revisions to the client satisfaction survey instrument for PY 2017.

M. ORDER OF SELECTION

Describe:

1. WHETHER THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL IMPLEMENT AND ORDER OF SELECTION. IF SO, DESCRIBE:

A. THE ORDER TO BE FOLLOWED IN SELECTING ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS TO BE PROVIDED VR SERVICES.

The North Carolina VR Programs are not under an order of selection, and the North Carolina designated state units do not plan to implement an Order of Selection during the period covered by the Unified State Plan.

B. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER.

The North Carolina VR Programs are not under an order of selection, and the North Carolina designated state units do not plan to implement an Order of Selection during the period covered by the Unified State Plan.

C. THE SERVICE AND OUTCOME GOALS.

The North Carolina VR Programs are not under an order of selection, and the North Carolina designated state units do not plan to implement an Order of Selection during the period covered by the Unified State Plan.

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

The North Carolina VR Programs are not under an order of selection, and the North Carolina designated state units do not plan to implement an Order of Selection during the period covered by the Unified State Plan.

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

The North Carolina VR Programs are not under an order of selection, and the North Carolina designated state units do not plan to implement an Order of Selection during the period covered by the Unified State Plan.

2. IF THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT HAS ELECTED TO SERVE ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS, REGARDLESS OF ANY ESTABLISHED ORDER

OF SELECTION, WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT.

The North Carolina VR Programs are not under an order of selection, and the North Carolina designated state units do not plan to implement an Order of Selection during the period covered by the Unified State Plan.

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.

Title VI, Part B funds were last received in FFY 2017. North Carolina did not receive any additional funds under section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services for FFY 2018, however, the Divisions forecast annual expenditures of approximately $11 million for supported employment services that will be provided through the Title I basic support grant.

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

As incorporated into its policies concerning supported employment services, the NCDVRS VR program first provides on—going support as appropriate for supported employment. Ongoing support includes services: (a) needed to support and maintain the individual in SE that are (b) based on a determination by the DVR counselor of the individual's needs as specified in an IPE; and (c) furnished from the time of job placement until transition to extended services, except as provided in post—employment status and, following transition, by one or more extended service providers throughout the individual's term of employment in a particular job placement or multiple placements, if those placements are provided under a program of transitional employment.

At the time of transition to extended services from an extended services provider, the VR program ensures through its contracts, agreements, and policies that extended services are provided by a state agency, a private non—profit organization, through natural supports or any other appropriate resource other than VR, after the individual has made the transition from the state VR support. Extended services begin when (a) the individual is employed, (b) intensive training is completed, and (c) stabilization on the job has occurred. Individuals may be served for as long as there is a reasonable expectation that an extended services source will be identified during the course of rehabilitation. The NC DVRS VR Program will only contract with supported employment service providers that give written

commitment that they will provide extended services compliant with Federal regulations.

On—going support provided during extended services must include a minimum of twice—monthly monitoring at the work site to assess job stability unless under special circumstances, especially at the request of the individual, the IPE provides for off—site monitoring and based upon that assessment, the coordination or provision of specific services at or away from the work site, that are needed to maintain employment stability. If off—site monitoring is determined to be appropriate, it must, at a minimum, consist of two (2) face—to—face meetings with the client and one employer contact monthly. These activities apply to all supported employment clients and not only those whose services are provided through funds reserved pursuant to section 603(d), for youth with the most significant disabilities.

B. HOW THE STATE WILL LEVERAGE OTHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDS TO INCREASE RESOURCES FOR EXTENDED SERVICES AND EXPANDED SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES.

The DVRS VR program is collaborating with community rehabilitation programs and other agencies and organizations to provide extended services and expanded supported employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities. Because DVRS will only utilize community rehabilitation programs that give written commitment that they will provide extended services compliant with Federal regulations as supported employment vendors, many of those community rehabilitation programs providing SE services also provide extended services under their service contract at no additional cost to DVRS when other resources for extended services are not available. The Request for Application (RFA) is one of the key tools DVRS utilizes for contract and program development, in which the entity submitting the application has completed much of the foundational work in leveraging and braiding resources from other public and private funds. And, through it's continued participation on interagency committees and collaboration efforts, DVRS will continue to work with community rehabilitation programs, LME/MCOs, and other organizations to leverage other public and private funds to increase resources for extended services and expanded supported employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities.

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 North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) is partnering with the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services (DMHDDSAS) and other divisions and departments in developing competitive, integrated employment opportunities. DVRS establishes and maintains contracts or agreements with over 120 private for profit and non-profit VR service providers providing an array of services to DVRS consumers. One hundred two (102) private-non-profit VR service providers have established performance-based contracts with the Division, where the organizations are administered funds when an individual receiving services within their program has achieved designated goals or "milestones" on their way toward their ultimate goal of competitive employment. Almost all supported employment and work adjustment services provided through community rehabilitation programs were transitioned from a fee for services hourly rate payment system to a milestone payment system. Additionally, performance-based cooperative agreements engaging non-profit organizations encompass brain injury support services, multiple (currently 14) Project SEARCH™ sites and the provision of Pre Employment Transition Services. This system and its implementation were developed in collaboration with the community rehabilitation provider community through representation via the CRP-DVRS steering subcommittee and other means of stakeholder input.

2. HOW A BROAD RANGE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES AND DEVICES WILL BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AT EACH STAGE OF THE REHABILITATION PROCESS AND ON A STATEWIDE BASIS.

Assistive Technology services and devices are provided to eligible individuals statewide who require them. Rehabilitation technology and assistive technology services are sponsored and provided to the degree necessary to complete the rehabilitation program. Included are services and devices which can supplement and enhance an individual's functions such as adapted computer access, augmentative communication, specialized seating and mobility, vehicle modifications, and services which can have an impact on the environment, such as accessibility, job re-design, work site modification and residence modification. Application of the available engineering and assistive technology services and technologies is important when making determinations of eligibility particularly for individuals with significant and most significant disabilities. Rehabilitation engineering evaluations and services are not subject to an individual's financial eligibility; however, devices, equipment and modifications recommended by the engineer are subject to financial eligibility. Applicants during the assessment phase, and consumers determined to be eligible for services in need of and who can benefit from rehabilitation engineering services, devices and assistive technology services can be referred to providers of

these services, and these services can assist to assist with assessment processes. Presently within the state, these services are made available statewide by Rehabilitation Engineers, Assistive Technology Consultants, and other agency staff as well as through outside Assistive Technology Suppliers and Providers. The Division is fortunate to have the North Carolina Assistive Technology Program as a vital program component. The program increases access and the provision of services to individuals served within the VR program and supports the Division mission of increasing independence for clients in the home, post- secondary school and work setting. In addition, this affords clients of the Division with fast access to the programs array of services which includes: technical expertise in selecting the most appropriate device; hands-on demonstration and try-out of low tech and high tech devices for people with disabilities; information on a variety of technology options; funding resource information and strategies; short-term loan of equipment to consumers, families and professionals who serve them; training to consumers, families and professionals; technical assistance to local organizations, schools, and programs to expand assistive technology local service delivery capacity; awareness and outreach activities to inform the public about equipment and devices people with disabilities can use for greater independence. DVRS collaborated with the North Carolina Assistive Technology Program (NCATP) to purchase iPads to train DVRS and community rehabilitation program (CRP) field staff in the use of technology to overcome specific barriers to employment. Staff learned different software applications (apps) as well as different ways to communicate to employers during job development. A team member from the Employment and Program Development Section will present at the National TASH Conference in Portland, Oregon in December 2015 where NC's project with the iPads will be highlighted. NCATP provides a professional development program available to all VR staff who provide evaluation, assistive technology equipment and assistive technology services for the consumers they are serving. NCATP has twenty staff serving the state of North Carolina, which includes the Director, Funding Specialist, AT Information and Referral Specialist, Intake Coordinator, 2 Processing Assistants, 4 Speech Language Pathologists (SLP) and 10 Assistive Technology Consultants. The 10 AT Consultants and 4 SLPs provide direct one-on-one services in the Assistive Technology Centers. Since 2015 DVRS has progressively increased their collaborative efforts with NCATP and other AgrAbility partners to provide assistive technologies and related services to farmers and farmworkers within the state. There have also been joint outreach efforts to Veterans with disabilities who may be interested in pursuing agriculturally-oriented occupations.

Additionally, the current interagency agreement between DVRS and education agencies, including the DPI and Local Educational Agencies (LEA)/School Boards, stipulate the financial responsibilities of education agencies, which include the provision of assistive technology required and included in an individual's IEP, without cost to the DVRS. Both DVRS and DSB share information about provides technical assistance and consultation

to DPI, LEAs, and schools regarding accommodations and assistive technology that will help facilitate the education and vocational rehabilitation of students with disabilities, including students who are deaf or hearing impaired, blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired.

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.

DVRS employs several strategies to increase outreach activities to various minority groups with the goal of also reaching those individuals with the most significant disabilities. The major thrust of activities is to go where the minority individuals and groups are contrasted with expecting them to come to Vocational Rehabilitation or to know how to access services without assistance. Management and staff on the local, regional, and state levels continue to identify minority or ethnic groups in their community along with identifying group leaders, common meeting places, and preferred ways to access information, and also neighborhood and community resources that can be used and developed to bring rehabilitation services to more minority individuals with the most significant disabilities. As there are numerous diverse cultures throughout North Carolina, staff are encouraged to concentrate on the groups in their area. The specific groups of considerable interest include: North Carolina Native Americans, Hispanic/Latino populations, African and Asian populations. The Division has created a staff position that is dedicated to developing and furthering initiatives for outreach to Hispanic/Latino populations. This individual routinely travels to the communities where there are high concentrations of the targeted populations and provides marketing information to their meetings and carnivals. The Division also has active program specialists who provide outreach to advocacy organizations serving individuals in the following areas: Mental Illness and Substance abuse, Veterans, Developmental Disabilities, Traumatic Brain Injuries, and Deaf/Communication Disorders. Specific Objectives and Strategies Pertaining to these activities are included within the State Plan Goals effective through FFY 2019:

Priority 2. Improve Outcomes for Minorities and Populations Identified as Underserved or Hard to Place in Employment

Goal 2.1. Increase the number and proportion of individuals with mental illness and substance abuse disorder exiting the VR program in employment after services were provided under an individualized plan for employment.

Objective 2.1.1. The total number of individuals with mental illness exiting the VR program in employment will exceed that of the prior year.

Objective 2.1.2. Increase the rehabilitation rate for individuals with mental illness exiting the VR program after receiving services under and

individualized plan for employment from 47.7% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 52% in program year 2019.

Goal 2.2. Increase the number and proportion of individuals with most significant disabilities exiting the VR program in employment after services were provided under an individualized plan for employment.

Objective 2.2.1. The total number of individuals with most significant disabilities exiting the VR program in employment will exceed that of the prior year.

Objective 2.2.2. Increase the rehabilitation rate for individuals with most significant disabilities exiting the VR program after receiving services under and individualized plan for employment from 44.8% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 50% in program year 2019.

Strategy 2.1. Continue collaborations with programs and partners to implement evidence-based practices that will increase employment outcomes for individuals with mental illness and substance disorder, including the Individual Placements and Supports (IPS) model, as appropriate.

Goal 2.3. Increase the number and proportion of individuals with disabilities of minority racial backgrounds exiting the VR program in employment after services were provided under an individualized plan for employment.

Objective 2.3.1. The total number of individuals with disabilities of minority racial backgrounds exiting the VR program in employment will exceed that of the prior year.

Objective 2.3.2. Increase the rehabilitation rate for individuals with disabilities of minority racial backgrounds exiting the VR program after receiving services under and individualized plan for employment from 50.1% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 55.8% in program year 2019.

Strategy 2.2. Increase cultural competence among staff, methods and resources that can help staff to effectively reach and serve individuals with disabilities of minority backgrounds and/or Hispanic ethnicity who qualify for VR services.

Strategy 2.3. Encourage hiring of Spanish speaking staff members in areas with high concentrations of people of Hispanic ethnicity.

Goal 2.4. Increase the number and proportion of individuals with disabilities with criminal backgrounds exiting the VR program in employment after services were provided under an individualized plan for employment.

Objective 2.4.1. Increase the rehabilitation rate for individuals with disabilities and criminal backgrounds exiting the VR program after receiving services under and individualized plan for employment from 47% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 52% in program year 2019.

Strategy 2.3. Partner with agencies, including NC Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice, associations, and employers to develop viable pathways to employment for consumers with criminal backgrounds.

Strategy 2.4. Identify and apply current best practices that will increase employment success of individuals with disabilities transitioning from a corrections environment or have experienced difficulties obtaining employment because of previous convictions.

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).

DVRS will revise and renew its state level memorandum of agreement (MOA) with DPI upon issuance of the final federal regulations on Title IV of WIOA. The purpose of the MOU is to outline a collaborative partnership between the two agencies to provide state level approval and support for enhanced transition services to students with disabilities. The revised MOA with DPI will also specify the manner in which Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) will be coordinated and provided within NC schools as well as how students with disabilities, including those who are potentially eligible for VR services, will be identified and served in compliance with federal regulations. In addition to a state level MOA, the DVRS VR unit offices and local education agencies (LEA) customize a local Third Party Cooperative Agreement (TPCA) to outline how the agencies will work together to ensure that VR services are administered to students with disabilities. The TPCA stipulates administrative funding to support VR staff, outlines procedures for information sharing, and requires a process for referring students with disabilities to VR for the Division to carry out the VR process. DVRS TPCAs with 99 of the 115 LEAs in North Carolina contribute funding towards 202 positions including VR counselors, business relations representatives, vocational evaluators and additional VR support staff including casework assistants and casework technicians available to provide VR transition services in the local community. In areas where a TPCA has not been established, the local manager has designated a VR counselor to directly serve the students with disabilities in the local schools. Since 2003, DVRS has implemented strategies for serve transition-aged youth. Under WIOA and as the Title IV regulations are finalized, DVRS will be enhancing programs and services to transition-aged youth with increased focus on students with disabilities and PETS. New programs are intended to align the Division with federal requirements under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, namely PETS, as well as provide improved transition services to students while they are in high school. DVRS expects that NC public schools will see a value-add for investing in the VR partnership. DVRS

plans to maintain and strengthen its programmatic relationships with school transition services through its continued active participation by the Division's Transition Program Specialist on the State Capacity Building Team for Transition. This team, including DPI leadership, DVRS, University Center for Development and Learning, Parent/Child Advocacy Agency, Career and Technical Education, and NC Community Colleges System representation was formed in recent years to develop statewide goals and provide better coordinated transition activities for students with disabilities to achieve better results with post-school outcomes, including obtaining employment or attending post-secondary education. Currently, NC's Capacity Building Plan is focused on improving student involvement in the individualized education program (IEP) process so that planning is more meaningful and associated with a student's post-school goals. The state is continuing to work on a Transition Toolkit for teachers and anticipates the development of toolkits for parents, students, and agencies that will be individualized at the local level. DPI consultants are providing transition training to LEAs to promote student-led IEPs, and NC DVR plans to provide training to VR counselors and LEA representatives in the Spring of 2016 to focus on the role of the VR Counselor in the IEP process. DVRS plans to continue collaboration with DPI leadership on technical assistance grants that focus on improving transition services and employment outcomes for transition-aged youth, including re- submission for the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) Intensive Technical Assistance grant.

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

DVRS continues to utilize two advisory workgroups or committees comprised of supported employment, other community rehabilitation program providers along with Division staff as an effective method to identify and update the needs, goals, and priorities as they pertain to community rehabilitation programs. This group annually establishes goals and makes recommendations to the DVRS Director regarding the directions in which the community rehabilitation programs should continue to develop and grow. Another venue that has effectively promoted healthy dialog between the community rehabilitation programs and the Division is the regional CRP summit. Typically, annually or semi-annually, as funding permits, regional summits are held where training and discussion of topics of mutual interest to both the CRP community and the Division. Community rehabilitation programs are evaluated annually by the Division's local, regional, and state management in order to determine the appropriate level of service outcomes for purchase for the next funding cycle. The decision is based primarily upon need of consumers and availability of financial resources. The programs are also evaluated annually by the Division's local, regional, and state management relative to program capital and staffing needs for new and innovative programs. Priorities are developed and many of these needs are met through the Establishment Authority (the authority

which makes funds available for the establishment of community rehabilitation programs) contingent upon the Division having funds available to do so. The need for new community rehabilitation programs is also assessed continually, with special emphasis as part of the comprehensive statewide needs assessment process. New community rehabilitation programs are created, at least in part, to assist the Division in meeting identified needs and are typically generated through local and sometimes legislative initiatives. In these cases, the Division can help expand and improve the programs through establishment projects as funds permit. One important activity the Division is currently working on which will launch during federal fiscal year 2014 is migrating from older legacy systems to a new electronic case management system which will require a lot of effort on behalf of the Division's fiscal and program staff, community rehabilitation program representatives, and developers. The Division is looking to make the process of receiving documentation and invoicing for services as paperless as possible.

6. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE STATE WITH RESPECT TO THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA.

At this time, DVRS and DSB are entering into the baseline year for the performance accountability measures under section 116 if the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The Divisions realize that in order to perform better on the indicator concerning median quarterly earnings, they must help consumers to prepare higher paying positions, typically obtained through increased education, specifically through more individuals successfully completing their post-secondary degrees, then following through with jobs that match their employment potential. DVRS and DSB are currently looking for ways to adjust programs, services, and supports to accomplish this in a fiscally- responsible manner. Further, DVRS' commitment to increasing client earnings is reflected in the elevated standing of importance that obtaining quality jobs for its consumers has and has made pursuit of this goal/priority 1: Employment Outcomes: Increase quantity and quality of employment outcomes of individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with significant/most significant disabilities through a dual customer approach. Beyond increasing consumers' participation in career-oriented post-secondary education/training, some of the other strategies that DVRS has established under this goal are to develop and build quality relationships with businesses that offer strong salaries and benefits and to continue offering the internship services, which, compared to an OJT experience, are geared more toward individuals who have completed their specialized training and need work experience to get their careers established. This service has been very well received by staff and consumers and we expect to continue the service. Another strategy that DVRS is employing to increase the earning potential of individuals who have entrepreneurial skills is through the support the Division has made available through a dedicated Small Business

Specialist on staff who helps support staff and consumers in their assessment of this option as a fit and when it is mutually determined as such, coordination of local resources and ongoing supports for the consumer pursuing this option. In 2013, DVRS participated in a NIDRR-funded Learning Collaborative administered by the Institute for Community Inclusion. DVRS submitted a proposal to focus on strategies that can be employed to increase the average hourly wage in two offices within the Western region with different economic climates and resources. Asheville, which is the larger economic environment, will employ different strategies and approaches to the Forest City office, which is largely manufacturing-based and rural. The project concluded in February 2014, and successful strategies were reviewed to determine whether they may have application to other economic areas in North Carolina.

In March 2017, DVRS and DSB jointly entered an intensive technical assistance agreement with WINTAC to receive technical assistance with implementation and performance enhancement in the areas of the provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services, Customized Employment and related services; Extend the provision of services to unreached youth with disabilities in Juvenile Development Centers; linking individual staff performance with corporately collected Common Performance Measures; and Improving systems integration with the NCWorks Career Centers across the state.

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

DVRS has relatively strong ties with other components of the statewide Workforce Development System. The partnerships and linkages that were established prior to the provisions of the Rehabilitation Act amendments of 1998 have served as a stable and effective foundation for effective service delivery. Cooperative agreements or memorandum of agreements have been established with all local area workforce boards. The agreements provide for the following strategies: Provision of inter-component staff training and technical assistance regarding: • the availability and benefits of, and information on eligibility standards for VR services; and • the promotion of equal, effective, and meaningful participation by individuals with disabilities receiving workforce development system services in all of the states NCWorks Career Centers in the state through the promotion of accessibility; the use of non-discriminatory policies and procedures; the provision of reasonable accommodations; auxiliary aids and services, and rehabilitation technology for persons with disabilities. Identification of service delivery strategies by DVRS within the NCWorks Career Centers and other components of the workforce development system. Development and implementation of information systems that link all components of the statewide workforce development system; that link the components to other electronic networks including non- visual electronic networks; and that

relate to such subjects as employment statistics and information on job vacancies, career planning, and workforce development activities. Further development and use of customer service features such as common intake and referral procedures when feasible, customer databases, resource information, and human services hotlines. Establishment of cooperative efforts with employers to facilitate job placement and carry out any other activities that Vocational Rehabilitation and the employers determine to be appropriate. Identification of staff roles, responsibilities, and available resources, along with specification of the financial responsibility of each component of the statewide workforce development system with regards to paying for certain services (consistent with state law and federal requirements). The rehabilitation needs of individuals who are served through components of the statewide workforce development system other than through the public VR program will be updated and reassessed through the methodology outlined in that section of the VR portion of the Unified State Plan. One of the ongoing goals for both the VR and NCWorks system is to continue to refine the processes and procedures for NCWorks staff to better determine which consumers with disabilities utilizing the centers should be referred to DVRS rather than being served through the NCWorks. First it is necessary to determine which consumers served by the NCWorks system have a disability. Strategies to improve this will be further explored via mutual collaboration between the Division and NCWorks Career Centers to establish training for its staff. DVRS participated in the development of NCWorks Career Centers and continues to be an active partner throughout North Carolina to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access core workforce services. Vocational Rehabilitation staff are represented on the state level as well as on local boards. The Division remains an active partner with the workforce development system and supports the NCWorks concept to provide more universal access to placement and training services; to integrate programs by offering a common core of information and services; and by offering consumers more choices regarding where and how they get services. Through local agreements, direct service delivery staff within the Division have gained more access to comprehensive DES data, which enables faster service delivery and cross-agency collaboration. Nearly all DVRS offices have obtained access to these databases to date. In every community where there are NCWorks Career Centers, local VR offices provide counseling staff, vocational evaluators, human resource placement specialists and other staff as appropriate to meet the needs of those individuals who enter a NCWorks Career Center and require the specialized services offered by the VR program. Specific arrangements and staffing patterns by VR staff vary from site to site depending on local needs and agreements. Enhanced working relationships with key partners of the workforce development system such as DSS, DSS, NCCCS, and other local partnerships allow all the agencies to better meet the needs of the individual. The number of individuals served or identified through components of the workforce development system is increasing. Local Division management represents Vocational Rehabilitation on the local

workforce development boards while staff also actively participate in planning, development, and service delivery with both individual component agencies or within the NCWorks Career Centers already established. State Level meetings with identified partners of the workforce development system continue to promote effective collaboration and equal access to services by 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;

Following a thorough analysis of the results of the 2013 Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment, the Division and its SRC, jointly established the prioritized goals below for the period 2015-17, which will carry over through to 2019: Priority 1. Improve Client Outcomes Goal 1.1. Increase the number and proportion of individuals exiting the VR program in employment after services were provided under an individualized plan for employment. Objective 1.1.1. The total number of individuals exiting the VR program in employment will exceed that of the prior year. Objective 1.1.2. Increase the rehabilitation rate for individuals exiting the VR program after receiving services under and individualized plan for employment from 50.4% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 55.8% in program year 2019. Goal 1.2. Increase the number and proportion of individuals with significant or most significant disabilities exiting the VR program in employment after services were provided under an individualized plan for employment. Objective 1.2.1. Maintain that at least 75% of VR consumers who achieved competitive employment will be individuals with significant or most significant disabilities. Goal 1.3. Increase earnings for individuals exiting the VR program in employment. Objective 1.3.1. Increase average hourly earnings for individuals who exit the VR program in competitive employment from 48% the statewide average for all North Carolinians in federal fiscal year 2013 to at least 52% in program year 2019. Objective 1.3.2. Increase the proportion of clients exiting the VR Program in competitive employment whose own income is their primary source of support at closure compared to the percentage whose own income is the primary source of support when they applied for VR services from 62.7% in federal fiscal year 2013 to at least 65% in program year 2019. Priority 2. Improve Outcomes for Minorities and Populations Identified as Underserved or Hard to Place in Employment Goal 2.1. Increase the number and proportion of individuals with mental illness and substance abuse disorder exiting the VR program in employment after services were provided under an individualized plan for employment. Objective 2.1.1. The total number of individuals with mental illness exiting the VR program in employment will exceed that of the prior year. The rehabilitation rate for individuals with mental illness exiting the VR program after receiving services under and individualized plan for employment from 47.7% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 52% in program year 2019. Goal 2.2. Increase the number and proportion of individuals with most

significant disabilities exiting the VR program in employment after services were provided under an individualized plan for employment. Objective 2.2.1. The total number of individuals with most significant disabilities exiting the VR program in employment will exceed that of the prior year. Objective 2.2.2. Increase the rehabilitation rate for individuals with most significant disabilities exiting the VR program after receiving services under and individualized plan for employment from 44.8% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 50% in program year 2019. Goal 2.3. Increase the number and proportion of individuals with disabilities of minority racial backgrounds exiting the VR program in employment after services were provided under an individualized plan for employment. Objective 2.3.1. The total number of individuals with disabilities of minority racial backgrounds exiting the VR program in employment will exceed that of the prior year. Objective 2.3.2. Increase the rehabilitation rate for individuals with disabilities of minority racial backgrounds exiting the VR program after receiving services under and individualized plan for employment from 50.1% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 55.8% in program year 2019. Goal 2.4. Increase the number and proportion of individuals with disabilities with criminal backgrounds exiting the VR program in employment after services were provided under an individualized plan for employment. Objective 2.4.1. Increase the rehabilitation rate for individuals with disabilities and criminal backgrounds exiting the VR program after receiving services under and individualized plan for employment from 47% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 52% in program year 2019. Priority 3. Increase Client Satisfaction Goal 3.1. Increase client satisfaction with their counselor's understanding of their VR needs. Objective 3.1.1. Increase the percent of clients who are satisfied or very satisfied with their counselor's understanding of their VR needs from 84.7% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 90% in program year 2019. Goal 3.2. Increase client satisfaction with their counselor in terms of being easy to contact. Objective 3.2.1. Increase the percent of clients who are satisfied or very satisfied that their counselor was easy to contact from 86.0% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 90% in program year 2019. Goal 3.3. Increase client satisfaction with their counselor in terms of working with them as an equal partner. Objective 3.3.1. Increase the percent of clients who are satisfied or very satisfied that their counselor worked with them as an equal partner from 85.3% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 88% in program year 2019. Goal 3.4. Increase client satisfaction with their counselor in terms of offering options that meet their work-related needs. Objective 3.4.1. Increase the percent of clients who are satisfied or very satisfied that their counselor offered options that met their work-related needs from 79.9% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 84% in program year 2019. Goal 3.5. Increase client satisfaction with their level of involvement in their VR program. Objective 3.5.1. Increase the percent of clients who are satisfied or very satisfied with their level of involvement in their VR program from 81.5% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 85% in program year 2019. Goal 3.6. Increase client satisfaction with response time for services provided by VR staff. Objective 3.6.1. Increase the percent of clients who rate the response time for services

provided by VR staff as above average or excellent from 63.4% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 67% in program year 2019. Goal 3.7. Increase client satisfaction with their overall experience with the VR program. Objective 3.7.1. Increase the percent of clients who rate their overall experience with the VR program as above average or excellent from 66.3% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 71% in program year 2019. Division of Services for the Blind Priority 1: Increase the average wages and benefits of individuals closed with successful wage-earning employment outcomes Goal 1.1. Individuals who are blind or visually impaired in North Carolina will have access to employment opportunities that provide good wages and level of benefits through use of expanded internships, work experiences, community based work adjustment, and expanded relationships with employer portals. Goal will be to increase successful employment outcomes with benefits by 2% (baseline 2013 - 72) and to increase average wage at closure by 1% (baseline 2013 - $11.97 per hour). Goal 1.2. Increase staff knowledge about careers, employment opportunities, and business relationship development. Goal will be measured by staff reports to supervisors, who in turn will share with program specialist for job development. Goal 1.3. Increase the use of supported employment services to facilitate successful employment outcomes for persons with the most significant disabilities. Goal will be measured by availability of vendors in areas where there are none at this time, increased authorizations for supported employment services, and increased number of individuals closed in successful employment after receiving supported employment services. Goal 1.4. Provide a holistic approach to service provision that will better enable individuals to obtain employment and maintain it after DSB VR case closure. Goal will be measured by feedback from individuals closed with successful employment on the satisfaction survey, increase in success rate, and a decrease in the number of cases referred to the agency again within 36 months of successful employment outcome. Priority 2. Eligible individuals will have access to assistive technology required for employment Goal 2.1. Provide assistive technology and training in its use for all eligible individuals who require specific equipment and software to obtain, maintain, and regain employment. Measurement criteria will be to increase the numbers of individuals who receive assistive technology services (equipment and/or training) by 1% (baseline 2013 — 429 individuals). Goal 2.2. Assistive technology staff in all seven District Offices will receive training on latest software and hardware to enhance placement opportunities. Each field staff member will attend at least two training sessions (either on-line or in classroom) during the year on new technology. Priority 3. Transition services will be available in all counties of North Carolina for students who are blind or visually impaired. Goal 3.1. DSB will continue to provide transition services to students who are blind or visually impaired attending schools in all 115 Local Education Agencies (LEA's) of North Carolina. The goal will be to increase the number of individuals, ages 14-21, served by 2% (baseline for FFY2013 — 310). Goal 3.2. DSB will provide continuing

education training for transition program staff. This training includes Pre-Employment Transition Services

Goal 3.3. Rehabilitation Counselors will increase their awareness of opportunities for internships and work experiences for transition age students. Priority 4. Quality and knowledgeable outreach to individuals with disabilities, family members, and individuals who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities will be provided by DSB. Goal 4.1. DSB's services will be provided to individuals, families, minority populations and those experiencing health disparities through targeted outreach activities. Data for the objectives will be captured and managed in DSB's new case management system called BEAM. Goal 4.2. DSB will develop marketing opportunities to targeted audiences regarding specific agency programs. Goal 4.3. DSB will identify ways by which DSB can assist veterans with disabilities to become able to obtain, maintain or regain employment. DSB will meet with officials working with veterans who are visually impaired, blind or deaf blind to educate them regarding services that are available to veterans with disabilities through DSB. Goal 4.4. DSB will continually seek and identify ways in which to reach the growing minority populations across North Carolina. Priority 5. Over the next two fiscal years, implementation of systematic program evaluations and consistent quality assurance methods will ensure the agency is meeting the mission of enabling individuals who are blind or visually impaired to achieve their goals of independence and employment. Goal 5.1. To provide consistent and accurate data using the new case management system, BEAM, to assess program performance. Measurable criteria are the program will be in place and staff will have received training by the end of FFY 2019. Goal 5.2. To provide holistic, consistent, and accurate methods of quality assurance and program evaluation. Measurable criteria will be that as the program goes "live", the rehabilitation program team and supervisors will evaluate the data as it becomes available, and will identify specific methods of quality assurance that can be done through use of BEAM.

B. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES; AND

Innovation and expansion funds will be utilized during PY 2018-19 to purchase demonstration devices for use with the North Carolina Assistive Technology Program to expand their device loan and assistive technology assessment capabilities. Their Assistive Technology consultants, along with NC DVRS rehabilitation engineers will employ these to better serve those in need of device loans or simulation, with anticipated emphasis on meeting the needs of farmers and farmworkers through the AgrAbility program partnerships the Division is currently building upon. It is anticipated that these devices will increase the Division's ability to respond and assess these needs more responsively and help improve the accuracy of recommendations.

Beginning October, 2015 and on an ongoing basis, innovation and expansion funds are being utilized through a financial assistance contract with the

Statewide Independent Living Council to further their progress in achieving goals and strategies within the current State Plan for Independent Living. These funds will also help facilitate collaboration between the Division and the Centers for Independent Living in the development of pre-employment transition services such as self-advocacy, peer mentoring, and financial skills counseling.

Through NC DVR's participation in the RSA- funded Technical Assistance Project "E3TC" Empower Educate Employ Targeted Communities, the need for an expansion of the certified Work Incentive and Planning Assistance (WIPA) counselors network was identified as an area where NC DVRS and NC DSB will plan to utilize innovation and expansion funds to help accomplish this during the 2018 and 2019 program years.

Finally, a portion of innovation and expansion funding is used in support of activities of the NC DVRS 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.

The strategies listed in part (B) of this section specific to Priority 2. Improve Outcomes for Minorities and Populations Identified as Underserved or Hard to Place in Employment will be applied as strategies to 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. Strategies specific to overcoming identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with most significant disabilities in Supported Employment include continued collaboration with DMHDDSAS to (a) optimize coordination of services at the local service level to improve ease of service access for consumers requiring supported employment services; (b) expand implementation of the Individual Placement and Support Model of Supported Employment; (c) develop a funding mechanism that utilizes supported employment funds from VR, state funds from the Local Management Entities, and Medicaid dollars from the Managed Care Organizations to fund supported employment for those needing the individual placement and support (IPS) model of supported employment; (d) train VR field staff as well as Community Rehabilitation Program providers in the IPS Model of Supported Employment; (e) conduct fidelity reviews of providers who contract to provide the IPS Model of Supported Employment; and (f) increase the number of sites across the state to be a part of the IPS Model of Supported Employment.

P. EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS

Describe:

1. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE VR PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE APPROVED VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS.

Priority 1: Improve Client Outcomes

Goal 1.1. Increase the number and proportion of individuals exiting the VR program in employment after services were provided under an individualized plan for employment.

- OBJECTIVE 1.1.1. THE TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS EXITING THE VR PROGRAM IN EMPLOYMENT WILL EXCEED THAT OF THE PRIOR YEAR.

Measure for Objective	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
The number of persons achieving employment outcomes will equal or exceed the previous year.	6,303	6,758	6,723	6,310	6,317	6,127

Performance Assessment

During federal fiscal year 2016, the number of individuals exiting the Division's VR program in employment decreased by about 3%. The Division maintains successful partnerships with community rehabilitation programs and an emphasis on vocational counseling and guidance, benefits counseling, rehabilitation services, and matching employers' workforce needs with the skillsets of VR consumers through a Dual Customer Approach. Placements through community rehabilitation programs account for approximately more than a third of the clients who exited in employment. Other strategies employed to improve performance on this indicator are summarized in the strategies section of the Unified State Plan. The Division continues to utilize on-the-job training and internship services and has expanded brain injury support services and IPS supported employment.

Objective 1.1.2. Increase the rehabilitation rate for individuals exiting the VR program after receiving services under and individualized plan for employment from 50.4% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 55.8% in federal fiscal year 2017.

Measure for Objective	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
The percentage of all individuals who have achieved an employment outcome after exiting the program having received services will equal or exceed 55.8%.	56.5%	56.4%	50.4%	58.1%	55.1%	54.0%

Performance Assessment

The DVRS VR Program missed this objective by less than 2% in 2016. Success in 2014 was partially due to filling the previously higher than expected number of counselor vacancies. However, a considerable number of cases that would have been closed in a prior year remained open as a residual effect of these vacancies. Having increased staff provided the capacity to review and close these cases through 2016 in preparation for the new RSA-911 reporting requirements under WIOA, which include reports on open cases. The agency will continue to monitoring this indicator with increased emphasis of its importance through case management and reviews. DVRS expects this will be a gauge of the WIOA performance accountability measures related to the employment rate at the second and fourth quarter following case closure.

Goal 1.3. Increase earnings for individuals exiting the VR program in employment.

- OBJECTIVE 1.3.1. INCREASE AVERAGE HOURLY EARNINGS FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO EXIT THE VR PROGRAM IN COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT FROM 48% THE STATEWIDE AVERAGE FOR ALL NORTH CAROLINIANS IN FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2013 TO AT LEAST 52% IN FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2017.

Measure for Objective	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
The average hourly earnings of all individuals who exit the program in competitive employment as a ratio to the average hourly earnings for all employed North Carolinians will equal or exceed 0.52.	0.48	0.48	0.47	0.44	0.43	0.44

Performance Assessment

For federal fiscal year 2016, DVRS was not able to meet this RSA indicator, which continues to present a challenge, despite strategies to encourage additional education and training to increase client earnings.

DVRS attributes its current performance on this indicator primarily as a result of two main factors: the large number of transition-age youth whose exit the VR program in entry-level positions and the number of individuals served through supported employment, which comprise nearly a fifth of the VR program's employment outcomes. These individuals exit the VR program with earnings that are closer to minimum wage. Despite, the impact on performance for this measure, the DVRS maintains a strong commitment to supported employment and providing VR services for transition-age youth.

Objective 1.3.2. Increase the proportion of clients exiting the VR Program in competitive employment whose own income is their primary source of support at closure compared to the percentage whose own income is the primary source of support when they applied for VR services to at least 65% in federal fiscal year 2019. (RSA standard was 53%)

Measure for Objective	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Of the individuals who achieve competitive employment, the difference between the percent who reported their own income as the largest single source of economic support at closure compared to the percent at application.	63.8	63.8	62.8	63.7	66.4	64.6

Performance Assessment

During federal fiscal year 2016, DVRS exceeded the former federal performance standard for this indicator, and expects continued performance that will achieve at least 65% by 2019. Approximately 76.8% of VR clients that exited in employment had their own income has their primary source of support. Of these, about 12.2% were retention cases where the individual with a disability was employed at the time of application with their own earnings as their primary source and the other 64.6% were primarily dependent on another source of income, such as public support or family and friends. This latter group moved towards self-sufficiency at the time of case closure and had reduced dependence on other sources of support to where they primarily depended on their own earnings.

PRIORITY 2. IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR MINORITIES AND POPULATIONS IDENTIFIED AS UNDERSERVED OR HARD TO PLACE IN EMPLOYMENT

Goal 2.1. Increase the number and proportion of individuals with *mental illness* and *substance abuse disorder* exiting the VR program in employment after services were provided under an individualized plan for employment.

- OBJECTIVE 2.1.1. THE TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS EXITING THE VR PROGRAM IN EMPLOYMENT WILL EXCEED THAT OF THE PRIOR YEAR.
- OBJECTIVE 2.1.2. INCREASE THE REHABILITATION RATE FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS EXITING THE VR PROGRAM AFTER RECEIVING SERVICES UNDER AND INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT FROM 47.7% IN FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2013 TO 52% IN FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2019.

Measures for Goal	2014	2015	2016
The total number of individuals with mental illness and/or substance abuse disorder exiting the VR program in employment will exceed that of the prior year.	2,298	2,503	2,339
Increase the rehabilitation rate for individuals with mental illness and/or substance abuse disorder exiting the VR program after receiving services	52.8%	51.4%	50.4%

Performance Assessment

Since the most recently completed comprehensive statewide needs assessment, individuals with mental illness have comprised an increasing proportion of the employment outcomes and in 2016 accounted for about 38% of all employment outcomes. Success in this area is largely attributed to expanded use of community rehabilitation programs through the milestone system and collaborative interagency efforts, including those that specifically target this population such as the individual placement and supports model of supported employment.

Goal 2.2. Increase the number and proportion of individuals with *most significant disabilities* exiting the VR program in employment after services were provided under an individualized plan for employment.

- OBJECTIVE 2.2.1. THE TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WITH MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES EXITING THE VR PROGRAM IN EMPLOYMENT WILL EXCEED THAT OF THE PRIOR YEAR.
- OBJECTIVE 2.2.2. INCREASE THE REHABILITATION RATE FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES

EXITING THE VR PROGRAM AFTER RECEIVING SERVICES UNDER AND INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT FROM 44.8% IN FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2013 TO 50% IN FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2019.

Measures for Goal	2014	2015	2016
The total number of individuals with Most Significant Disabilities exiting the VR program in employment will exceed that of the prior year.	1,575	1,713	1,747
Increase the rehabilitation rate for individuals with Most Significant Disabilities exiting the VR program after receiving services	54.8%	51.4%	52.8%

Performance Assessment

Since the last comprehensive statewide needs assessment was conducted, individuals with most significant disabilities have comprised an increasing proportion of the employment outcomes and in 2016 accounted for 28.5% of all employment outcomes. Many of these individuals are individuals with severe- or severe and persistent mental illness or transition-age youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Success in this area is largely attributed to a focus on services for transition-age youth with I/DD and expanded use of community rehabilitation programs through the milestone system, and collaborative interagency efforts, including those that specifically target this population such as brain injury support services and the individual placement and supports model of supported employment.

Goal 2.3. Increase the number and proportion of individuals with disabilities of *minority racial backgrounds* exiting the VR program in employment after services were provided under an individualized plan for employment.

- OBJECTIVE 2.3.1. THE TOTAL NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES OF MINORITY RACIAL BACKGROUNDS EXITING THE VR PROGRAM IN EMPLOYMENT WILL EXCEED THAT OF THE PRIOR YEAR.
- OBJECTIVE 2.3.2. INCREASE THE REHABILITATION RATE FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES OF MINORITY RACIAL BACKGROUNDS EXITING THE VR PROGRAM AFTER RECEIVING SERVICES UNDER AND INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT FROM 50.1% IN FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2013 TO 55.8% IN FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2019.

Measures for Goal	2014	2015	2016
The total number of individuals with disabilities of minority racial backgrounds exiting the VR program in employment will exceed that of the prior year.	3,097	3,182	3,105
Increase the rehabilitation rate for individuals with disabilities of minority racial backgrounds exiting the VR program after receiving services.	57.3%	54.6%	53.4%

Performance Assessment

In FFY 2016, individuals of minority backgrounds accounted for more than 50% of all employment outcomes. Success in this area is largely attributed to outreach in underserved areas and the application of a financial needs test for certain direct cost services. This allows the Division to provide these services to individuals, often of minority backgrounds who can least afford them.

Goal 2.4. Increase the number and proportion of individuals with disabilities with *criminal backgrounds* exiting the VR program in employment after services were provided under an individualized plan for employment.

- OBJECTIVE 2.4.1. INCREASE THE REHABILITATION RATE FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AND CRIMINAL BACKGROUNDS EXITING THE VR PROGRAM AFTER RECEIVING SERVICES UNDER AND INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT FROM 47% IN FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2013 TO 52% IN FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2019.

Note: Data for the measure of this objective are pending.

PRIORITY 3. INCREASE CLIENT SATISFACTION

Goal 3.1. Increase client satisfaction with their counselor's understanding of their VR needs.

- OBJECTIVE 3.1.1. INCREASE THE PERCENT OF CLIENTS WHO ARE SATISFIED OR VERY SATISFIED WITH THEIR COUNSELOR'S UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR VR NEEDS FROM 84.7% IN FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2013 TO 90% IN FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2019.

Goal 3.2. Increase client satisfaction with their counselor in terms of being easy to contact.

- OBJECTIVE 3.2.1. INCREASE THE PERCENT OF CLIENTS WHO ARE SATISFIED OR VERY SATISFIED THAT THEIR COUNSELOR WAS EASY TO CONTACT FROM 86.0% IN FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2013 TO 90% IN FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2019.

Goal 3.3. Increase client satisfaction with their counselor in terms of *working with them as an equal partner.*

- OBJECTIVE 3.3.1. INCREASE THE PERCENT OF CLIENTS WHO ARE SATISFIED OR VERY SATISFIED THAT THEIR COUNSELOR WORKED WITH THEM AS AN EQUAL PARTNER FROM 85.3% IN FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2013 TO 88% IN FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2019.

Goal 3.4. Increase client satisfaction with their counselor in terms of *offering options that meet their work-related needs*.

- OBJECTIVE 3.4.1. INCREASE THE PERCENT OF CLIENTS WHO ARE SATISFIED OR VERY SATISFIED THAT THEIR COUNSELOR OFFERED OPTIONS THAT MET THEIR WORK-RELATED NEEDS FROM 79.9% IN FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2013 TO 84% IN FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2019.

Goal 3.5. Increase client satisfaction with their *level of involvement* in their VR program.

- OBJECTIVE 3.5.1. INCREASE THE PERCENT OF CLIENTS WHO ARE SATISFIED OR VERY SATISFIED WITH THEIR LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR VR PROGRAM FROM 81.5% IN FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2013 TO 85% IN FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2019.

Goal 3.6. Increase client satisfaction with *response time for services* provided by VR staff.

- OBJECTIVE 3.6.1. INCREASE THE PERCENT OF CLIENTS WHO RATE THE RESPONSE TIME FOR SERVICES PROVIDED BY VR STAFF AS *ABOVE AVERAGE* OR *EXCELLENT* FROM 63.4% IN FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2013 TO 67% IN FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2019.

Goal 3.7. Increase client satisfaction with their *overall experience* with the VR program.

- **Objective 3.7.1. Increase the percent of clients who rate their overall experience with the VR program as *above average* or *excellent* from 66.3% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 71% in federal fiscal year 2019.**

Measures for Goal 3	2013	2014	2015	2016*
Percent of clients satisfied with their counselor in terms of understanding their VR needs	84.7%	83.2%	83.1%	85.4%
Percent of clients satisfied with their counselor in terms of being easy to contact	86.0%	84.3%	84.0%	87.3%
Percent of clients satisfied with their counselor in terms of working with them as an equal partner	85.3%	83.6%	83.9%	86.3%
Percent of clients satisfied with their counselor in terms of offering options to meet their needs related to work	79.9%	78.0%	77.0%	79.4%
Percent of clients satisfied or very satisfied with their level of involvement in their VR program.	81.5%	80.9%	81.8%	86.3%
Percent of clients satisfied or very satisfied with the response time for services provided by VR staff.	63.4%	62.2%	57.6%	87.3%
Percent of clients satisfied or very satisfied with their overall experience in the VR Program.	66.3%	64.3%	60.5%	87.2%

***Note: The question wording and response scales for the satisfaction survey were revised for 2016 and responses for this year are approximate equivalent with those of prior years.**

Performance Assessment for Goal 3.

For federal fiscal year 2016, the percentages on the measures of customer satisfaction were above 80% for all measures except the item on the client's satisfaction with help deciding on job choices, which was 79.4%. The Division has improved in this area as a result of low staff vacancy rates, increased client contact, and a focus on case services quality.

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

Objective 1.1.1. The total number of individuals exiting the VR program in employment will exceed that of the prior year: One of the strategies for achieving this increase is for the DVRS VR program to utilize on-the-job training (OJT) without supports. Wage subsidies for OJT are funded at a reduced amount relative to when additional funding for these services was available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and both

greater utilization of OJT and number of corresponding employment outcomes through OJT was achieved. A full wage subsidy and making the process more convenient for employers would increase OJT utilization and outcomes.

Objective 1.1.2. Increase the rehabilitation rate for individuals exiting the VR program after receiving services under and individualized plan for employment from 50.4% in federal fiscal year 2013 to 55.8% in federal fiscal year 2017: The DVRS VR Program met this indicator in federal fiscal year 2014 but fell short by less than 1% in 2015. Success in 2014 was partially due to filling the previously higher than expected number of counselor vacancies. However, a significant number of cases that would have been closed in the prior year remained open as a residual effect of these vacancies. Having increased staff provided the capacity to review and close these cases in 2015.

Objective 1.3.1. Increase average hourly earnings for individuals who exit the VR program in competitive employment from 48% the statewide average for all North Carolinians in federal fiscal year 2013 to at least 52% in federal fiscal year 2017: For federal fiscal year 2015, DVRS was not able to meet this RSA indicator, which continues to present a challenge, despite strategies to encourage additional education and training to increase client earnings. DVRS attributes its current performance on this indicator primarily as a result of two main factors: the large number of transition-age youth whose exit the VR program in entry-level positions and the number of individuals served through supported employment, which comprise more than 17% of the VR program's employment outcomes. These individuals exit the VR program with earnings that are closer to minimum wage. Despite, the impact on performance for this measure, the DVRS maintains a strong commitment to supported employment and providing VR services for transition-age youth.

Objectives associated with Goal 3. Increase VR client satisfaction: For federal fiscal year 2015, the percentages on the measures of response time for services and overall satisfaction with the VR program were, respectively, 4.6% and 3.8%, lower than the prior year. Because the survey was administered to clients whose cases had closed, the results often represent satisfaction with services provided in the prior year, and may be explained by higher than average staff vacancies for that period. And, although the decrease is relatively small, it does speak to the need to maintain a low staff vacancy rate and emphasize the importance of continued emphasis on client satisfaction and work towards improving services for VR consumers.

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 GOALS AND STRATEGIES

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.

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

Response: Goals for the supported employment program included:

Supported Employment Goal 1: Increase the number of individuals with most significant disabilities who receive supported employment services during the program year.

Measures for SE Goal 1: Objective 1. Increase the number of individuals with most significant disabilities who receive supported employment services.

		2011	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*
Measure SE.1.	Number of individuals receiving supported employment services.	4,372	4,305	3,979	3,217	2,960	2,868
Measure SE.2.a.	Number of individuals exiting the VR program in employment in an integrated setting with supports.	968	1,023	989	939	1,110	1,208
Measure SE.2.b.	Of the individuals who receive supported employment services, the percent who exit the VR program with an employment outcome.	49.0%	49.8%	43.3%	55.8%	54.4%	51.5%

Performance Assessment for SE Goal 1: ***Increase the number of individuals with most significant disabilities who receive supported employment services during the program year.***

The reported number of VR consumers who received supported employment services through the Division has decreased year-over-year while the number of SE employment outcomes in 2016 is at a 6-year high. This is largely attributed to the implementation of the pay-for-performance milestone system toward the end of 2013. Prior to implementation of the milestone system, services were paid at an hourly rate and many SE clients accrued many hours of job development prior to or without being placed in

employment. With the implementation of the milestone payment system, SE clients progressed through job development to placement and stability more quickly. This decreased the total volume of clients receiving such services in a given year and increased both the number of employment outcomes and the success rate. Services might be further expanded; however, this is limited by a longstanding shortage of funds dedicated to LTVS for this population.

Supported Employment Goal 2: Identify and begin implementing practices that can increase the successful closure rate of individuals receiving supported employment services.

Performance Assessment for SE Goal 2: ***Identify and begin implementing practices that can increase the successful closure rate of individuals receiving supported employment services.***

During federal fiscal year 2016, 1,208 individuals who received supported employment services exited the VR program successfully employed in an integrated setting with supports. The issues identified in the assessment of SE Goal 1 regarding the availability of supported employment services also adversely impact the ability of service providers to achieve employment outcomes for VR consumers. To adapt to the changing and challenging economy, the Division had in 2014 implemented an outcome-based milestone payment system for community rehabilitation programs that were previously billing at an hourly rate for supported employment job development and intensive training services. This change positively impacted services on a systems level to the benefit of VR consumers in that the payment to the CRP is since contingent on the consumers' success. Additionally, an increasing number of SE outcomes are attributed to Project Search and the individual placement and supports model of supported employment and partnerships with new providers.

Supported Employment Goal 3: ***In search of improved supported employment services delivery models and practices, continue assessing the positive components gained through experience with the ARRA-funded innovative collaborative projects that concluded with federal fiscal year 2011.***

Performance Assessment: During federal fiscal year 2012, the Division worked to establish two programs as an extension of programs that were funded under the ARRA contracts that the Division had established during federal fiscal year 2010-11 to help meet the needs of consumers with significant and most significant disabilities in areas of employment training, employment-related transportation, and the creation of CRP-based enterprises for purposes of training. Two of the programs that were extended follow the Project Search model, to provide internships and supports for transition-age youth.

Supported Employment Goal 4: ***Support increased training/qualification requirements for job coaches and their***

supervisory staff. Collaboratively increase supported employment training to DVRS rehabilitation counselors and Community Rehabilitation Program direct service staff through the addition of a web-based (and other forms of) curriculum development.

Performance Assessment: The CRP-DVRS steering committee has established a subcommittee to focus on this area and are assessing the current training needs of CRP staff. The committee will continue to work with the regional TACE to implement components of the training effort addressing this area as resources allow. The Division's rules addressing these requirements are also in process.

Supported Employment Goal 5: ***Continue collaboration with the Division of Mental Health/Developmental Disabilities/Substance Abuse Services to secure reporting of the expenditures of the Long Term Support service definition in order to ensure consistent administration of these funds.***

Performance Assessment: Collaboration with DMHDDSA since 2015 continues to improve as both agencies work to provide secure resources for recipients of supported employment services.

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

Individuals exiting the VR program in employment in an integrated setting with supports comprise and increasing proportion of total VR program outcomes, from 14.9% in FFY 2014 to 17.6% in FFY 2015. This success is largely attributed to DVRS' focus on individuals with most significant disabilities and conversion from a fee for service, hourly rate, payment structure to a performance-based milestone payment system. However, one of the key challenges for DVRS is in the implementation of the Individual Placement and Supports (IPS) model of supported employment. DVRS has made significant progress in identifying clients that would benefit from IPS and in working collaboratively with DMHDDSAS, as described in Section (f) of the General VR Portion of the Unified Plan.

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

For the first three measures, the VR program, with both DVRS and DSB combined, estimates 35% employment the second quarter after exit; 32% employment, fourth quarter after exit; and median earnings of $2,800 for the second quarter after exit.

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

Innovation and expansion funds were utilized during FFY 2014-15 to purchase demonstration devices for use with the North Carolina Assistive Technology Program to expand their device loan and assistive technology

assessment capabilities using more current employment-related assistive technologies.

Specialized Supported Employment Demonstration Project: In collaboration with NC Easter Seals/UCP, a demonstration program that targets the provision of extensive wrap around support services for dually- diagnosed individuals with mental and mobility impairments that have not been successful with traditional supported employment programs was funded. During SFY 2013, the demonstration program reported that 14 individuals were successfully placed, reached stabilization or achieved a successful employment outcome.

Beginning October, 2015 and continuing into FFY 2017, innovation and expansion funds are being utilized through a financial assistance contract with the Statewide Independent Living Council to further their progress in achieving goals and strategies within the current State Plan for Independent Living.

Support of Activities of the State Rehabilitation Council

During federal fiscal year 2012, the Division worked to establish two programs as an extension of programs that were funded under the ARRA contracts that the Division had established during federal fiscal year 2010-2011 to help meet the needs of consumers with significant and most significant disabilities in areas of employment training, employment-related transportation, and the creation of CRP- based enterprises for purposes of training. Two of the programs that were extended follow the "Project Search" nationally known model to provide training for transition-aged students in the Durham and Charlotte areas. These programs are described as business-led, one year school-to-work programs that are embedded within an actual workplace. The VR program has since expanded use of this model to other sites throughout the state.

Q. QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES.

Include the following:

1. THE QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES.

The North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services in cooperation with the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services, provided grant funding in 1985 to 6 service providers in North Carolina to implement supported employment services. In 1986 the Division was awarded funding from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services to create a systems-change approach to implementing supported employment services in North Carolina. Since

1987 the Division's effort has grown to a statewide system of approximately 118 supported employment programs. During federal fiscal year 2017, nearly 3,000 individuals received supported employment services and 1,530 of these individuals achieved a successful employment outcome. Supported employment providers receive vendorship funding through the utilization of Title VI, Part B funds and General services fund (110). Title VI, Part B funds will continue to be utilized to supplement funds under Part B of Title I for the cost of supported employment services to persons with the most significant disabilities. However, the extent of services offered to a particular individual is determined on an individual basis incorporating the individual's informed choice pertaining to their need to achieve and to maintain a vocational goal. Examples of populations that will be served include (but are not limited to) individuals with severe and persistent mental illness, significant cognitive impairments, cerebral palsy, autism, and traumatic head injury. Supported employment services will be provided on a time-limited basis to individuals with the most significant disabilities. These services may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- development of and placement in jobs based on client informed choice in an integrated setting for the maximum number of hours possible based on the unique strengths, resources, interests, concerns, abilities, and capabilities of individuals with the most significant disabilities;
- intensive on-site job skills training and other training provided by skilled job trainers, co-workers, and other qualified individuals, including fading and stabilization;
- extended follow along services, including regular contact with employers, trainees, parents, guardians, or other suitable professional and informed advisors, in order to reinforce and stabilize the job placement; and
- post-employment services may be funded under Title I of the Act following the individual's transition to extended services if the required services are unavailable from the extended service providers and if they are necessary to maintain the job placement.

2. THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES.

Under federal regulations, the time-limited VR supported employment services to be provided are not to exceed 24 months funding unless the individualized plan for employment indicates that more than 18 months of services is necessary in order for the individual to achieve job stability prior to transition to extended services. The transition process from VR services to the extended service phase begins during the stabilization phase of supported employment. During this phase, the counselor documents the individual's adjustment to the job environment and job duties. Some indicators of stabilization include, but are not limited to, employer satisfaction, client satisfaction and minimal job coach intervention. The extended services phase continues during the 90 days after the end of the

stabilization phase. Interagency involvement begins from the point of referral for VR services provided by the Division and continues until the stabilization phase is completed and the long-term support provider begins providing extended services.

CERTIFICATIONS

Name of designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate **North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

Name of designated State agency **North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Mandy Cohen, M.D.**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Secretary**

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 I 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

DSA: NC DHHS Secretary: Mandy Cohen, M.D.; DSU: NC DVRS Director Tara K. Myers

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 **North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Vocational Rehabilitation Program**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Mandy Cohen, M.D.**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Secretary**

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.

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 **North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services NCDVRS Supported Employment Program**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Mandy Cohen, M.D.**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Secretary**

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,

HAS DEVELOPED AND WILL IMPLEMENT,

STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS IDENTIFIED IN THE ASSESSMENTS; AND

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

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:

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

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;

The NC Division of Services for the Blind (DSB), State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) members provided input through various venues as follows:

The SRC for the DSB conducted two focus groups in Winston-Salem NC and in Wilmington, NC. The Council held two public hearings in Raleigh, NC and in Statesville, NC during federal fiscal year 2014 for the collection of information to be used in the development of the federal fiscal year 2015 State Plan. However, these have traditionally been poorly attended and a decision was made to find additional ways to reach blind and visually impaired citizens across the state. The SRC met on Thursday, June 12, 2014, and the Unified State Plan was reviewed and approved by the Council for federal fiscal year 2015. The council also met in March, June, September and December of 2016 & 2017. The meeting on June 16, 2017, at the suggestion of the SRC members, was held at the Industries for the Blind in Asheville and a special focus group question and answer session was held with employees with visual impairment, blindness and deaf-blindness. At their inquiry, information was shared with them regarding DSB VR, ILR and ILS services and how they can access those services. Many of the employees there obtained information regarding how they might access services in the future. There were over 20 persons with visual impairment and blindness at this meeting from the community. Therefore, this has proven to be a good way of reaching those in the community and the SRC stated that they would look for ways like this in the future to reach more people.

The Council asked for clarification to the transition programs that the DSB has with the 13 local education agencies and the services being provided to other transition aged consumers being served by Community Rehabilitation Counselors. Agency response: All 100 counties are being served with transition services, but in some locations, there are specific dedicated Rehabilitation Counselors serving this aged population while in other areas, our community Rehabilitation counselors provide these services. The Council approved the Division's Priorities and Goals for federal fiscal year 2015 without modifications.

The State Rehabilitation Council members conducted two focus groups in Winston-Salem NC and in Wilmington, NC. The Council held two public hearings in Raleigh, NC and in Statesville, NC during federal fiscal year 2014 for the collection of information to be used in the development of the federal fiscal year 2015 State Plan. The State Rehabilitation Council met on Thursday, June 12, 2014, and the State Plan was reviewed and approved by the Council for federal fiscal year 2015.

The Council asked for clarification to the transition programs that DSB has with the 13 local education agencies and the services being provided to other transition aged consumers being served by Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. The response from DSB is that all 100 counties are being served

with transition services, but in some locations, there are specific dedicated DSB Vocational Rehabilitation staff that serve the transition population (Transition Rehabilitation Counselors and Community Employment Specialists) while in other areas, DSB general Vocational Rehabilitation provide these services.

The DSB State Rehabilitation Council approved the DSB VR Program's Priorities and Goals for federal fiscal year 2015 without modifications. DSB finalized their VR program's portion of the Plan, which was submitted and approved.

In 2014-2015, DSB also introduced WIOA to the SRC and reviewed how it would affect programs and services for NC. Some of these changes included the focus on students with disabilities and pre-employment transition services, supported employment for youth and services to those with most significant disabilities, the re-defining of competitive integrated employment and that definition's effects on community rehabilitation centers, strengthening partnerships with the one stop centers and LEAs and more. The SRC agreed that this was a lot of change, but that it is expected to be to the benefit of the clients we serve.

In 2016 and 2017, DSB has been faithful to share with the SRC any general changes secondary to WIOA in policy and procedure and gather their input on how these changes might affect our clients and how they should be implemented. The SRC has reviewed policies regarding: Pre-employment Transition Services, Supported Employment, Competitive Integrated Employment, Transition Services, etc.

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

The NC Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) accepted and implemented the State Rehabilitation Council's input and recommendations. DSB continues to solicit and implement SRC input and recommendations and changes whenever possible.

3. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S EXPLANATIONS FOR REJECTING ANY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT OR RECOMMENDATIONS.

The North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) did not reject any of the State Rehabilitation Council's input or recommendations.

B. REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS

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

1. A LOCAL PUBLIC AGENCY WILL PROVIDE THE NON-FEDERAL SHARE OF COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WAIVER REQUEST;

The North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind is not requesting a waiver for statewideness; therefore this requirement does not apply.

2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL APPROVE EACH PROPOSED SERVICE BEFORE IT IS PUT INTO EFFECT; AND

The North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind is not requesting a waiver for statewideness; therefore this requirement does not apply.

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.

The North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind is not requesting a waiver for statewideness; therefore this requirement does not apply.

C. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH AGENCIES NOT CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES UNDER THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM.

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

1. FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS;

DSB has established cooperative and collaborative working relationships with various federal, state and local agencies and organizations in our mission to help blind, visually impaired and deaf-blind citizens of North Carolina receive the most comprehensive and beneficial services and supports available to facilitate their vocational and independent living goals. Many of the agencies and organizations with whom DSB collaborates are carrying out activities under the Statewide Workforce Investment System.

DSB has a cooperative agreement with the DPI (Department of Public Instruction). The agreement with DPI establishes coordination for the provision of educational and transitional services to students with visual impairments. DSB has a cooperative agreement with the University of North Carolina System (UNC). DSB partners with UNC's Department of Allied Sciences in support of the university's rehabilitation counseling program. This includes the programs on campuses of UNC-Chapel Hill, Winston-Salem State University, A&T State University, East Carolina University, and North Carolina Central University campuses. The Division provides clinical experiences for students in the program through DSB district offices and the residential rehabilitation facility. DSB and UNC mutually plan and schedule student assignments. The Division provides students training and

supervision, mentoring, constructive feedback and formal evaluations. Students are also provided office and work space, use of computers and other office equipment and technology, and exposure to other professions in the field rehabilitation such as, orientation and mobility, low vision, social work and medical eye care. UNC provides DSB staff opportunities to participate in clinical education conferences and meetings. This collaborative relationship also creates potential employment opportunities for students upon the completion of their education.

DSB has informal collaborative relationships with other organizations and consumer and advocacy groups that are not carrying out activities under the Statewide Workforce Investment System such as the Governor Morehead School, NC Association of Blind Students, Governor Morehead School Alumni Association, NC Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, North Carolina Lions Inc., NC Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired and Prevent Blindness NC, North Carolina Conference on Visual Impairment and Blindness (NCCVIB) and Envisioning Youth Empowerment (EYE). DSB and the organizations and groups collaborate in referrals for services and supports, sharing information and resources, sponsorship and participation in trainings and events, outreach and educating the general public about blindness and vision loss and increasing the general public's awareness of the needs and abilities of individuals who have visual disabilities.

DSB is one of the designated state units (DSUs) that serve as a part of the NC Statewide Independent Living Council (NC SILC). NC SILC in collaboration with the DSUs develops three-year State Plans for Independent Living (SPILs). DSB actively engages with the SILC in the development of goals, objectives and measures to help meet the independent living needs of North Carolinians who have disabilities. These entities serve together on various work groups and committees such as governance, community based living, youth leadership forum, evaluation, civil rights and IL services and supports. The work groups and committees address matters and complete the tasks and activities required to achieve the goals and desired outcomes stated in the SPIL. A SILC member serves on the DSB State Rehabilitation Council.

Cooperative and collaborative relationships have been established between NC Centers for Independent Living (CILs) and DSB. Consumers are referred by and to each entity, relevant information is shared, CILs allows DSB the use of facilities for DSB to provide consumers community-based independent living skills training and in return DSB staff provides CIL staff in-service training pertaining to visual disabilities. DSB provides consumers individual advocacy skills training and refers to the CILs for systems change advocacy needs. At this time, DSB does not directly engage in a formally established state use contracting program, where commodities or services determined to be of use to state agencies are purchased from community—based rehabilitation programs employing and training individuals with significant disabilities. As of 2017, DSB does sponsor specific client services through several community rehabilitation programs that provide training

services to DSB consumers through contracts with entities such as the Haywood Vocational Services or OE Enterprises for the provision of pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS).

2. STATE PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

The NC Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) works in collaboration with the NC Assistive Technology Program, which is one of the programs working closely within the DHHS cross-divisional collaborative in the provision of rehabilitation technology services among individuals with disabilities within the state of North Carolina. Joint planning, assessment, training and service provision are increasing through the alignment and management restructuring within DHHS that has occurred within FFY 2016 and will continue to increase through ongoing collaborative opportunities to make best use of all rehabilitation technology resources available internal and external to the NC Department of Health and Human Services.

The North Carolina Assistive Technology Program (NCATP) leads North Carolina's efforts to carry out the federal Assistive Technology Act of 1998, as amended, by promoting independence for people with disabilities through access to technology. In NC, the Assistive Technology Program and the DVRS VR program are both administered through the NC Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services. NCATP has twenty staff serving the state of North Carolina, which includes the Director, Funding Specialist, AT Information and Referral Specialist, Intake Coordinator, two Processing Assistants, four Speech Language Pathologists (SLP) and ten Assistive Technology (AT) Consultants. The ten AT Consultants and four SLPs provide direct one-on-one services in the AT Centers.

NCATP provides professional development for all VR program professionals that provide evaluation, and assistive technology equipment and assistive technology services for the VR participants served through NCATP.

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

This does not currently apply to the DSB VR Program.

4. NONEDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH; AND

NC Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) will be increasing collaborative working relationships with noneducational agencies such as the Centers for Independent Living to serves out-of-school youth in addition to the other populations the organizations mutually serve. Consumers are referred by and to each entity, relevant information is shared, CILs allows DSB the use of

facilities for DSB to provide consumers community-based independent living skills training and in return DSB staff provides CIL staff in-service training pertaining to visual disabilities. DSB provides consumers individual advocacy skills training and refers to the CILs for systems change advocacy needs.

DSB staff presently work with the Centers for Independent Living (CILs) to coordinate services for specific individuals and also to address areas of broader systemic impact such as community education, disability awareness, and outreach services to various disability groups, including out-of-school youth. The CILs are consumer-controlled, cross-disability, community-based non-residential, private non-profit organizations that provide programs and services for people with all types of disabilities and their families. The goal of CILs is to promote and support opportunities for people with disabilities to fully participate in an integrated community and search for the possibilities to live as they choose. These centers are funded through Title VII of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended via the 2014 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Information and referral, independent living skills training, advocacy, and peer counseling are the four core services each center provides. In addition to these core services, the centers may provide additional services which are tailored to serve individuals with disabilities in their service area.

5. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS.

At this time, DSB does not directly engage in a formally established state use contracting program, where commodities or services determined to be of use to state agencies are purchased from community-based rehabilitation programs employing and training individuals with significant disabilities. As of 2017, DSB does sponsor specific client services through several community rehabilitation programs that provide training services to DSB consumers through contracts with entities such as the Haywood Vocational Services or OE Enterprises for the provision of pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS).

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.

NC Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) is currently revising and renewing its state level memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the NC

Department of Public Instruction (DPI). The revised MOA will reflect the updated requirements of the final federal regulations on Title IV of WIOA. The purpose of the MOU is to outline a collaborative partnership between the two agencies to provide state level approval and support for enhanced transition services to students with disabilities. The revised MOA with DPI will also specify the manner in which pre-employment transition services (PETS) will be coordinated and provided within NC schools as well as how students with disabilities, including those who are potentially eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, will be identified and served in compliance with federal regulations.

DSB currently offers a wide variety of services to students with visual impairments or blindness in transition to the world of work. Each student served by the DSB VR program must have an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) approved by a qualified DSB rehabilitation counselor. The IPE incorporates transitional elements of the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), along with the student's plans for transitioning from secondary school to employment. DSB transition staff and VR counselors are expected to participate in student IEP meetings pertaining to transition matters. Local school systems provide students services that are within its legal responsibility and customary practice. These services are provided without cost to the Division. DSB provides transitional and supportive services that are not available through the local school systems. All costs for services for which a student is found eligible is paid for through DSB VR case service funds. A formal cooperative agreement exists with the NC Department of Public Instruction, which consists of 115 local education agencies (LEA's), 128 charter schools, 1 regional school and 2 education entities. The emphasis of the Memorandum of Agreement with DPI is on students who are blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired, being served by local education agencies (LEA's) and the schools who are of transition age (14 to 21) and who need VR services to become employed. This agreement acknowledges the role of DSB in providing these services and encourages local LEA's and schools to develop working relationships with the staff who cover their corresponding areas and encourages referring students, sharing information and facilitating joint involvement in IEP meetings. DSB shares information about the transition program and provides technical assistance and consultation to DPI, LEA's, and schools regarding accommodations and assistive technology that will help facilitate the education and VR of students who are blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired.

DSB has agreements with twelve LEA's and one regional school across the state. These agreements designate cost sharing of transition staff positions (rehabilitation counselor and community employment specialist), the duties of these positions and the services to be provided by both parties in meeting the needs of transition age students The school systems with whom DSB continues to have agreements are Brunswick County, Charlotte-Mecklenburg County, Cumberland County, Edgecombe County, Guilford County, New Hanover County, Onslow County, Pender County, Pitt County,

Wake County Schools, Wilson County, Winston-Salem-Forsyth County Schools and the Governor Morehead School for the Blind. While DSB's goal is that ultimately all eligible students will be served by specialized transition counselors through formal cooperative agreements with the schools, DPI and local LEA budgetary restraints have prevented expansion of cost sharing for transition positions. Studies have demonstrated that students, who are blind, deaf-blind or visually impaired benefit from earlier identification and referral to the transition counselors and access to available services and supports. Such partnerships enable the counselor to develop stronger working relationships with the students, family and the school staff with greater knowledge of the available resources and supports within the school district. Opportunities to participate more fully in the student's individualized education planning process are also more readily available.

Transition students are served by DSB community VR counselors in schools where DSB does not have formal cooperative agreements with the LEA's. Vocational rehabilitation counselors develop and cultivate working relationships with school systems by educating them about the transition and vocational services available through DSB and providing technical assistance and consultation pertaining to the needs of and resources available to transition students. Due to the growth of charter schools, private schools, and home-school organizations, DSB is reaching out to these entities to provide resources for any student who is blind, visually impaired, or deaf-blind. While most students do attend public schools due to the resources of specialized teachers for persons with visual impairments, DSB recognizes the importance to reach students enrolled in these programs. Therefore, DSB will continue its outreach efforts and collaboration with school districts to develop and implement formal cooperative agreements and transition programs in other locations throughout the state.

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;

A formal cooperative agreement exists with the NC Department of Public Instruction, which consists of 115 local education agencies (LEA's), 128 charter schools, 1 regional school and 2 education entities. The emphasis of the Memorandum of Agreement with DPI is on students who are blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired, being served by local education agencies (LEA's) and the schools who are of transition age (14 to 21) and who need VR services to become employed. This agreement acknowledges the role of DSB in providing these services and encourages local LEA's and schools to develop working relationships with the staff who cover their corresponding areas and encourages referring students, sharing information and facilitating joint involvement in IEP meetings.

B. TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS;

DSB participates in transition planning and facilitates the development of IEPs and IPEs as follows:

Each student served by the DSB VR program must have an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) approved by a qualified DSB rehabilitation counselor (this is not required for the receipt of Pre-Employment Transition Services). The IPE incorporates transitional elements of the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), along with the student's plans for transitioning from secondary school to employment. DSB transition staff and VR counselors are expected to participate in student IEP meetings pertaining to transition matters. Local school systems provide students services that are within its legal responsibility and customary practice. These services are provided without cost to the Division. DSB provides transitional and supportive services that are not available through the local school systems. All costs for services for which a student is found eligible is paid for through DSB VR case service funds. A formal cooperative agreement exists with the NC Department of Public Instruction, which consists of 115 local education agencies (LEA's), 128 charter schools, 1 regional school and 2 education entities. The emphasis of the Memorandum of Agreement with DPI is on students who are blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired, being served by local education agencies (LEA's) and the schools who are of transition age (14 to 21) and who need VR services to become employed. This agreement acknowledges the role of DSB in providing these services and encourages local LEA's and schools to develop working relationships with the staff who cover their corresponding areas and encourages referring students, sharing information and facilitating joint involvement in IEP meetings. DSB shares information about the transition program and provides technical assistance and consultation to DPI, LEA's, and schools regarding accommodations and assistive technology that will help facilitate the education and VR of students who are blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired.

C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, OF EACH AGENCY, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR DETERMINING STATE LEAD AGENCIES AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES;

DSB transition staff and VR counselors are expected to participate in student IEP meetings pertaining to transition matters. Local school systems provide students services that are within its legal responsibility and customary practice. These services are provided without cost to the Division. DSB provides transitional and supportive services that are not available through the local school systems. All costs for services for which a student is found eligible is paid for through DSB VR case service funds.

The Exceptional Children Division of the Department Public Instruction (DPI) and the Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) have the primary responsibilities to ensure that the provisions set forth in this agreement are carried out. The intent of this agreement is to outline steps that will result in improved services to students with visual impairments resulting in improved educational opportunities, increased employment opportunities, and greater independence.

Though this agreement focuses primarily on students with visual impairments being served by local education agencies (LEAs) who are of transition age (14 to 21) and who need the vocational rehabilitation services available through the DSB, it is recognized that any student who might benefit from any services available from the DSB can and should be referred to that Division for assessment.

Formal cooperative agreements currently exist between some LEAs and the DSB to provide rehabilitation services, and particularly transition services, through specialized rehabilitation counselors and employment specialists. In other areas, the needs of students are addressed by the rehabilitation counselors who primarily serve adults in that geographic area. Cooperation between these two entities is essential to ensure compliance with state and federal laws and regulations, to minimize duplication of effort, and to maximize efficient use of the entities' resources to help individuals with visual impairments complete their education and become employed.

Cooperative agreements developed between the DSB and LEAs should enable students with visual impairments to access rehabilitation services that had not previously been available or readily available to them from the LEA. Transition services provided under rehabilitation plans must not be services normally provided by the LEAs and determined necessary for the provision of a free and appropriate public education if they were not applicants or consumers of the state agency. These services include: testing and counseling, adjustment to blindness services, eye-related medical services, computer and vision specific technology services, job placement, and follow-up. Following a determination that a student is eligible for rehabilitation services, an employment goal is established and services identified that will assist the client in reaching the goal. An Individualized Plan for employment outlines the goal and services to be provided in support of that goal. Each student who applies for vocational rehabilitation services can expect to receive an assessment to determine eligibility and a determination made by a rehabilitation counselor as to whether the student is or is not eligible for services. It is recognized that the development of these employment plans with younger and less vocationally mature consumers may take longer than with the adult client.

Pursuing these aims, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction set forth here the terms of this cooperative agreement.

Responsibilities

A. The North Carolina DPI will encourage LEAs to request participation of the North Carolina DHHS in initial and subsequent cooperative transition planning meetings for students with visual impairments.

B. In order to facilitate coordination of services and open communication, the DSB will make local systems aware of students with visual impairments enrolled in the local education agency who are receiving rehabilitation services through the DSB.

C. When required, the liaisons will coordinate the conditions, terms, and procedures of cost reimbursement between the entities for service provision. Such coordination will occur in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations.

D. Both entities are bound by regulations on confidentiality, and each entity has the responsibility to see that referrals are made with the informed consent of the student/parent and are accompanied by any available information that is pertinent to the student's rehabilitation/education.

E. The Department of Health and Human Services through the DSB will provide technical consultation and assistance to both the LEA and to the DPI regarding the accessibility of hardware and software for use by students with visual impairments, modifications that can be made to better facilitate the education and vocational rehabilitation of students with visual impairments. Orientation and mobility services for students will be addressed on a student-by-student basis at the local level.

Resolution of Disputes

Should there arise a dispute relative to services pursuant to this agreement between a LEA or DPI and DSB, differences will be resolved in accordance with the following procedures:

A. The local liaison from the grieving agency shall provide written communication to the local representative of the other agency. Such communication will identify the conflict, proposed action, and a summary of factual, legal, and policy grounds.

B. Pending a resolution, both DSB and the LEA or DPI will ensure that services will continue at the same level while negotiations proceed to seek a mutual agreement on issues subject to the dispute.

C. A written response, which includes a proposed solution to the dispute will be provided by the receiving entity within 45 days.

D. Should further action be required, a report from both entities shall be submitted to the DHHS-DSB Chief of Rehabilitation Field Services and the Director, Exceptional Children Division, DPI for resolution.

E. Any party aggrieved by the proposed resolutions authorized by this agreement shall have all due process rights available under 20 USC, G.S.

115C-116 and their implementing regulations. The term "party" includes public party or agency affected by such action and the parent(s), legal guardian(s), or surrogate parent(s) of the child with disabilities. Failure of the party to pursue due process rights under 20 USC 1415 and G.S. 115C-116 within 30 days of notification of the decision shall constitute acceptance by such parties of the decision made pursuant to this agreement.

Implementation of Agreement

The DSB Chief of Rehabilitation Field Services and the Director of the Exceptional Children Division are designated and given the responsibility for implementing the provisions of this Agreement; monitoring the implementation of this Agreement; and sharing consumer information as long as it does not conflict with policies pertaining to confidentiality and informed consent of an individual receiving services.

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

DSB shares information about the transition program and provides technical assistance and consultation to DPI, LEA's, and schools regarding accommodations and assistive technology that will help facilitate the education and VR of students who are blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired.

DSB has also enlarged the transition rehabilitation services presently offered for students 14-21 years of age in North Carolina who are blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired by adding specific Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS): (1) Student Counseling on Transition/Higher Ed Training Opportunities- Required Student Workplace Readiness Training; (2) Student Self-Advocacy Training; (3) Student Job Exploration Counseling; (4) Student Job Exploration Counseling Materials; and Student Work Based Learning Experience Maintenance. These services are provided to all students with visual impairments, blindness, or deaf-blindness whether they are eligible or potentially eligible for vocational rehabilitation services.

Transition students are served by DSB general vocational rehabilitation counselors in schools where DSB does not have formal cooperative agreements with the LEA's. Vocational rehabilitation counselors develop and cultivate working relationships with school systems by educating them about the transition and vocational services available through DSB and providing technical assistance and consultation pertaining to the needs of and resources available to transition students. DSB has trained and commissioned 7 Pre-Employment Transition Services Associate positions which are equipped to target potentially eligible students ages 14-21 years of age that may require Pre-Employment Transition Services. They are instructed to contact parent and teachers to assess need and desire for services, provide Pre-ETS services directly and document all activities regarding service provision. If desired, this position can also refer students

to a VR Counselors so that they can then apply for a full program of VR services leading to competitive integrated employment.

DSB reaches out to various county school systems to assure that they are aware of DSB services. Due to the growth of charter schools, private schools, and home-school organizations, DSB is reaching out to these entities to provide resources for any student who is blind, visually impaired, or deaf-blind. While most students do attend public schools due to the resources of specialized teachers for persons with visual impairments, DSB recognizes the importance to reach students enrolled in these programs.

DSB will continue its outreach efforts and collaboration with school districts to develop and implement formal cooperative agreements and transition programs in other locations throughout the state.

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.

DSB purchases supported employment services, extended services, and community based work adjustment services from Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) for individuals who will require the assistance of a job coach to find a job, to learn the duties of the job, to develop acceptable work habits, and to provide long term support to ensure the individual is able to retain the job if required by the individual. The CRP must meet certain requirements before services are purchased. The Contractor will maintain accreditation through the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), Council on Accreditation (COA), or other accreditation by a DSB approved national accrediting authority will be a vendor with the state of North Carolina and will accept payments for services provided through an outcome based program.

DSB has cooperative agreements with eight CRPs for the provision of long term follow up support services (extended services) to individuals who achieved their goal of employment assistance from the supported employment program. The CRP meets with the individual based on DSB's phasing system for long term follow up. The Contractor provides extended services and ongoing support services through individual contacts on the schedule as listed below. The contractor bills DSB for these contacts and follows the phases of DSB's extended services plan as follows:

Phase 1: Twice monthly contacts with the individual and employer for the first 6 months of extended services, unless a provision is put in place on the individual's original or amended IPE for off -site monitoring.

Phase 2: At the end of 6 months, the contractor, individual and employer will make determination as to the individual's stabilization on the job. If ongoing support is required by the individual to maintain employment, ongoing

support of two monthly contacts can condition. If and when the individual is determined to be well stabilized in the employment situation, an offer will be made to the individual and employer that continued monitoring could be made once every six months. If this offer is accepted by the individual and employer, the contractor must continue to monitor in the phase 2 for no less than 24 months. The individual and employer must sign a waiver acknowledging their agreement to this action during this phase.

Phase 3: When the individual has successfully completed phase 2, the contractor may offer the individual and employer an opportunity to cease regular monitoring. If they chose to enter into phase 3, the individual is placed on an inactive list and monitoring would only be at the individual or employer's request. The individual and employer must sign a waiver agreeing to the conditions of phase 3. If the contractor is contacted by either the individual or employer, the contractor will make an on-site visit to determine what services are needed to re-stabilize the individual's job. If the contractor determines that more than minimal services are needed, then the contractor should refer the individual back to the DSB's Vocational Rehabilitation Program for possible case activation. However, if the contractor determines that the issues can be resolved with for example, short term training or educating of staff, the contractor can provide required services to the individual and/or employer.

DSB developed a community-based work adjustment services program with assistance from several community rehabilitation programs (CRP) for eligible individuals who require initial intervention to improve and increase productivity, attendance, punctuality, ability to interact appropriately with coworkers and supervisors, and work tolerance, yet do not require long-term support. CRP's across the state have developed specialized programs for these services that include situational assessments, job placement and job coaching services. Payments are made to the CRP's using an outcome based format, with increment payments made based on milestones.

DSB provides the Contractor with staff training, consultation and technical assistance, as appropriate. DSB's VR Counselor coordinates individual admissions and subsequent services with the contractor. Consistent with DSB policy, the referring VR Counselor provides the Contractor with the necessary documents. DSB participates in admissions, attends subsequent staffing, and provides individual rehabilitation counseling and other rehabilitation services to promote the individual's progress while enrolled with the Contractor. Individual records will reflect evidence of mutual effort and each party will keep the other informed regarding placement and follow-up activities.

The DSB Rehabilitation Program Specialist meets periodically with the CRP's personnel to provide assistance relative to standards compliance, fiscal accountability, quality of service, individual referrals, and the planning of program services for DSB individuals as identified in this contract.

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.

DSB utilizes an outcome based method of purchasing supported employment services from private non-profit community rehabilitation programs (CRP) for eligible individuals who are determined to have the most significant disabilities and are in need of supported employment. The CRP must meet three requirements: (1) the CRP must be certified by a nationally recognized certification program such as CARF, COA, or Council on Quality Leadership (CQL); (2) the CRP must be a vendor of the state; and (3) the CRP must be willing to accept DSB's milestone payment system. There are five milestones with incentives throughout the entire supported employment process. The five milestones are: (1) Assessment and Planning; (2) Job Development; (3) Job Placement; (4) Stabilization; and (5) Successful Employment. Incentives are provided the employer provides health insurance coverage at little or no cost to the individual, and the individual is eligible to be covered at the time of case closure. The Community Rehabilitation Program provides documentation in the form of a record of service hours provided and case notes from the job coaches to the DSB VR Counselors with each invoice for payment of the milestones. DSB continues to contract for extended services and currently has agreements with CRPs to provide this important service. These services are paid through state funds without use of Title VI funding.

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

DSB will reach out to employers in their geographic areas and statewide to make contact on behalf of the agency to ensure that area employers are aware of what DSB-VR has to offer regarding their employment needs. They will offer general information on DSB Services including opportunities for internships, work experiences, and the Supported Employment Program, and screening and placement of potential qualified employees. They may also offer disability sensitivity training and additional information regarding benefits to employers that hire those with disabilities.

2. TRANSITION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, FOR STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES.

Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) will communicate with employers regarding the expansive program DSB offers its students and youth with disabilities. They will offer general information on DSB Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) and Youth Services including opportunities for work-based learning experiences, the Supported Employment Program, potential employees that we may represent, disability sensitivity training available and benefits to employers that hire those with disabilities.

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;

NC Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) has established an informational sharing agreement with NCTracks, the recently developed multi-payer Medicaid Management Information System for North Carolina, to make sure that DSB is sponsoring all approved medical cost services at the appropriate pricing tiers. This has taken a combined effort with DVRS, the Controller's Office, Information Technology Services and the NCTracks team to make sure this information is shared accurately and is up to date at all times. DSB and DVRS has also entered into an agreement with Social Security Administration allowing for the sharing of information on an as needed basis only to assist with presumption of eligibility and provision of services to those with verified disabilities. This sharing of information was made possible using the BEAM electronic case management system and every VR staff person that has access to such information must annually review appropriate information and agree to confidentiality protocols.

2. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES; AND

DSB has reached out to the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD) to begin discussions regarding how our agencies might work together to better serve the needs of North Carolinians with multiple disabilities.

DSB is also making every effort to collaborate with agencies within DHHS including our sister agencies, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) and Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DSDHH). DSB and DVRS have jointly purchased and developed a customized version of the Libera System 7 Electronic Case Management

System (BEAM), which has greatly increased DSB reporting and monitoring capabilities while also enabling DSB to better serve VR program clients on an everyday basis. With DSDHH, DSB has continued collaboration on a grant-funded effort to deliver state of the art assistive technology equipment and assistive technology training to those that are Deaf-Blind through services provided directly by our Deaf-Blind Specialists.

3. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

DSB has reached out to the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services to begin discussions regarding how our agencies might work together to better serve the needs of North Carolinians with multiple disabilities.

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;

The Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) utilizes the state human resource and payroll system called Building Enterprise Access for North Carolina's Core Operations (BEACON), which was fully implemented in 2008. Reports on staff positions and vacancies pertaining to the Unified Plan are customized from this system. Data on the number of VR program participants are provided through the BEAM case management and service payment system.

The tables in this section show the number of personnel employed in the provision of VR services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category. In total, the ratio of VR counselors to individuals served is served 3,178/ 41 total counselor positions or 78:1.

Job Title	Total Positions	Clients Served Per Position
Rehabilitation Counselor I	22	144
Rehabilitation Counselor II	19	167
Rehabilitation Counselor in Charge	4	794
Rehabilitation Admin Counselor I	3	1,059
Rehabilitation Supervisor	3	1,059
Vocational Evaluator II	1	3,178
HR Placement Specialist	6	529
Human Services Coordinator I	1	3,178
Human Services Coordinator II	0	0
Rehabilitation Casework Tech	2	1,589
Processing Assistants	22	146
Total	83	38

*Individuals Served = 3,178 for DSB (source: FY 2017 RSA-113)

Currently, 100% of VR Program Staff meet the education standards for qualified rehabilitation counselor. Individuals who will meet the definition of "qualified rehabilitation counselor" are being recruited for all current vacancies and are hired whenever possible.

ii. the number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and

Currently, DSB has funded the following positions for the provision of VR services broken down by personnel category:

Job Title	Total Positions
Rehabilitation Counselor I	22
Rehabilitation Counselor II	19
Rehabilitation Counselor in Charge	4

Job Title	Total Positions
Rehabilitation Admin Counselor I	3
Rehabilitation Supervisor	3
Vocational Evaluator II	1
HR Placement Specialist	6
Human Services Coordinator I	1
Human Services Coordinator II	0
Rehabilitation Casework Tech	2
Processing Assistants	22
Total	83

iii. projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the State agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

The total number of individuals served through the Division of Services for the Blind's VR program has not increased over the past several years and an increase in funded positions is not expected. Based on a three-year average vacancy or staff turnover rate, including vacancies through promotion, the agency estimates the following cumulative total staff turnover for the upcoming five years:

Job Title	Vacancies FFY 2017	Total Needed Over Next 5 Years
Rehabilitation Counselor I	0	20
Rehabilitation Counselor II	0	5
Rehabilitation Counselor in Charge	2	0
Rehabilitation Admin Counselor I	1	5
Rehabilitation Supervisor	0	1
Vocational Evaluator II	0	0

Job Title	Vacancies FFY 2017	Total Needed Over Next 5 Years
HR Placement Specialist	0	0
Human Services Coordinator I	0	5
Human Services Coordinator II	0	15
Rehabilitation Casework Tech	0	5
Processing Assistant	1	5
Total	4	61

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;

DSB has developed a relationship with four North Carolina universities who currently offer graduate degrees in rehabilitation counseling studies. These include East Carolina University (ECU), A&T State University, Winston-Salem State University (WSSU), and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH). AT&T State and the WSSU programs are historically black universities and were established with the assistance of Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) grant and school funding. Stipends and financial aid assistance are offered to candidates in these programs. Classes began in fall, 2003 and continue to this date. Division representatives serve on the steering committee at each university. The universities and DSB plan to continue partnering to provide internships for students as needed. Winston- Salem State University received funding in 2002 to offer a bachelor degree in rehabilitation studies, and coursework continues. The master degree program in rehabilitation studies is designed in coordination with the undergraduate program to encourage these graduates to pursue a master degree. North Carolina A&T State University has used the structure in existing master degree programs in guidance and counseling to build the rehabilitation counseling master degree program. UNC has received an RSA grant to provide a master's degree in psychiatric disabilities and is currently offering four course as part of their master's program.The following is a list of institutions by program type that currently offer professional training programs for preparing VR professionals:

• ***NC A&T University***: Mental Health Counseling - Rehabilitation Program Master's program; Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Rehabilitation Counseling & Rehabilitation Counselor Education; Certificate in Rehabilitation Counseling & Behavioral Addictions; Certificate in Rehabilitation Psychology &

Behavioral Medicine; and Certificate in Vocational Evaluation & Work Adjustment;

• ***Winston Salem State University***: Masters of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling with program focus specialization offered in Deaf & Hard of Hearing, Rural Transition, Vocational Evaluation, as well as Public VR;

• ***University of NC at Chapel Hill***: Master of Science in Clinical Rehabilitation & Mental Health Counseling;

• ***East Carolina University***: Masters of Science in Rehabilitation & Career Counseling; Certificate in Rehabilitation Counseling; Certificate in Vocational Evaluation; Certificate in Substance Abuse Counseling; and Certificate in Military & Trauma Counseling.

ii. the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and

• ***NC A&T University***:

- Mental Health Counseling - Rehabilitation Program Master's program, **36 students**
- Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Rehabilitation Counseling & Rehabilitation Counselor Education, **28 students**
- Certificate Rehabilitation Counseling & Behavioral Addictions, **22 students**
- Certificate in Rehabilitation Psychology & Behavioral Medicine, **8 students**
- Certificate in Vocational Evaluation & Work Adjustment. **0 students**

• ***Winston Salem State University***:

- Masters of Science in Rehabilitation: **40 students**

• ***UNC at Chapel Hill***:

- Master of Science in Clinical Rehabilitation & Mental Health Counseling: **42 students**

• ***East Carolina University***:

- Masters of Science in Rehabilitation & Career Counseling: **18 students**
- Certificate in Rehabilitation Counseling: **12 students**
- Certificate in Vocational Evaluation: **26 students**
- Certificate in Substance Abuse Counseling: **unknown**
- Certificate in Military & Trauma Counseling: **32 students**

iii. the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

• ***NC A&T University:***

- Mental Health Counseling - Rehabilitation Program Master's program, **8 graduates (2 hired between DVRS and DSB)**
- Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Rehabilitation Counseling & Rehabilitation Counselor Education, **4 graduates**
- Certificate Rehabilitation Counseling & Behavioral Addictions, **10graduates**
- Certificate in Rehabilitation Psychology & Behavioral Medicine, **unknown**
- Certificate in Vocational Evaluation & Work Adjustment, **unknown**

• ***Winston Salem State University***:

- Masters of Science in Rehabilitation: **16 graduates**

• ***UNC at Chapel Hill***:

- Master of Science in Clinical Rehabilitation & Mental Health Counseling: **18 graduates**

• ***East Carolina University***:

- Masters of Science in Rehabilitation & Career Counseling: **14 graduates (2 hired between DVRS and DSB)**
- Certificate in Rehabilitation Counseling: **3 graduates**
- Certificate in Vocational Evaluation: **2 graduates**
- Certificate in Substance Abuse Counseling: **unknown**
- Certificate in Military & Trauma Counseling: **20 graduates**

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 Division of the Services for the Blind (DSB) employs the following strategies to ensure that the agency's projected need for qualified staff are met:

DSB has offered unpaid internship positions for students in their last semester of a master level degree program in rehabilitation counseling. Offering internships educates students about the needs of individuals who are blind or visually impaired and strengthens the pool of candidates for possible employment with DSB.

Nationwide recruitment is now done by posting positions in NeoGov, an Internet Human Resources Application Provider for Government Agencies. NeoGov has eliminated the need for numerous individual contacts to advertise available positions and has expanded the available applicant pool. A section on DSB's website labeled, "Career Opportunities" links browsers to NeoGov listings. Plans have also begun to begin to alert the universities with Rehabilitation Counseling Programs to openings as posted to further encourage qualified applicants.

Among senior management and area supervisors, DSB has 2 staff members with more than 25 years of service and one vacancy. The need for succession planning was identified and steps have been taken through cross-training for all staff and training opportunities for those hoping to lead. DSB utilizes NC DHHS leadership training as a point of entrance for pre-supervisory training. DSB conducts leadership/pre-supervisory training in an effort to begin to identify staff interested in management opportunities.

DSB uses affirmative action to ensure the employment and advancement in employment of qualified individuals with disabilities. On an annual basis, DSB conducts a workforce analysis of its representation of persons with disabilities, of persons of different ethnic groups and of males and females in different personnel classifications and occupational categories. Those classifications and occupational categories in which persons with disabilities and minority groups are under-represented are identified, and goals are established to increase representation in DSB's workforce.

During their first year of employment, all rehabilitation counselors are required to complete developmental training in casework requirements and documentation. The chiefs of rehabilitation and the REA and district rehabilitation supervisors provide this training in small groups to directly address agency policies and procedures for professional casework practices. After 1 year of employment, rehabilitation counselors who meet the standard for qualified Rehabilitation Counselor may request promotion to rehabilitation counselor II. Evaluation procedures for this promotion consist of a written and oral examination of casework policies and procedures, caseload review and audit, and review of contact with caseload eligible individuals to assess quality and satisfaction of services. The Chief of Rehabilitation Field Services administers and reviews all aspects of the examination process. Counselors are also required to participate in a week-long adjustment to blindness training which is organized by the

rehabilitation center teacher staff and management to increase knowledge regarding working with those with a visual impairment or blindness.

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

While DSB modeled their counselor personnel standard after the CRCC, the Division also initiated its own comprehensive standard with more specific listing of degrees that it will accept. Effective October 1, 2008, this standard-related requirement for a Rehabilitation Counselor hire included:

• Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling;

• Master's degree in a closely related field such as Counseling, Social Work, Psychology, Special Education, Communication Disorders, Human Services;

• Current certification as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor or Licensed Professional Counselor;

• Current enrollment in a qualifying master's degree program AND graduation occurs prior to the date of hire.

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.

As of December 21, 2009, all employees in the Rehabilitation Counselor I and Rehabilitation Counselor II roles met the CSPD mandate. Although the mandate has been lifted, DHHS has not at this time changed its policies regarding minimum requirements for the VR counselor position but is investigating whether lowering the educational standard for VR counselors to the minimum credentialing specified in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act is necessary and beneficial to VR clients. Currently, employees that do not meet the minimum education requirements serve in trainee status and not function as a Rehabilitation Counselor, and must progress toward attaining the necessary requirements outlined in a Memorandum of Agreement within the specified timeframe. If the employee does not meet the specified requirements or they are not progressing at an

acceptable rate, the employee is separated during their probationary status period.

Between 2016 - 2018, two newly hired rehabilitation counselors have successfully completed coursework to meet the minimum educational requirements for employment. Three DSB employees have enrolled in RSA Scholarship programs for Rehabilitation Counseling at Auburn University and Winston-Salem State University. One of these employees graduated in 2016 and met requirements to be promoted to Rehabilitation Counselor position within DSB. The other two employees are still completing coursework under the Academic Assistance policy.

The VR program currently averages around 10 qualified applicants for each vacancy, which is primarily attributable to the current economic climate. This means that recruitment for Rehabilitation Counselor I and Rehabilitation Counselor II positions have not been as challenging as in years past. The Division does find it generally takes longer to find professionals prepared to serve a Deaf and Hard of Hearing caseload, but well-qualified staff are eventually hired.

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

DSB has an ongoing comprehensive system for personnel development that provides all staff classifications with appropriate job-related training. Staff members complete Learning Request Forms yearly to identify specific training needs. The Program Specialist for Staff Development analyzes the learning requests, and then plans specific training activities to meet the identified needs. As a result of these requests, training has been provided in an array of training events with relevant curriculum and skills acquisition experiences. DSB has developed and presented intensive training sessions this year.

Since the implementation of WIOA, and as of December, 2017, DSB provided a number of mandatory trainings focused on WIOA and Pre-ETS for Rehabilitation Counselors, supervisors, specialists, Business Service Representatives and Community Employment Specialists, including introductions to the changes in definitions, policies and specifically the BEAM-System 7 reporting processes. In 2016, staff attended a joint DVRS

and DSB Transition Conference, which provided a specific overview to Pre-ETS from different workforce and educational partners. Most recently, DSB sponsored a training event that introduced staff to more than 20 national and state vendors of Pre-ETS services to support their efforts in matching students to appropriate training opportunities. Another area of focus of staff development has been Job Development. Since 2016, DSB has had at least one employee per year enrolled in the Career Development Facilitator training offered by NCWorks. Other Job Development trainings provided by DSB include Windmills training, Improving Business Development Skills Training, attendance at the annual NCWorks Partnership Conference and annual Business Engagement training for specific employment specialists.

Beginning in May, 2017, DSB became one of 4 states to participate in training and research from the National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Visual Impairment (NRTC) "Improving Business Development Skills." As a participating state, case carrying VR counselors have been and continue to respond to quarterly surveys pertaining to their business development activities. In February, 2018, staff from the NRTC and an external trainer from a state with documented success in the dual customer approach to business development, provided an intensive 3-day training for Rehabilitation Counselors, supervisors, job development staff and Deaf-Blind Specialists. Following the training, the Rehabilitation Counselors will continue completing quarterly surveys for approximately 9 months as part of the research project. Additionally, the NRTC will provide Technical Assistance to DSB administration.

DSB staff attended-trainings many of which were developed as in-service trainings included: Administrative Professionals Certificate Training; Assistive Technology; BEAM-System 7 Training- All Staff Statewide; Best Practices for DSB's New Rehabilitation Counselors; Business Service Representative Training; Community Collaboration and Training Forum; CPR Training; CFNC.ORG Training Sessions; DHHS Leadership Training; Employment Opportunities Professional Training; National Equipment Deaf-Blind Training Program; National Transition Conference; New Employee Sensitivity Training; North Carolina Conference on Visual Impairment and Blindness (NCCVIB) in collaboration with Governor Morehead School for the Blind, and the NC Department of Public Instruction; North Carolina Deaf Blind Association Conference; Orientation & Mobility at SOMA Conference; Pre-Supervisory Training; Professional and Personal Development; Rehabilitation Center and Evaluation Unit Annual Training; Spanish Training Courses; Strategic Planning; Teaching Financial Literacy; Workplace Violence Prevention.

As of 2017, in coordination with the Office of State Human Resources, a number of DSB employees have completed coursework in the Leading at all Levels curriculums for Individual Contributors and Supervisors. The Staff Development VR Program Specialist has become credentialed as a trainer for 3 of the 5 Individual Contributors modules in an effort to make the trainings more available to DSB staff. Additionally, during the 2017 calendar

year, 15 employees participated in and received 3-year certificates in Mental Health First Aid.

DSB has maintained the authority granted by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification to provide Certified Rehabilitation Counselor Credits (CRC) for all certified rehabilitation counselors. The agency also has the authority to grant Continuing Educational Units (CEU) by the Academy of Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Programs (ACVREP).

During the years of 2015-2018, DSB secured a 3-year subscription to the e-Learning platform of the American Foundation of the Blind (AFB). At the 2 ½ year mark of the subscription, 121 DSB employees have completed more than 200 courses. Most of the coursework provided on the AFB e-Learning platform provide CRC and ACVREP credentials. DSB staff are also routinely alerted to other on-line training events provided by sponsors such as, WINTAC, NCWorks and the ADA National Network.

DSB partnered with Mississippi State University Research and Training Center Vision Specialist Certificate Program to train staff in the specific area of vision. DSB had one person graduate from this program in August 2012 and nine graduated in 2011. DSB began a Transition Certificate program with Winston-Salem State University and 2 staff began this program, but it has presently been suspended by the University. We are in touch with WSSU and will again offer this opportunity to staff as it presents itself. DSB is also researching additional resources for transition training. In 2016, one transition counselor completed coursework for a Transition certificate from the University of Maryland.

DSB continues to work towards expansion of the availability of additional transition programs that can better prepare students in transition from school to work and develops specialized training in transition services. DPI's consultant for vision impairment and DSB's specialist for transition services work together to identify areas to establish new programs and to provide consultation for the school systems in transition program development. The program specialist is responsible for maintaining a good relationship with DPI to ensure continued communication at the state level that will enhance the availability of services to students in their local school systems. DPI's consultant for vision impairment serves on DSB's state rehabilitation council.

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.

DSB requires professional skills in rehabilitation counseling, blind rehabilitation, customer service and business relationship development to enhance client employment opportunities. Training materials are extensively researched and drawn from a rich spectrum of resources,

including vocational rehabilitation, sales, customer service, business, marketing, workforce development, job development, CRCC,SSA, RSA, EEOC, ODEP, ADA National Network, and Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Centers. Attention is given to knowledge translation: a process which includes knowledge dissemination of evidence-based and best practices derived from the results of rigorous research. The Program Specialist for Employment Services assists in the provision of comprehensive training on these subjects to all newly hired VRCs and VR staff responsible for job development and placement. Follow-up training and one-on-one coaching is available to staff not meeting performance objectives.

A library of rehabilitation resources is maintained in the state office. The Staff Development Program Specialist continually reviews available materials for the library, identifies and purchases current information relevant to VR and to vision-related topics. Areas specifically addressed in the learning requests are targeted in this search of materials. These books and materials are available in regular and adapted format, and can be checked out from the library by any staff member across the state.

Equipment is purchased and maintained to enhance training programs, presentations, and small group work.

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.

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

The capability to produce Braille is available in all seven district office locations. Information can also be produced in large print for distribution as needed in the district offices with use of existing computer equipment. Mass production of Braille and large print material is done by the specialized communications unit located at DSB's state office to support DSB's employees who are blind or visually impaired. Information is put on tape for those who prefer this mode of communication by district office staff. Information is also shared using e-communications (e-mail, disks, etc.), and each office has a computer with speech access for staff who use this mode of communication. DSB has placed the policy and procedures manual on DSB's website. The website currently contains information about all of DSB's programs, frequently used forms, links to resources, the local office locations, and the staff directory.

DSB has a specialized program for persons who have both vision and hearing loss. The program consists of 5 specialists to serve the district offices and a statewide program specialist who manages the activities of this program. Each member of this program is skilled in use of sign language to enhance communication. The consultants work very closely with rehabilitation counselors on all cases where individuals have any degree of both vision and hearing loss. They provide information regarding specialized needs of these individuals, the availability of resources, and the arrangement of appropriate communication. This collaboration ensures the individual has the opportunity for maximum participation in a rehabilitation program of services that will lead to successful employment. DSB maintains a list of approved interpreters and dedicated funding for interpreting services through DHHS resources.

A list of qualified interpreters is maintained in each office, and these can be hired as required to enhance communication. When necessary, all offices have access to a state-contracted service for interpreting services available through use of a telephone. When an applicant or eligible individual meets with a staff member, the Telelanguage service is contacted, and they obtain a language specific interpreter by telephone. Through use of a speakerphone, the interpreter translates the conversations into a language that the individual and staff understand. Initial feedback from use of this program is that it is efficient and constructive to effective communication.

Also, DSB purchased Rosetta Stone-Spanish and made the program available to all staff in the agency. DSB has had 26 staff engage in the program since its inception. However, secondary to technical difficulties with the program, DSB is presently seeking an alternative that will be more accessible to all users.

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.

DSB works with DPI to ensure all students who are blind or visually impaired have access to VR services while attending public school. DSB has 13 memorandums of agreements with school systems to provide transition programs for their students who are blind or visually impaired. These programs work with students who are blind or visually impaired, the school staff, and the parents or guardians as the student transitions from school to work, and continue working with them until they achieve their employment goals. The specialized programs are located in the following school systems: Cumberland County Schools, Mecklenburg County Schools, Pitt County Schools, Wilson County Schools, Edgecombe County Schools, Wake County Schools, Guilford County Schools, Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools,

New Hanover County Schools, Pender County Schools, Onslow County Schools, Brunswick County Schools, and the Governor Morehead School for the Blind. Each program consists of a Rehabilitation Counselor and a Community Employment Specialist who are trained to work with students during their transition from school to work.

All Rehabilitation Counselors have received training on IDEA. Rehabilitation counselors in the district offices develop relationships with school systems and with teachers who serve students with blindness or visual impairments in their coverage area. They participate as members of the school's individualized education program (IEP) team as a provider of transition services for students who are blind or who are visually impaired. Consultation is provided to all rehabilitation counselors who include students on their caseload. The program specialist and the specialized transition counselors are available to advise counselors in areas such as participation on the IEP team and location of specialized resources for students as they transition from school to work.

DSB provides additional specialized services for students, such as the summer youth programs at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind. One program called "SAVVY" (Summer Adjustment to Blindness Vital to Visually Impaired Youth) World Of Work provides career exploration, paid internships with job coaching, interviewing skills and counseling provided by DSB staff. One program, "SAVVY" Youth in Transition provides a classroom setting and field trips to develop skills and confidence for greater independence, specific life skills, basic living skills, social development, vocational and study skills and independent living. Another program called "SAVVY" College Prep provides "college survival skills," such as independent study habits and maximum use of any assistive technology.

In addition, DSB often provides Youth Mini Centers in the communities throughout the state in coordination with the VR transition program staff and the independent living rehabilitation staff for those students who cannot attend one of the Center programs. These programs focus on direct requests of the youth in that area and may include local recreational offerings, activities of daily living instruction, O&M, assistive technology evaluation and training, banking, college tours and much more.

A rehabilitation program specialist is assigned to coordinate transition services to ensure all students have access to DSB's VR services while in high school. The school systems with transition programs renew their cooperative agreements for funding and the transition program specialist coordinates the involvement of the local DSB staff, the school staff, and DSB's financial officers to ensure these agreements are complete and accurate.

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;

Statewide Assessment General Statement:

The North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind completed a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment in 2013. In 2014, legislators introduced the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and with it a host of new points of emphasis and vocational rehabilitation program requirements. The passage of this law, due to its massive content, change of focus as well as it being the first of its kind in over 20 years, was considered to be revolutionary. Secondary to this, leadership within the Department of Health and Human Services decided that in order to be comprehensive and to give the best benefit those we serve, we needed to await further regulatory instruction prior to moving forward with another needs assessment that may very well be off base. At this time, the NC Division of Services for the Blind and the NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation are presently in the process of conducting a joint comprehensive statewide needs assessment involving various partners. Therefore, the present goals are being pursued as stated under the guidance of the latest completed statewide needs assessment. We feel these goals continue to reflect the needs of our state as demonstrated not only by the needs assessment itself, but with input from client satisfaction surveys and other internal and external feedback.

An assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State, Particularly the VR services needs of those with the most significant disabilities including their need for supported employment services:

The Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) is an important division operating in collaboration with others under the authority of the NC Department of Health and Human Services. DSB is a DHHS division. DSB's mission is to enable people who are blind, visually impaired or deaf blind to reach their goals of independence and employment. Eligible individuals are served in all 100 counties of North Carolina. DSB is the designated state unit recognized by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to deliver VR services to individuals who have significant visual disabilities.Consistent with the mandates of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, DSB conducts a comprehensive statewide needs assessment (CSNA) every three years. The State Rehabilitation Council collaborated with DSB in the completion of the DSB 2013 CSNA. The Division contracted the services of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the Department of Allied Health Sciences, and the Division of Rehabilitation Counseling & Psychology to conduct the assessment that was completed on October 31, 2013.

The following research questions were addressed:

• Who are the unserved and underserved groups of individuals that are blind or visually impaired in North Carolina who do not receive the services they need from DSB?

• What are the VR service needs of minorities with visual disabilities?

• What are the VR needs of individuals with visual disabilities, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of individuals with the most significant visual disabilities, including their need for supported employment services?

• What are the vocational rehabilitation service needs of individuals with visual disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system?

• What is the need to establish, develop or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state?

Methodology: Strategies identified in the VR Needs Assessment Guide (Shell, 2010), were used, including a review and analysis of archival data and literature consisting of the following sources:

• 2012 DSB Annual Report

• NC DSB's 2011 federal fiscal year State Plan

• Customer Satisfaction Survey Results

• CSNA reports from NC DSB and NC DVRS

• CSNA reports from Kentucky and Virginia

• NC DSB agency data (RSA-911) or Case Service Report for FYs 2009-2012

• American Community Survey, Center for Disease Control, Current Population Survey

• State Center for Health Statistics, NC Division of Public Health, NC Department of Health and Human Services

• Prevent Blindness America

• U. S. Bureau of the Census Data for the State of North Carolina

Various stakeholders participated in surveys, key informant interviews and focus groups. The participants included current and former DSB consumers, DSB staff, eye care providers, community rehabilitation program representatives, workforce development system partners, the State Rehabilitation Council, employers and advocacy group representatives. A qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data was conducted.

NC Demographic Profile:

As of 2017, the US Census reports NC has a population of 10,273,419.

Presenting with a very diverse makeup as follows:

White alone, percent, July 1, 2016, 71%

Black or African American alone, percent, July 1, 2016, 22.2%

American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent, July 1, 2016, 1.6%

Asian alone, percent, July 1, 2016, 2.9%

Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander alone, percent, July 1, 2016, 0.1%

Two or More Races, percent, July 1, 2016, 2.2%

Hispanic or Latino, percent, July 1, 2016, 9.2%

The NC household income reported by the US Census in 2017 reflected:

Median household income, 2012-2016 $48,256

Persons in poverty 15.4 percent

No specific group(s) of individuals were identified as unserved in the assessment. However, statistically more females than males have vision problems such as cataracts, glaucoma, low vision, age-related macular degeneration, or blindness yet still DSB serves equal number of males and females annually.

This may suggest that women are underserved by DSB. Minorities, individuals who have limited incomes and individuals living in rural areas are also underserved by DSB. Consumers of Hispanics/Latino, Black/African-American, and American Indians/Alaska Native racial/ethnic background are underserved as well. One out of three DSB consumers is African American, meaning this group does access and receive services from DSB but was found to be less successful in securing employment than the non- Hispanic White group.Older adults, transition-age-youth/adolescents, individuals who are deaf-blind or have other multiple disabilities were also noted to be underserved.Employment and Community Participation: The employment rate of individuals with disabilities in North Carolina is 36.7% (American Community Survey, 2011). Thirty-nine percent of DSB consumers who participated in the CSNA reported being unemployed and unemployment is higher in some minority groups (e.g., African Americans). Of the unemployed group who participated in the study (n=119), 47% said they would like to find a job, 37% said that they had been actively searching for a job, 21% sought out vocational services in the past year (primarily through DSB or DVRS) and 43% (n=132) of all consumers who participated said they would need more assistance to participate in the community.Barriers to employment identified by DSB consumers included the following: lack of jobs; lack of transportation; lack of state funds or budget restrictions; lack of information regarding disability resources; health concerns; and the lack of qualified service providersServices Needs/Gaps identified by Consumers included: post-employment services; supported employment; vocational services; assistive technology;

information and supports in accessing public transportation; medical services; and services to improve independent living.

Recommendations:

Outreach to Unserved and Underserved Groups:• Increase awareness of DSB services in the underserved communities; facilitate innovative outreach activities and events that target women, transition age youth, minorities, older adults, individuals living in rural areas and individuals with low income• Educate the public about the presence and role of DSB in the community. Post flyers, brochures about DSB in doctor's offices, schools, hospitals, and community agencies.

Strategic Activities to Address Employment Needs:• Improve the retention and rehabilitation rates for individuals who are underserved (women, transition age youth, minorities, older adults, individuals living in rural areas, and individuals with low income)• Implement evidence-based practices in VR and assistive technology

B. WHO ARE MINORITIES;

NC Demographic Profile:

As of 2017, the US Census reports NC has a population of 10,273,419.

Presenting with a very diverse makeup as follows:

White alone, percent, July 1, 2016, 71%

Black or African American alone, percent, July 1, 2016, 22.2%

American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent, July 1, 2016, 1.6%

Asian alone, percent, July 1, 2016, 2.9%

Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander alone, percent, July 1, 2016, 0.1%

Two or More Races, percent, July 1, 2016, 2.2%

Hispanic or Latino, percent, July 1, 2016, 9.2%

The NC household income reported by the US Census in 2017 reflected:

Median household income, 2012-2016 $48,256

Persons in poverty 15.4 percent

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

No specific group(s) of individuals were identified as unserved in the assessment. However, statistically more females than males have vision problems such as cataracts, glaucoma, low vision, age-related macular degeneration, or blindness yet still DSB serves equal number of males and females annually.

This may suggest that women are underserved by DSB. Minorities, individuals who have limited incomes and individuals living in rural areas are also underserved by DSB. Consumers of Hispanics/Latino, Black/African-American, and American Indians/Alaska Native racial/ethnic background are underserved as well. One out of three DSB consumers is African American, meaning this group does access and receive services from DSB but was found to be less successful in securing employment than the non- Hispanic White group.Older adults, transition-age-youth/adolescents, individuals who are deaf-blind or have other multiple disabilities were also noted to be underserved.

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

The VR Needs of Individuals with Disabilities Served through other Components of the Statewide Workforce Development System

State and Local Improvements Needed for Workforce Development System Integration and Accountability

This section is named after the title of a complete evaluation of North Carolina's entire workforce development system, which was published in March 2012 by the North Carolina General Assembly Program Evaluation Division. NC DHHS and DVRS participated in the evaluation at various stages. The full document is accessible online through the North Carolina General Assembly website: http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/PED/Reports/documents/Workforce/WFD_Report.pdf.

The summary of the report's findings are that state and local program coordination of workforce programs have failed to create an integrated, effective workforce development system. Among its findings, the report notes that the services offered at local NCWorks sites and level of integration varies across the state, and that the centers do not apply information technology to the extent available, and that despite investments in a data system to track participants, there are no statewide performance measures for the workforce development system. The recommendations were that the NC General Assembly should streamline the workforce development system, enhance accountability, strengthen the NCWorks system (One-Stop Centers), require increased use of technology, and create a legislative oversight committee to oversee the reforms. These changes would benefit all job seekers, of which individuals with disabilities are a disadvantaged subgroup. The recommendation toward increased use of technology was said to be particularly applicable to North Carolinians with disabilities in making services more accessible. For example, in the report (p.25), a Workforce Solutions administrator explained that NCWorks were conceptualized as a physical location but that remote access could facilitate the virtual presence of specialized staff that do not need to be at NCWorks full time for customers with disabilities, thereby avoiding the need for a return visit on a day when staff is on site.

An important recommendation of the above reference Workforce Development System evaluation report was to improve the NC Common Follow-up System (CFS), which is currently undergoing implementation. Data from the CFS show that of 60,105 DVRS VR program clients included in the cross-program match for PY 2013, 4,497 (7.5%) were served through the Division of Adult Corrections and Juvenile Justice; 4,025 (6.7%) were served through the Department of Public Instruction; 74 (0.1%) were served through the DSB VR Program; 10,455 (17.4%) were served through the Division of Social Services; 18,232 (30.3%) were served through the Division of Workforce Solutions; 13,400 (22.3%) were served through the North Carolina Community College System; and 854 (1.4%) were served by a University of North Carolina constituent university. Over a five year period, of nearly 120,000 individuals served by the VR program in an eligible case status, 82% were provided services or participated in a program provided through another CFS agency. Nearly 1 in 5 VR consumers was served through the Division of Adult Corrections, which is slightly more than those in DPI. More than half of VR Consumers are served through DWS, and just under half receive services through the NCWorks Career Center System, and just under half were enrolled in the NC Community College System. The need for collaboration in service provision is suggested by the volume of our VR consumers served through one or more of these other agencies.

Challenges the NC Workforce Development System on Whole Experiences When Fulfilling the Needs of Individuals with Disabilities

Five Workforce Board Directors served as key informants for the CSNA. Each was asked to (a) Identify challenges the NC Workforce Development System as a whole faces when fulfilling the needs of people with disabilities; (b) Identify what they thought could be done to overcome these challenges; and (c) Identify what they thought VR and the State Rehabilitation Council could do to help in overcoming these challenges. The top ranked challenges identified were: (a) client training and job skills development; employer willingness to hire and accommodate people with disabilities; (b) transportation and other support services; and (c) training and resources related to assistive technology for NCWorks Career Centers. Barriers to client training and job skills development were: (a) the system doesn't specialize in serving folks with disabilities; (b) getting employers who allow flexible working schedules; lack of partnerships with vocational rehabilitation to serve people with disabilities; and (c) clients may not be aware of the other services available. Solutions proposed included: (a) training for NCWorks staff in the different types of disabilities; (b) continue to market services to employers; (c) NCWorks Career Center staff can refer customers to VR, continue to build rapport with our other workforce partners, and bridge the gap with employers; and (d) VR could present information about NCWorks Career Centers workforce partner programs to VR participants. With regard to the need for more employers to hire and accommodate people with disabilities, barriers included: (a) lack of funding

to educate business on the hidden workforce available; and (b) lack of employer knowledge of available accommodations that can be made. Solutions proposed included: (a) continued partnerships with agencies that specialize in providing services for individuals with disabilities; and (b) for other workforce agencies to train staff, educate employers, and promote hiring of individuals with disabilities to employers. With regard to the need for transportation and other Support Services, the barrier was mainly limited funding and lack of coordination. The proposed solutions were to leverage additional funding sources and improve coordination of services. Lastly, the barrier regarding the need for training and resources related to assistive technology for NCWorks Career Centers was a lack of funding and the solution proposed was to leverage resources to purchase, build infrastructure, and install technology that assist individuals with disabilities.

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

Resulting recommendations of the most recent assessment of needs included the recommendation to increase awareness of DSB services among transition age youth and also to improve the retention and rehabilitation rates for this population. During this planning period, there has been significant focus on developing additional pre-employment transition services for youth transitioning from school to work. As a result of the planning, in February, 2016 a joint transition conference was held among transition staff and service providers. Break out sessions were designed as part of the curriculum so that input could collected to more thoroughly assess the needs of specific services identified in the new act among the this population.

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

An assessment of the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the state will be included in the next needs assessment.

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 .

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 will be included in the next needs assessment. The transition services specialists of both DSB and DVRS recently convened a PETS conference with focus groups and discussions on ideas for developing PETS programs, such as expanding the number of Project SEARCH sites, summer internship and work experience programs, and self-advocacy workshops with involvement from the CILS. Strategies are currently being developed to accurately track staff time allocated to PETS and incorporate documentation in the VR program's case management system.

K. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

Describe:

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

NC DSB estimates 3,050 individuals will be eligible to receive VR services using Title I funds each year for FFY 2019 and 2020.

2. THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL RECEIVE SERVICES UNDER:

A. THE VR PROGRAM;

During FFY 2017, NC DSB served 3,178 individuals, of which 3,009 (95%) had been determined eligible for VR services. The forecast, based on the three most recently completed years and the first half of FFY 2018, is that 3,050 individuals each year will receive VR services using Title I funds for years FFY 2019 and 2020. Projected costs of services are estimated to be $14,000,000 each year, exclusive of pre-employment transition services, without implementation of order of selection. This estimate includes (a) cases where purchased services were provided in accordance with the consumer's individualized plan for employment; (b) cases where purchased services were provided toward the development of the consumer's individualized plan for employment (e.g., diagnostic and assessment services provided by a community rehabilitation program); and (c) cases where non-purchased services were provided (e.g., vocational counseling and evaluations provided by NC DSB VR program staff).

B. THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM; AND

During FFY 2017, NC DSB served 9 individuals identified as having most significant disabilities received supported employment services at a total direct service cost of $34,600. As per indications from RSA, NC DSB is expecting to receive Title VI SE funding in FFY 2018; however should these dedicated funds not be made available to NC DSB in FFY 2019 or 2020, supported employment services will be maintained using Title I funding.

C. EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION;

The NC Division of Services for the Blind's VR program is not currently, nor does it plan to operate under an order of selection during the time period covered under the current Unified Plan.

3. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR VR SERVICES, BUT ARE NOT RECEIVING SUCH SERVICES DUE TO AN ORDER OF SELECTION; AND

The NC Division of Services for the Blind's VR program is not currently operating under 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.

For FFY 2019 and FFY 2020, NC DSB estimates that each year 3,050 individuals will receive VR services using Title I funds. Projected costs of services are estimated to be $14,000,000, exclusive of pre-employment transition services, without implementation of order of selection. This estimate includes (a) cases where purchased services were provided in accordance with the consumer's individualized plan for employment; (b) cases where purchased services were provided toward the development of the consumer's individualized plan for employment (e.g., diagnostic and assessment services provided by a community rehabilitation program); and (c) cases where non-purchased services were provided (e.g., vocational counseling and evaluations provided by NC DSB VR program staff). NC DSB does not expect to operate under an order of selection during the period covered by this Unified Plan. Bottom of Form

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.

The North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind completed a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment in 2013. In 2014, legislators introduced the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and with it a host of new points of emphasis and vocational rehabilitation program requirements. The passage of this law, due to its massive content, change of focus as well as it being the first of its kind in over 20 years, was considered to be revolutionary. Secondary to this, leadership within the Department of Health and Human Services decided that in order to be comprehensive and to give the best benefit those we

serve, we needed to await further regulatory instruction prior to moving forward with another needs assessment that may very well be off base. At this time, the NC Division of Services for the Blind and the NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation are presently in the process of conducting a joint comprehensive statewide needs assessment involving various partners. Therefore, the present goals are being pursued as stated under the guidance of the latest completed statewide needs assessment. We feel these goals continue to reflect the needs of our state as demonstrated not only by the needs assessment itself, but with input from client satisfaction surveys and other internal and external feedback.

Pursuant to an analysis of the results of the DSB VR Program's most recent statewide comprehensive needs assessment, DSB and its State Rehabilitation Council jointly established the priorities, goals and objectives below for the current period.

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

Priority 1: Increase the average wages and benefits of individuals closed with successful wage-earning employment outcomes

Goal 1.1. Individuals who are blind or visually impaired in North Carolina will have access to employment opportunities that provide good wages and level of benefits through use of expanded internships, work experiences, community based work adjustment, and expanded relationships with employer portals. Goal will be to increase successful employment outcomes with benefits by 2% (baseline 2013 - 72) and to increase average wage at closure by 1% (baseline 2013 - $11.97 per hour).

Goal 1.2. Increase staff knowledge about careers, employment opportunities, and business relationship development. Goal will be measured by staff reports to supervisors, who in turn will share with program specialist for job development.

Goal 1.3. Increase the use of supported employment services to facilitate successful employment outcomes for persons with the most significant disabilities. Goal will be measured by availability of vendors in areas where there are none at this time, increased authorizations for supported employment services, and increased number of individuals closed in successful employment after receiving supported employment services.

Goal 1.4. Provide a holistic approach to service provision that will better enable individuals to obtain employment and maintain it after DSB VR case closure. Goal will be measured by feedback from individuals closed with successful employment on the satisfaction survey, increase in success rate, and a decrease in the number of cases referred back to the agency within 36 months of successful employment outcome.

Priority 2. Eligible individuals will have access to assistive technology required for employment

Goal 2.1. Provide assistive technology and training in its use for all eligible individuals who require specific equipment and software to obtain, maintain, and regain employment. Measurement criteria will be to increase the numbers of individuals who receive assistive technology services (equipment and/or training) by 1% (baseline 2013 - 429 individuals).

Goal 2.2. Assistive technology staff in all seven District Offices will receive training on latest software and hardware to enhance placement opportunities. Each field staff member will attend at least two training sessions (either on-line or in classroom) during the year on new technology.

Priority 3. Transition services will be available in all counties of North Carolina for students who are blind or visually impaired.

Goal 3.1. DSB will continue to provide transition services to students who are blind or visually impaired attending schools in all 115 Local Education Agencies (LEA's) of North Carolina. The goal will be to increase the number of individuals, ages 14-21, served by 2% (baseline for FFY2013 - 310).

Goal 3.2. DSB will provide continuing education training for transition program staff.

Goal 3.3. Rehabilitation Counselors will increase their awareness of opportunities for internships and work experiences for transition age students.

Priority 4. Quality and knowledgeable outreach to individuals with disabilities, family members, and individuals who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities will be provided by DSB.

Goal 4.1. DSB's services will be provided to individuals, families, minority populations and those experiencing health disparities through targeted outreach activities. Data for the objectives will be captured and managed in DSB's new case management system called BEAM.

Goal 4.2. DSB will develop marketing opportunities to targeted audiences regarding specific agency programs.

Goal 4.3. DSB will identify ways by which DSB can assist veterans with disabilities to become able to obtain, maintain or regain employment. DSB will meet with officials working with veterans who are visually impaired, blind or deaf blind to educate them regarding services that are available to veterans with disabilities through DSB.

Goal 4.4. DSB will continually seek and identify ways in which to reach the growing minority populations across North Carolina.

Priority 5. Over the next two fiscal years, implementation of systematic program evaluations and consistent quality assurance methods will ensure

the agency is meeting the mission of enabling individuals who are blind or visually impaired to achieve their goals of independence and employment.

Goal 5.1. To provide consistent and accurate data using the new case management system, BEAM, to assess program performance. Measureable criteria are the program will be in place and staff will have received training by the end of FFY2015.

Goal 5.2. To provide holistic, consistent, and accurate methods of quality assurance and program evaluation. Measureable criteria will be that as the program goes "live", the rehabilitation program team and supervisors will evaluate the data as it becomes available, and will identify specific methods of quality assurance that can be done through use of BEAM.

DSB subscribes to the following supported employment goals:

In all 100 counties, DSB plans to identify individuals with disabilities that have traditionally been underserved and not served, who will require Supported Employment services in order to achieve a successful employment outcome by using the following objectives:

1. Provide training to new rehabilitation counselors that will assist in their ability to identify and to refer individuals with the most significant disabilities for supported employment services.

2. DSB's program specialist for supported employment will provide training to community rehabilitation program staff, as requested, on information about working with individuals who are blind or visually impaired to assist in job development and placement.

3. Community rehabilitation programs will identify individuals with the most significant disabilities who want to work, and refer them to DSB for VR services, which may include supported employment services.

4. During each of Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017, DSB plans to close ten (10) individuals indicating successful employment outcomes after receiving supported employment services.

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

The goals and priorities jointly developed with the State Rehabilitation Council were developed from the results of (a) the most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates; (b) DSB VR program's performance under the performance standards and indicators in place prior to the passage of WIOA (performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA had yet to be assessed as half of the WIOA measures have not yet been finalized at the time of this plan's submission); and (c) other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program.

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

The goals and objectives for priority 3 pertaining to the provision of transition services and priority 4, related to increasing outreach and services to minorities and underserved populations, were developed jointly with the State Rehabilitation Council in response to findings from the most recent comprehensive statewide assessment.

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

The goals and objectives for Priority 1 pertaining to improving wages for successful outcomes, were developed jointly with the State Rehabilitation Council based on the DVRS VR programs performance on standards and indicators. Performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA will be measured beginning PY 2017 and the goals and objectives under Priority 1 will be revised accordingly.

C. OTHER AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON THE OPERATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE VR PROGRAM, INCLUDING ANY REPORTS RECEIVED FROM THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL AND FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MONITORING ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED UNDER SECTION 107.

The goals and objectives presented incorporate input received form the State Rehabilitation Council and recommendations received from monitoring activities from July 2014 and also from monitoring reviews conducted in 2008.

M. ORDER OF SELECTION

Describe:

1. WHETHER THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL IMPLEMENT AND ORDER OF SELECTION. IF SO, DESCRIBE:

A. THE ORDER TO BE FOLLOWED IN SELECTING ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS TO BE PROVIDED VR SERVICES.

The North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) VR program is not under an order of selection, and the North Carolina designated state unit (DSB) does not plan to implement an Order of Selection during the period covered by the Unified State Plan.

B. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER.

The North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) VR program is not under an order of selection, and the North Carolina designated state unit (DSB) does not plan to implement an Order of Selection during the period covered by the Unified State Plan.

C. THE SERVICE AND OUTCOME GOALS.

The North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) VR program is not under an order of selection, and the North Carolina designated state unit (DSB) does not plan to implement an Order of Selection during the period covered by the Unified State Plan.

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

The North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) VR program is not under an order of selection, and the North Carolina designated state unit (DSB) does not plan to implement an Order of Selection during the period covered by the Unified State Plan.

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

The North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) VR program is not under an order of selection, and the North Carolina designated state unit (DSB) does not plan to implement an Order of Selection during the period covered by the Unified State Plan.

2. IF THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT HAS ELECTED TO SERVE ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS, REGARDLESS OF ANY ESTABLISHED ORDER OF SELECTION, WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT.

The North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) VR program is not under an order of selection, and the North Carolina designated state unit (DSB) does not plan to implement an Order of Selection during the period covered by the Unified State Plan.

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 North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind completed a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment in 2013. In 2014, legislators introduced the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and with it a host of new points of emphasis and vocational rehabilitation program requirements. The passage of this law, due to its massive content, change of focus as well as it being the first of its kind in over 20 years, was considered to be revolutionary. Secondary to this, leadership within the Department of Health and Human Services decided that in order to be comprehensive and to give the best benefit those we serve, we needed to await further regulatory instruction prior to moving forward with another needs assessment that may very well be off base. At this time, the NC Division of Services for the Blind and the NC Division of

Vocational Rehabilitation are presently in the process of conducting a joint comprehensive statewide needs assessment involving various partners. Therefore, the present goals are being pursued as stated under the guidance of the latest completed statewide needs assessment. We feel these goals continue to reflect the needs of our state as demonstrated not only by the needs assessment itself, but with input from client satisfaction surveys and other internal and external feedback.

Title VI, Part B funds were last received by the Division in FFY 2017 and just recently, it is the Division's very recent understanding that separate funding designated for supported employment is anticipated to be received in the near future.

Upon utilization of all Title VI funds, supported employment services will be funded through the Title I basic support grant.

As a general approach, DSB subscribes to the following supported employment goals:

In all 100 counties, DSB plans to identify individuals with disabilities that have traditionally been underserved and not served, who will require Supported Employment services in order to achieve a successful employment outcome by using the following objectives:

1. Provide training to new rehabilitation counselors that will assist in their ability to identify and to refer individuals with the most significant disabilities for supported employment services.

2. DSB's program specialist for supported employment will provide training to community rehabilitation program staff, as requested, on information about working with individuals who are blind or visually impaired to assist in job development and placement.

3. Community rehabilitation programs will identify individuals with the most significant disabilities who want to work, and refer them to DSB for VR services, which may include supported employment services.

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

As incorporated into its policies concerning supported employment services, the DSB VR program first provides on-going support as appropriate for supported employment. Ongoing support includes services: (a) needed to support and maintain the individual in SE that are (b) based on a determination by the VR counselor of the individual's needs as specified in an IPE; and (c) furnished from the time of job placement until transition to extended services, except as provided in post-employment status and,

following transition, by one or more extended service providers throughout the individual's term of employment in a particular job placement or multiple placements, if those placements are provided under a program of transitional employment.

At the time of transition to extended services from an extended services provider, the VR program ensures through its contracts, agreements, and policies that extended services are provided by a state agency, a private non-profit organization, through natural supports or any other appropriate resource other than VR, after the individual has made the transition from the state VR support. Extended services begin when (a) the individual is employed, (b) intensive training is completed, and (c) stabilization on the job has occurred. Individuals may be served for as long as there is a reasonable expectation that an extended services source will be identified during the course of rehabilitation. The DSB VR Program will only contract with supported employment service providers that give written commitment that they will provide extended services compliant with Federal regulations.

On-going support provided during extended services must include a minimum of twice-monthly monitoring at the work site to assess job stability unless under special circumstances, especially at the request of the individual, the IPE provides for off-site monitoring and based upon that assessment, the coordination or provision of specific services at or away from the work site, that are needed to maintain employment stability. If off-site monitoring is determined to be appropriate, it must, at a minimum, consist of two (2) face-to-face meetings with the client and one employer contact monthly. These activities apply to all supported employment clients and not only those whose services are provided through funds reserved pursuant to section 603(d), for youth with the most significant disabilities.

B. HOW THE STATE WILL LEVERAGE OTHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDS TO INCREASE RESOURCES FOR EXTENDED SERVICES AND EXPANDED SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES.

The Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) VR program is collaborating with community rehabilitation programs and other agencies and organizations to provide extended services and expanded supported employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities. Because the DSB VR program will only utilize community rehabilitation programs that give written commitment that they will provide extended services compliant with Federal regulations as supported employment vendors, many of those community rehabilitation programs providing SE services also provide extended services under their service contract at no additional cost to the Division when other resources for extended services are not available. The Request for Application (RFA) is one of the key tools utilized for contract and program development, in which the entity submitting the application has completed much of the foundational work in

leveraging and braiding resources from other public and private funds. And, through its continued participation on interagency committees and collaboration efforts, DSB will continue to work with community rehabilitation programs, LME/MCOs, and other organizations to leverage other public and private funds to increase resources for extended services and expanded supported employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities.

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 North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind completed a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment in 2013. In 2014, legislators introduced the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and with it a host of new points of emphasis and vocational rehabilitation program requirements. The passage of this law, due to its massive content, change of focus as well as it being the first of its kind in over 20 years, was considered to be revolutionary. Secondary to this, leadership within the Department of Health and Human Services decided that in order to be comprehensive and to give the best benefit those we serve, we needed to await further regulatory instruction prior to moving forward with another needs assessment that may very well be off base. At this time, the NC Division of Services for the Blind and the NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation are presently in the process of conducting a joint comprehensive statewide needs assessment involving various partners. Therefore, the present goals are being pursued as stated under the guidance of the latest completed statewide needs assessment. We feel these goals continue to reflect the needs of our state as demonstrated not only by the needs assessment itself, but with input from client satisfaction surveys and other internal and external feedback.

The methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilties in support of the Division's jointly established goals and priorities are listed below indicating each relationship with each goal and priority:

Priority 1: Increase the average wages and benefits of individuals closed with successful wage-earning employment outcomes

Goal 1.1: Individuals who are blind or visually impaired in North Carolina will have access to employment opportunities that provide good wages and level of benefits through use of expanded internships, work experiences,

community based work adjustment, and expanded relationships with employer portals. Goal will be to increase successful employment outcomes with benefits by 2% (baseline 2013 - 72) and to increase average wage at closure by 1% (baseline 2013 - $11.97 per hour). This goal is still under pursuit.

Strategy 1.1.1. DSB's staff will utilize the work experience and internship programs to obtain placements for eligible individuals who have recently completed post-secondary training or occupational education. The work experience training program gives eligible individuals whether youth or adults, without formal training or those who are recent graduates an opportunity to gain work experience to add to their resume' and problem solve needed accommodations and travel skills. The use of work experiences will remain a strategy through 2020, with the goal of seven 100 work experience placements that result in three (15) successful employment outcomes during FFY2018. Tracking will be done through monthly feedback to the Program Specialist for Job Placement from office supervisors and BEAM.

Strategy 1.1.2. DSB staff will have resources of community-based work adjustment services through community rehabilitation programs for eligible individuals who require this service for successful employment. It is a resource for individuals who need short-term job coaching to be successful on the job, but do not require long-term support services afforded by supported employment services. The goal for FFY2018 will be five successful employment closures with use of this program. Tracking will be done through monthly feedback to the Program Specialist for Job Placement from office supervisors and information made available through the agency's new case management system BEAM.

Strategy 1.1.4. DSB will participate in the talent acquisition portal designed exclusively for VR individuals, which will permit increased access to local, statewide, and national job openings and direct exposure to business customers seeking to employ individuals from the talent pool of people with disabilities. A pilot project has been completed in one office that was determined to be successful, and will now be implemented in all offices during FFY2015. Tracking will be done through the agency's Program Specialist for Job Development and Placement. Secondary to issues with the BEAM case management system, this strategy is delayed and it is anticipated that the new case management system will be able to handle tracking such a talent pool.

Goal 1.2. DSB will increase staff knowledge about careers, employment opportunities, and business relationship development. Goal will be measured by staff reports to supervisors, who in turn will share with program specialist for job development.

Strategy 1.2.1. DSB will provide ongoing training experiences for all VR counselors, business representatives, and community employment specialists to include detailed knowledge of DSB work experiences, DSB

Business Services, and evidence based practices related to achieving optimal employment outcomes. Each rehabilitation counselor, business representative, community employment specialist, and supervisor will attend at least one agency-sponsored event regarding best practices for placement services per year. Each new counselor, business representative, and community employment specialist will receive additional training regarding these subjects within the first six months of employment. Tracking will be done through the agency's staff development program specialist.

Strategy 1.2.2. DSB will provide staff with information on local and state labor markets, especially careers in high demand and the skills and training required to enter those careers. Each rehabilitation counselor, business representative, community employment specialist, and supervisor will attend at least two events about local commerce or job fairs in their service area, and report these to their supervisor as to how the event may influence their employment activities. Tracking will be done through reports made to the office supervisor, to be submitted monthly to the chief of rehabilitation field services.

Strategy 1.2.3. DSB will increase the awareness of staff as to how assistive technology can increase placements in job settings, especially high demand careers. Each rehabilitation counselor, business representative, community employment specialist, and supervisor will visit at least one modified job setting to see how individuals are using the latest assistive technology on the job, and will accompany the local assistive technology consultant or rehabilitation engineer to one job site modification evaluation.

Tracking will be done through reports made to the office supervisor, to be submitted monthly to the chief of rehabilitation field services.

Goal 1.3. DSB will increase the use of supported employment services to facilitate successful employment outcomes for persons with the most significant disabilities. Goal will be measured by availability of vendors in areas where there are none at this time, increased authorizations for supported employment services, and increased number of individuals closed in successful employment after receiving supported employment services.

Strategy 1.3.1. DSB will provide training to all DSB VR counselors regarding the definition of most significant disabling conditions that present impediments to employment and regarding supported employment services. Each office will be provided success stories of individuals in supported employment and will have a representative that meets with the program specialist for Job Development and Placement to promote SE services in their local offices. These will be coordinated by the program specialist for supported employment services, program specialist for Job Development and Placement and the area or district supervisor in each office. The occurrence and outcome of these meetings will be reported to the chief of rehabilitation field services on a quarterly basis.

Strategy 1.3.2. Each district office will identify the availability of supported employment vendors for their coverage area and report this information to the program specialist for supported employment by December, 2014. The program specialist will identify potential vendors for areas not covered, and will contact them regarding the provision of services. This will be measured by number of new vendors contacted with a goal of 7 new vendors contacted during FFY 2013.

Goal 1.4. DSB staff will be able to increase an individual's ability to maintain employment after DSB VR closure by providing holistic evaluations and service provision while active cases in areas related to secondary disabilities, independent living skills, and support systems. Goal will be measured by feedback from individuals closed with successful employment on the satisfaction survey, increase in success rate, and a decrease in the number of cases referred back to the agency within 36 months of successful employment outcome.

Strategy 1.4.1. Training in areas of the most common secondary disabling conditions and associated services will be provided to all DSB VR counselors. Based on availability of training funds, this will need to occur through FFY2017. Supervisors will be trained on assisting staff to find vendors and resources for payment (if needed) for treatment of these conditions.

Strategy 1.4.2. Counselors will partner with other DSB staff, including DSB social workers for the blind, Rehabilitation Center for the Blind staff, and independent living rehabilitation counselors, and with local private non-profit organizations to assist consumers in acquiring skills, resources and assistance needed to obtain the necessary level of employment stability. This will include, but not limited to, instruction in independent living skills, financial assistance for medical costs through the Affordable Health Care Act, resources for a stable living environment, locating local support groups, understanding protection through the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other employment-related laws, etc. Outcome of this strategy will be measured by decreasing the number of cases reopened during a fiscal year by 10% that had been closed with a successful employment outcome during the three previous years. (Baseline will be established by number of cases reopened in FFY2014 that were successful outcome closures during FFY2011, FFY2012 and FFY2013.)

Goal 1.5. DSB will investigate evidence-based practices for the purpose of integrating them into DSB rehabilitation processes that will apply to all cases, make policy adjustments as needed, and train counselors in their use over the next three fiscal years.

Strategy 1.5.1. DSB will establish a committee to study the incorporation of evidence-based practices in rehabilitation that will include study of other states and consultation with individuals in the academic institutions during the first year of this goal. The committee will consist of selected individuals from the agency leadership team, Rehabilitation Center for the Blind staff and field staff. The outcome will be recommendations to the chiefs of

rehabilitation regarding changes in practice needed. Tracking will be the report of the study.

Strategy 1.5.2. During the second year, the chiefs of rehabilitation will establish criteria and will work with the staff development specialist to determine training needs to achieve the recommended practice changes. Training will be provided to staff regarding the practice changes. Quality assurance methods will be established for assurance that the practices are implemented. Tracking will be that all staff with direct consumer contact have received training.

Strategy 1.5.3. During the third year, use of the recommended evidence-based practices will be monitored by supervisors and the chief of rehabilitation field services for field staff, and by the Rehabilitation Center director and chief of programs and facilities for the Rehabilitation Center. Tracking will be results of the quality assurance reviews regarding use of the criteria and feedback from office supervisors to the chief of rehabilitation field services, and by feedback from the Rehabilitation Center staff to the chief of programs and facilities.

Priority 3: Transition services will be available in all counties of North Carolina for students who are blind or visually impaired.

Goal 3.1: DSB will continue to provide transition services to students who are blind or visually impaired attending schools in all 115 Local Education Agencies (LEA's) of North Carolina. The goal will be to increase the number of individuals, ages 14-21, served by 2% (baseline for FFY2013 - 310).

Strategy 3.1.1. Current cooperative agreements with thirteen LEA's will be maintained. School budget shortfalls are predicted to continue into the next fiscal year so expansion of this program is not anticipated. However, staff will continue making contacts with LEA's to offer opportunities for such programs. Area supervisors and program specialist for transition will make at least one contact with each LEA during the year. The program specialist for transition and supported employment will be responsible for tracking these contacts through the office supervisors.

Strategy 3.1.2. Transition services to students attending schools without DSB Cooperative Agreements are served by DSB VR counselors covering those counties where the schools are located. Rehabilitation counselors will contact the lead teacher for the visually impaired for the LEA's in their counties at least twice per year. The program specialist for transition and supported employment will be responsible for tracking these contacts through the office supervisors.

Strategy 3.1.3. The program specialist for transition and supported employment will establish contact with state level associations for private schools, charter schools, and home-schools to share information about transition services available through DSB for distribution to their members statewide. Referrals resulting from contact with state level associations will

be shared with the appropriate field VR counselor for contact by the program specialist for transition and supported employment as received.

Goal 3.2: DSB will provide continuing education training for transition program staff. This training includes Pre-Employment Transition Services.

Strategy 3.2.1. The program specialist for transition services will conduct transition staff meetings and provide ongoing trainings quarterly to increase staff awareness and knowledge about transition issues and policy.

Goal 3.3. Rehabilitation Counselors will increase their awareness of opportunities for internships and work experiences for transition age students.

Strategy 3.3.1. The program specialist for transition and supported employment will provide current information about opportunities for transition age individuals by email distribution and by staff meeting presentations.

Strategy 3.3.2. Training about transition services and their responsibilities of outreach in their coverage area will be provided to all new rehabilitation counselors. Training will be provided by the program specialist for transition and in Best Practices for New DSB VR Counselors. It is important that this training be provided through the state rehabilitation program staff as local supervisors to increase consistency to reaching all school-age individuals with visual impairments regarding the availability of transition services from DSB.

Strategy 3.3.2. Program Specialist for Transition Services and the Transition Counselors in each area will continue to be available for consultation regarding transition services.

Priority 4: Quality and knowledgeable outreach to individuals with disabilities, family members, and Individuals who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities will be provided by DSB.

Goal 4.1. DSB's services will be provided to individuals, families, minority populations and those experiencing health disparities through targeted outreach activities. Data for the objectives will be captured and managed the program specialist for AT/Deaf Blind.

Strategy 4.1.1. Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served who are Hispanics/Latinos by 1% during the period October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015. (The baseline for FFY 2013 was 159.)

Strategy 4.1.2. Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served who are African American by 1% from October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015. (The baseline for FFY 2013 was a total of1614 individuals who are African-American.)

Strategy 4.1.3. Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served who are Native American by 1% during the period October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015. (Baseline unable to be established due to delays in BEAM, and tracking the increase will begin in FFY 2015.)

Strategy 4.1.4. Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served who are veterans by 1% during the period October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015. (Baseline data needs to be collected for this population for the first time using BEAM. The existing data collection system provides that nine individuals who are veterans were served in FFY2013; however the reliability of this data may be low.)

Strategy 4.1.5. Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served who have diabetes by 1% during the period October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015. (The baseline for FFY 2013 was.1857, with 109 of these being consumers with cases initiated in FFY2013.)

Goal 4.2. DSB will develop marketing opportunities to targeted populations regarding specific agency programs.

Strategy 4.2.1. DSB will develop individualized program/service brochures (Vocational Rehabilitation Program, Independent Living Rehabilitation, Independent Living Services, Deaf-Blind, Rehab Center, Business Enterprise, Assistive Technology and Assistive Technology Instructors, Evaluation Unit and for individuals with Diabetes, medical providers and Veterans) to be placed on the agency's website and be used at outreach events. The program specialist for AT/Deaf Blind services will coordinate the development of these brochures that will be done by the individual programs. Due to funding issues, it is anticipated this strategy will be completed accomplished in FFY2016.

Strategy 4.2.1. DSB staff will develop presentations to other state agencies and to organizations who work with individuals within the targeted populations regarding opportunities for persons with blindness and visual impairments and about services available through DSB. Tracking will occur by reports to the chief of rehabilitation field services regarding presentations made and the targeted population.

Goal 4.3. DSB will identify ways by which DSB can assist veterans with disabilities to become able to obtain, maintain or regain employment.

Strategy 4.3.1. DSB will meet with officials working with veterans who are visually impaired, blind or deaf blind to educate them regarding services that are available to veterans with disabilities through DSB.

Goal 4.4. DSB will continually seek and identify ways in which to reach the growing minority populations across North Carolina.

Strategy 4.4.1. DSB will increase the number of DSB employees who are of an ethnic or racial minority by 1.5 percent for FFY 2015 (baseline - FFY2013 is 85).

Strategy 4.4.2. DSB will encourage staff to participate in local training programs, either on-line or in community college system, in other languages. The program specialist for staff development will track and report the number of individuals who request and acquire this type of training.

Priority 5: Over the next two fiscal years, implementation of systematic program evaluations and consistent quality assurance methods will ensure the agency is meeting the mission of enabling individuals who are blind or visually impaired to achieve their goals of independence and employment.

Goal 5.1. DSB will increase their ability to provide consistent and accurate data using the new case management system, BEAM, for assessment of program performance. Tracking will be that the program is in place, staff has received training, and strengths and deficiencies of the reporting capabilities are determined by the end of FFY2015.

Strategy 5.1.1. DSB will provide refresher training, support, and problem-solving after the initiation of the agency's new case management system, BEAM. All issues regarding BEAM use by staff using assistive technology will be resolved during the first year of its use.

Strategy 5.1.1. Monthly reviews of outcome data by rehabilitation program chiefs and managers will be completed with supervisors and other program staff.

Goal 5.2. DSB provides holistic, consistent, and accurate methods of quality assurance and program evaluation. Measureable criteria will be that as BEAM goes "live", the rehabilitation program team and supervisors evaluates the data, and identifies specific methods of quality assurance that can be done through use of BEAM.

Strategy 5.2.1. The chief of rehabilitation field services, with consultation of supervisors, will develop an up-to- date Quality Assurance Manual outline identifying areas requiring specific methods of quality assurance based on outcome measures with consideration of BEAM. The manual will be completed and in place with staff during FFY2020.

Strategy 5.2.2. DSB quality assurance team (chief of rehabilitation field services, program specialists, and office supervisors) will use Quality Assurance methods to achieve holistic, consistent, and accurate measures of case reviews.

Strategy 5.2.3. DSB will provide feedback and training to counseling staff using the results of the quality assurance reviews to improve best practices in providing services to individuals. Tracking will be done by a meeting with counselor staff in each office at least annually to review the quality assurance review by the chief of rehabilitation field services or by the office supervisor with report to the chief.

DSB continues to work toward all listed strategies and goals.

2. HOW A BROAD RANGE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES AND DEVICES WILL BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AT EACH STAGE OF THE REHABILITATION PROCESS AND ON A STATEWIDE BASIS.

The strategies used to provide a broad range of assistive technology services and devices to individuals with disabilities in support of the Division's jointly established goals and priorities are listed below indicating each relationship with each goal and priority:

Priority 2: Eligible individuals will have access to assistive technology required for employment

Goal 2.1. DSB will provide assistive technology and training in its use for all eligible individuals who require specific equipment and software to obtain, maintain, and regain employment. Measurement criteria will be to increase the numbers of individuals who receive assistive technology services (equipment and/or training) by 1% (baseline 2013 - 429 individuals; 2017-435 individuals received AT services).

Strategy 2.1.1 DSB will maintain the policy to purchase of technology for eligible individuals without regard to financial eligibility when required for success in reaching their vocational goal. The individual must be working toward an employment goal that requires specific technology to attain, regain, or maintain employment and have the capacity to use the equipment.

Goal 2. Assistive technology staff in all seven District Offices will receive training on latest software and hardware to enhance placement opportunities. Each field staff member will attend at least two training sessions (either on-line or in classroom) during the year on new technology.

Strategy 2.2.1 DSB will provide training for the Rehabilitation Engineer, Assistive Technology Consultants, and Assistive Technology teachers and instructors about new and innovative products. All staff attending the training sessions will provide a written report and copies of materials obtained to their supervisors, the program specialist for AT and Deaf/Blind, and the staff development program specialist.

Strategy 2.2.2. DSB will partner with the NC Assistive Technology Project and the NC Rehabilitation Association to sponsor the 2018 "NCRA/NCATP Training Conference and Exhibitor Showcase" (formerly the NC Assistive Technology Expo), and identify at least two presentations about assistive technology for individuals who are blind or who have visual impairments.

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.

The strategies 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 and underserved by the VR program through the jointly established goals and priorities are listed below indicating each relationship with each goal and priority:

Priority 4: Quality and knowledgeable outreach to individuals with disabilities, family members, and Individuals who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities will be provided by DSB.

Goal 4.1. DSB's services will be provided to individuals, families, minority populations and those experiencing health disparities through targeted outreach activities. Data for the objectives will be captured and managed the program specialist for AT/Deaf Blind.

Strategy 4.1.1. Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served who are Hispanics/Latinos by 1% during the period October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015. (The baseline for FFY 2013 was 159.)

Strategy 4.1.2. Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served who are African American by 1% from October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015. (The baseline for FFY 2013 was a total of1614 individuals who are African-American.)

Strategy 4.1.3. Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served who are Native American by 1% during the period October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015. (Baseline unable to be established due to delays in BEAM, and tracking the increase will begin in FFY 2015.)

Strategy 4.1.4. Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served who are veterans by 1% during the period October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015. (Baseline data needs to be collected for this population for the first time using BEAM. The existing data collection system provides that nine individuals who are veterans were served in FFY2013; however the reliability of this data may be low.)

Strategy 4.1.5. Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served who have diabetes by 1% during the period October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015. (The baseline for FFY 2013 was.1857, with 109 of these being consumers with cases initiated in FFY2013.)

Goal 4.2. DSB will develop marketing opportunities to targeted populations regarding specific agency programs.

Strategy 4.2.1. DSB will develop individualized program/service brochures (Vocational Rehabilitation Program, Independent Living Rehabilitation, Independent Living Services, Deaf-Blind, Rehab Center, Business Enterprise, Assistive Technology and Assistive Technology Instructors, Evaluation Unit and for individuals with Diabetes, medical providers and Veterans) to be placed on the agency's website and be used at outreach events. The program

specialist for AT/Deaf Blind services will coordinate the development of these brochures that will be done by the individual programs.

A comprehensive DSB brochure highlighting all programs was designed and distributed in 2016. DSB is now working with marketing staff to develop additional marketing products to increase referrals and client knowledge of individual services and needed programs.

Strategy 4.2.1. DSB staff will develop presentations to other state agencies and to organizations who work with individuals within the targeted populations regarding opportunities for persons with blindness and visual impairments and about services available through DSB. Tracking will occur by reports to the chief of rehabilitation field services regarding presentations made and the targeted population.

Goal 4.3. DSB will identify ways by which DSB can assist veterans with disabilities to become able to obtain, maintain or regain employment.

Strategy 4.3.1. DSB will meet with officials working with veterans who are visually impaired, blind or deaf blind to educate them regarding services that are available to veterans with disabilities through DSB.

Goal 4.4. DSB will continually seek and identify ways in which to reach the growing minority populations across North Carolina.

Strategy 4.4.1. DSB will increase the number of DSB employees who are of an ethnic or racial minority by 1.5 percent for FFY 2015 (baseline - FFY2013 is 85).

Strategy 4.4.2. DSB will encourage staff to participate in local training programs, either on-line or in community college system, in other languages. The program specialist for staff development will track and report the number of individuals who request and acquire this type of training.

These goals and strategies remain under pursuit.

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).

The strategies 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 through the jointly established goals and priorities are listed below indicating each relationship with each goal and priority:

Priority 3: Transition services will be available in all counties of North Carolina for students who are blind or visually impaired.

Goal 3.1: DSB will continue to provide transition services to students who are blind or visually impaired attending schools in all 115 Local Education Agencies (LEA's) of North Carolina. The goal will be to increase the number of individuals, ages 14-21, served by 2% (baseline for FFY2013 - 310).

Strategy 3.1.1. Current cooperative agreements with thirteen LEA's will be maintained. School budget shortfalls are predicted to continue into the next fiscal year so expansion of this program is not anticipated. However, staff will continue making contacts with LEA's to offer opportunities for such programs. Area supervisors and program specialist for transition will make at least one contact with each LEA during the year. The program specialist for transition and supported employment will be responsible for tracking these contacts through the office supervisors.

Strategy 3.1.2. Transition services to students attending schools without DSB Cooperative Agreements are served by DSB VR counselors covering those counties where the schools are located. Rehabilitation counselors will contact the lead teacher for the visually impaired for the LEA's in their counties at least twice per year. The program specialist for transition and supported employment will be responsible for tracking these contacts through the office supervisors.

Strategy 3.1.3. The program specialist for transition and supported employment will establish contact with state level associations for private schools, charter schools, and home-schools to share information about transition services available through DSB for distribution to their members statewide. Referrals resulting from contact with state level associations will be shared with the appropriate field VR counselor for contact by the program specialist for transition and supported employment as received.

Goal 3.2: DSB will provide continuing education training for transition program staff.

Strategy 3.2.1. The program specialist for transition services will conduct transition staff meetings and provide ongoing trainings quarterly to increase staff awareness and knowledge about transition issues and policy.

Goal 3.3. Rehabilitation Counselors will increase their awareness of opportunities for internships and work experiences for transition age students.

Strategy 3.3.1. The program specialist for transition and supported employment will provide current information about opportunities for transition age individuals by email distribution and by staff meeting presentations.

Strategy 3.3.2. Training about transition services and their responsibilities of outreach in their coverage area will be provided to all new rehabilitation counselors. Training will be provided by the program specialist for transition and in Best Practices for New DSB VR Counselors. It is important that this training be provided through the state rehabilitation program staff

as local supervisors to increase consistency to reaching all school-age individuals with visual impairments regarding the availability of transition services from DSB.

Strategy 3.3.2. Program Specialist for Transition Services and the Transition Counselors in each area will continue to be available for consultation regarding transition services.

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

The strategies used to improve community rehabilitation programs within the state through the jointly established goals and priorities are listed below indicating each relationship with each goal and priority:

Goal 1.3. DSB will increase the use of supported employment services to facilitate successful employment outcomes for persons with the most significant disabilities. Goal will be measured by availability of vendors in areas where there are none at this time, increased authorizations for supported employment services, and increased number of individuals closed in successful employment after receiving supported employment services.

Strategy 1.3.1. DSB will provide training to all DSB VR counselors regarding the definition of most significant disabling conditions that present impediments to employment and regarding supported employment services. Each office will be provided success stories of individuals in supported employment and will have a representative that meets with the program specialist for Job Development and Placement to promote SE services in their local offices. These will be coordinated by the program specialist for supported employment services, program specialist for Job Development and Placement and the area or district supervisor in each office. The occurrence and outcome of these meetings will be reported to the chief of rehabilitation field services on a quarterly basis.

Strategy 1.3.2. Each district office will identify the availability of supported employment vendors for their coverage area and report this information to the program specialist for supported employment by December, 2014. The program specialist will identify potential vendors for areas not covered, and will contact them regarding the provision of services. This will be measured by number of new vendors contacted with a goal of 7 new vendors contacted during FFY 2013. DSB has added five (5) new supported employment providers to serve its clients as of 2017 and continues to add and train new vendors on an ongoing basis.

6. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE STATE WITH RESPECT TO THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA.

At this time, DSB is entering into the baseline year for the performance accountability measures under section 116 if the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

DSB realizes that in order to perform better on the indicator concerning median quarterly earnings, they must help consumers to prepare for and obtain stable, higher paying positions, typically obtained through increased education, specifically through more individuals successfully completing their post-secondary degrees, then following through with jobs that match their employment potential. DSB along with DVRS are currently looking for ways to adjust programs, services, and supports to accomplish this in a fiscally-responsible manner.

Further, DSB's commitment to increasing client earnings is reflected in the elevated standing of importance that obtaining quality jobs for its consumers has and has made pursuit of this goal/priority 1: Increase the average wages and benefits of individuals closed with successful wage-earning employment outcomes.

Another strategy that DSB is employing to increase the earning potential of individuals who have entrepreneurial skills is through the ongoing improvements the Division has made available through a dedicated Small Business Specialist on staff who helps support staff and consumers in their assessment of this option as a fit and when it is mutually determined as such, coordination of local resources and ongoing supports for the consumer pursuing this option.

In March 2017, DSB and DVRS jointly entered an intensive technical assistance agreement with WINTAC to receive technical assistance with implementation and performance enhancement in the areas of the provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services, Customized Employment and related services; Extend the provision of services to unreached youth with disabilities in Juvenile Development Centers; linking individual staff performance with corporately collected Common Performance Measures; and Improving systems integration with the NCWorks Career Centers across the state.

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

The Division of Services for the Blind collaborates with other components of the statewide Workforce Development System at the state and local levels. The partnerships and linkages that were established prior to the provisions of the Rehabilitation Act amendments of 1998 have served as a stable and effective foundation for effective service delivery. Cooperative agreements or memorandum of agreements have been established with all local area workforce boards. The agreements provide for the following strategies:

Provision of inter-component staff training and technical assistance with regard to:

• the availability and benefits of, and information on eligibility standards for VR services; and

• the promotion of equal, effective, and meaningful participation by individuals with disabilities receiving workforce development system services in all of the states NCWorks Career Centers in the state through the promotion of accessibility; the use of non-discriminatory policies and procedures; the provision of reasonable accommodations; auxiliary aids and services, and rehabilitation technology for persons with disabilities.

Identification of service delivery strategies by DSB within the NCWorks Career Centers and other components of the workforce development system.

Development and implementation of information systems that link all components of the statewide workforce development system; that link the components to other electronic networks including non-visual electronic networks; and that relate to such subjects as employment statistics and information on job vacancies, career planning, and workforce development activities.

Further development and use of customer service features such as common intake and referral procedures when feasible, customer databases, resource information, and human services hotlines.

Establishment of cooperative efforts with employers to facilitate job placement and carry out any other activities that Vocational Rehabilitation and the employers determine to be appropriate.

Identification of staff roles, responsibilities, and available resources, along with specification of the financial responsibility of each component of the statewide workforce development system with regards to paying for certain services (consistent with state law and federal requirements).

The rehabilitation needs of individuals who are served through components of the statewide workforce development system other than through the public VR program will be updated and reassessed through the methodology outlined in that section of the VR portion of the Unified State Plan. One of the ongoing goals for both the VR and NCWorks system is to continue to refine the processes and procedures for NCWorks staff to better determine which consumers with disabilities utilizing the centers should be referred to the DSB VR program rather than being served through the NCWorks. First it is necessary to determine which consumers served by the NCWorks system have a disability. Strategies to improve this will be further explored via mutual collaboration between the Division and NCWorks Career Centers to establish training for its staff.

DSB participated in the development of NCWorks Career Centers and continues to be an active partner throughout North Carolina to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access core workforce services. Vocational Rehabilitation staff are represented on the state level as well as on local boards. The Division remains an active partner with the workforce development system and supports the NCWorks concept to provide more universal access to placement and training services; to integrate programs by offering a common core of information and services; and by offering consumers more choices regarding where and how they get services. Through local agreements, direct service delivery staff within the Division have gained more access to comprehensive DES data, which enables faster service delivery and cross-agency collaboration. Nearly all DVRS offices have obtained access to these databases to date.

The number of individuals served or identified through components of the workforce development system is increasing. Local Division management represents the vocational rehabilitation programs on the local workforce development boards while staff also actively participate in planning, development, and service delivery with both individual component agencies or within the NCWorks Career Centers already established.

State Level meetings with identified partners of the workforce development system continue to promote effective collaboration and equal access to services by 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;

Pursuant to an analysis of the results of the most current Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment, DSB and its state rehabilitation council jointly established the priorities below. The following strategies address each these priorities and their associated goals and objectives as identified in Section (n) of the VR portion of the unified state plan.

Priority 1: Increase the average wages and benefits of individuals closed with successful wage-earning employment outcomes

Goal 1.1: Individuals who are blind or visually impaired in North Carolina will have access to employment opportunities that provide good wages and level of benefits through use of expanded internships, work experiences, community based work adjustment, and expanded relationships with employer portals. Goal will be to increase successful employment outcomes with benefits by 2% (baseline 2013 - 72) and to increase average wage at closure by 1% (baseline 2013 - $11.97 per hour).

Strategy 1.1.1. DSB's staff will utilize the work experience and internship programs to obtain placements for eligible individuals who have recently completed post-secondary training or occupational education. The internship training program gives eligible individuals who are untrained or

recent graduates a competitive edge with the number of experienced individuals in the current job market due to company closings and layoffs. The use of work experiences will remain a strategy through September, 2020. Tracking will be done through monthly feedback to the Program Specialist for Job Placement from office supervisors.

Strategy 1.1.2. DSB staff will build upon the use of "Work Experiences without Pay" to obtain opportunities where employment is more likely to be offered at the conclusion of the work experience agreement. The goal will be to enter into 80 Work Experience without Pay agreements that result in 12 placements during FFY2015. DSB will continue to provide worker compensation coverage for consumers participating in work experiences, since the employer cannot cover them unless they are paid. Tracking will be done through monthly feedback to the Program Specialist for Job Placement from office supervisors and information made available through the agency's new case management system BEAM.

Strategy 1.1.3. DSB staff will have resources of community-based work adjustment services through community rehabilitation programs for eligible individuals who require this service for successful employment. It is a resource for individuals who need short-term job coaching to be successful on the job, but do not require long-term support services afforded by supported employment services. The goal for FFY2015 will be five successful employment closures with use of this program. Tracking will be done through monthly feedback to the Program Specialist for Job Placement from office supervisors and information made available through the agency's new case management system BEAM.

Strategy 1.1.4. DSB will participate in the talent acquisition portal designed exclusively for VR individuals, which will permit increased access to local, statewide, and national job openings and direct exposure to business customers seeking to employ individuals from the talent pool of people with disabilities. A pilot project has been completed in one office that was determined to be successful, and will now be implemented in all offices during FFY2015. Tracking will be done through the agency's Program Specialist for Job Development and Placement.

Goal 1.2. DSB will increase staff knowledge about careers, employment opportunities, and business relationship development. Goal will be measured by staff reports to supervisors, who in turn will share with program specialist for job development.

Strategy 1.2.1. DSB will provide ongoing training experiences for all VR counselors, business representatives, and community employment specialists to include detailed knowledge of DSB work experiences, DSB Business Services, and evidence based practices related to achieving optimal employment outcomes. Each rehabilitation counselor, business representative, community employment specialist, and supervisor will attend at least one agency-sponsored event regarding best practices for placement services per year. Each new counselor, business representative,

and community employment specialist will receive additional training regarding these subjects within the first six months of employment. Tracking will be done through the agency's staff development program specialist.

Strategy 1.2.2. DSB will provide staff with information on local and state labor markets, especially careers in high demand and the skills and training required to enter those careers. Each rehabilitation counselor, business representative, community employment specialist, and supervisor will attend at least two events about local commerce or job fairs in their service area, and report these to their supervisor as to how the event may influence their employment activities. Tracking will be done through reports made to the office supervisor, to be submitted monthly to the chief of rehabilitation field services.

Strategy 1.2.3. DSB will increase the awareness of staff as to how assistive technology can increase placements in job settings, especially high demand careers. Each rehabilitation counselor, business representative, community employment specialist, and supervisor will visit at least one modified job setting to see how individuals are using the latest assistive technology on the job, and will accompany the local assistive technology consultant or rehabilitation engineer to one job site modification evaluation. Tracking will be done through reports made to the office supervisor, to be submitted monthly to the chief of rehabilitation field services.

Goal 1.3. DSB will increase the use of supported employment services to facilitate successful employment outcomes for persons with the most significant disabilities. Goal will be measured by availability of vendors in areas where there are none at this time, increased authorizations for supported employment services, and increased number of individuals closed in successful employment after receiving supported employment services.

Strategy 1.3.1. DSB will provide training to all DSB VR counselors regarding the definition of most significant disabling conditions that present impediments to employment and regarding supported employment services. Each office will be provided success stories of individuals in supported employment and will have a representative that meets with the program specialist for Job Development and Placement to promote SE services in their local offices. These will be coordinated by the program specialist for supported employment services, program specialist for Job Development and Placement and the area or district supervisor in each office. The occurrence and outcome of these meetings will be reported to the chief of rehabilitation field services on a quarterly basis.

Strategy 1.3.2. Each district office will identify the availability of supported employment vendors for their coverage area and report this information to the program specialist for supported employment by December, 2014. The program specialist will identify potential vendors for areas not covered, and will contact them regarding the provision of services. This will be measured

by number of new vendors contacted with a goal of 7 new vendors contacted during FFY 2013.

Goal 1.4. DSB staff will be able to increase an individual's ability to maintain employment after DSB VR closure by providing holistic evaluations and service provision while active cases in areas related to secondary disabilities, independent living skills, and support systems. Goal will be measured by feedback from individuals closed with successful employment on the satisfaction survey, increase in success rate, and a decrease in the number of cases referred back to the agency within 36 months of successful employment outcome.

Strategy 1.4.1. Training in areas of the most common secondary disabling conditions and associated services will be provided to all DSB VR counselors. Based on availability of training funds, this will need to occur through FFY2017. Supervisors will be trained on assisting staff to find vendors and resources for payment (if needed) for treatment of these conditions.

Strategy 1.4.2. Counselors will partner with other DSB staff, including DSB social workers for the blind, Rehabilitation Center for the Blind staff, and independent living rehabilitation counselors, and with local private non-profit organizations to assist consumers in acquiring skills, resources and assistance needed to obtain the necessary level of employment stability. This will include, but not limited to, instruction in independent living skills, financial assistance for medical costs through the Affordable Health Care Act, resources for a stable living environment, locating local support groups, understanding protection through the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other employment-related laws, etc. Outcome of this strategy will be measured by decreasing the number of cases reopened during a fiscal year by 10% that had been closed with a successful employment outcome during the three previous years. (Baseline will be established by number of cases reopened in FFY2014 that were successful outcome closures during FFY2011, FFY2012 and FFY2013.)

Goal 1.5. DSB will investigate evidence-based practices for the purpose of integrating them into DSB rehabilitation processes that will apply to all cases, make policy adjustments as needed, and train counselors in their use over the next three fiscal years.

Strategy 1.5.1. DSB will establish a committee to study the incorporation of evidence-based practices in rehabilitation that will include study of other states and consultation with individuals in the academic institutions during the first year of this goal. The committee will consist of selected individuals from the agency leadership team, Rehabilitation Center for the Blind staff and field staff. The outcome will be recommendations to the chiefs of rehabilitation regarding changes in practice needed. Tracking will be the report of the study.

Strategy 1.5.2. During the second year, the chiefs of rehabilitation will establish criteria and will work with the staff development specialist to

determine training needs to achieve the recommended practice changes. Training will be provided to staff regarding the practice changes. Quality assurance methods

will be established for assurance that the practices are implemented. Tracking will be that all staff with direct consumer contact have received training.

Strategy 1.5.3. During the third year, use of the recommended evidence-based practices will be monitored by supervisors and the chief of rehabilitation field services for field staff, and by the Rehabilitation Center director and chief of programs and facilities for the Rehabilitation Center. Tracking will be results of the quality assurance reviews regarding use of the criteria and feedback from office supervisors to the chief of rehabilitation field services, and by feedback from the Rehabilitation Center staff to the chief of programs and facilities.

Priority 2: Eligible individuals will have access to assistive technology required for employment

Goal 2.1. DSB will provide assistive technology and training in its use for all eligible individuals who require specific equipment and software to obtain, maintain, and regain employment. Measurement criteria will be to increase the numbers of individuals who receive assistive technology services (equipment and/or training) by 1% (baseline 2013 - 429 individuals).

Strategy 2.1.1 DSB will maintain the policy to purchase of technology for eligible individuals without regard to financial eligibility when required for success in reaching their vocational goal. The individual must be working toward an employment goal that requires specific technology to attain, regain, or maintain employment and have the capacity to use the equipment.

Goal 2. Assistive technology staff in all seven District Offices will receive training on latest software and hardware to enhance placement opportunities. Each field staff member will attend at least two training sessions (either on-line or in classroom) during the year on new technology.

Strategy 2.2.1 DSB will provide training for the Rehabilitation Engineer, Assistive Technology Consultants, and Assistive Technology teachers and instructors about new and innovative products. All staff attending the training sessions will provide a written report and copies of materials obtained to their supervisors, the program specialist for AT and Deaf/Blind, and the staff development program specialist.

Strategy 2.2.2. DSB will partner with the NC Assistive Technology Project and the NC Rehabilitation Association to sponsor the 2014 "NCRA/NCATP Training Conference and Exhibitor Showcase" (formerly the NC Assistive Technology Expo) October 22-25, 2014, in Greenville, NC, and identify at least two presentations about assistive technology for individuals who are blind or who have visual impairments.

Priority 3: Transition services will be available in all counties of North Carolina for students who are blind or visually impaired.

Goal 3.1: DSB will continue to provide transition services to students who are blind or visually impaired attending schools in all 115 Local Education Agencies (LEA's) of North Carolina. The goal will be to increase the number of individuals, ages 14-21, served by 2% (baseline for FFY2013 - 310).

Strategy 3.1.1. Current cooperative agreements with thirteen LEA's will be maintained. School budget shortfalls are predicted to continue into the next fiscal year so expansion of this program is not anticipated. However, staff will continue making contacts with LEA's to offer opportunities for such programs. Area supervisors and program specialist for transition will make at least one contact with each LEA during the year. The program specialist for transition and supported employment will be responsible for tracking these contacts through the office supervisors.

Strategy 3.1.2. Transition services to students attending schools without DSB Cooperative Agreements are served by DSB VR counselors covering those counties where the schools are located. Rehabilitation counselors will contact the lead teacher for the visually impaired for the LEA's in their counties at least twice per year. The program specialist for transition and supported employment will be responsible for tracking these contacts through the office supervisors.

Strategy 3.1.3. The program specialist for transition and supported employment will establish contact with state level associations for private schools, charter schools, and home-schools to share information about transition services available through DSB for distribution to their members statewide. Referrals resulting from contact with state level associations will be shared with the appropriate field VR counselor for contact by the program specialist for transition and supported employment as received.

Goal 3.2: DSB will provide continuing education training for transition program staff.

Strategy 3.2.1. The program specialist for transition services will conduct transition staff meetings and provide ongoing trainings quarterly to increase staff awareness and knowledge about transition issues and policy.

Goal 3.3. Rehabilitation Counselors will increase their awareness of opportunities for internships and work experiences for transition age students.

Strategy 3.3.1. The program specialist for transition and supported employment will provide current information about opportunities for transition age individuals by email distribution and by staff meeting presentations.

Strategy 3.3.2. Training about transition services and their responsibilities of outreach in their coverage area will be provided to all new rehabilitation

counselors. Training will be provided by the program specialist for transition and in Best Practices for New DSB VR Counselors. It is important that this training be provided through the state rehabilitation program staff as local supervisors to increase consistency to reaching all school-age individuals with visual impairments regarding the availability of transition services from DSB.

Strategy 3.3.2. Program Specialist for Transition Services and the Transition Counselors in each area will continue to be available for consultation regarding transition services.

Priority 4: Quality and knowledgeable outreach to individuals with disabilities, family members, and Individuals who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities will be provided by DSB.

Goal 4.1. DSB's services will be provided to individuals, families, minority populations and those experiencing health disparities through targeted outreach activities. Data for the objectives will be captured and managed the program specialist for AT/Deaf Blind.

Strategy 4.1.1. Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served who are Hispanics/Latinos by 1% during the period October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015. (The baseline for FFY 2013 was 159.)

Strategy 4.1.2. Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served who are African American by 1% from October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015. (The baseline for FFY 2013 was a total of1614 individuals who are African-American.)

Strategy 4.1.3. Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served who are Native American by 1% during the period October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015. (Baseline unable to be established due to delays in BEAM, and tracking the increase will begin in FFY 2015.)

Strategy 4.1.4. Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served who are veterans by 1% during the period October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015. (Baseline data needs to be collected for this population for the first time using BEAM. The existing data collection system provides that nine individuals who are veterans were served in FFY2013; however the reliability of this data may be low.)

Strategy 4.1.5. Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served who have diabetes by 1% during the period October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015. (The baseline for FFY 2013 was.1857, with 109 of these being consumers with cases initiated in FFY2013.)

Goal 4.2. DSB will develop marketing opportunities to targeted populations regarding specific agency programs.

Strategy 4.2.1. DSB will develop individualized program/service brochures (Vocational Rehabilitation Program, Independent Living Rehabilitation,

Independent Living Services, Deaf-Blind, Rehab Center, Business Enterprise, Assistive Technology and Assistive Technology Instructors, Evaluation Unit and for individuals with Diabetes, medical providers and Veterans) to be placed on the agency's website and be used at outreach events. The program specialist for AT/Deaf Blind services will coordinate the development of these brochures that will be done by the individual programs. Due to funding issues, it is anticipated this strategy will be completed accomplished in FFY2016.

Strategy 4.2.1. DSB staff will develop presentations to other state agencies and to organizations who work with individuals within the targeted populations regarding opportunities for persons with blindness and visual impairments and about services available through DSB. Tracking will occur by reports to the chief of rehabilitation field services regarding presentations made and the targeted population.

Goal 4.3. DSB will identify ways by which DSB can assist veterans with disabilities to become able to obtain, maintain or regain employment.

Strategy 4.3.1. DSB will meet with officials working with veterans who are visually impaired, blind or deaf blind to educate them regarding services that are available to veterans with disabilities through DSB.

Goal 4.4. DSB will continually seek and identify ways in which to reach the growing minority populations across North Carolina.

Strategy 4.4.1. DSB will increase the number of DSB employees who are of an ethnic or racial minority by 1.5 percent for FFY 2015 (baseline - FFY2013 is 85).

Strategy 4.4.2. DSB will encourage staff to participate in local training programs, either on-line or in community college system, in other languages. The program specialist for staff development will track and report the number of individuals who request and acquire this type of training.

Priority 5: Over the next two fiscal years, implementation of systematic program evaluations and consistent quality assurance methods will ensure the agency is meeting the mission of enabling individuals who are blind or visually impaired to achieve their goals of independence and employment.

Goal 5.1. DSB will increase their ability to provide consistent and accurate data using the new case management system, BEAM, for assessment of program performance. Tracking will be that the program is in place, staff has received training, and strengths and deficiencies of the reporting capabilities are determined by the end of FFY2015.

Strategy 5.1.1. DSB will provide refresher training, support, and problem-solving after the initiation of the agency's new case management system, BEAM. All issues regarding BEAM use by staff using assistive technology will be resolved during the first year of its use.

Strategy 5.1.1. Monthly reviews of outcome data by rehabilitation program chiefs and managers will be completed with supervisors and other program staff.

Goal 5.2. DSB provides holistic, consistent, and accurate methods of quality assurance and program evaluation. Measureable criteria will be that as BEAM goes "live", the rehabilitation program team and supervisors evaluates the data, and identifies specific methods of quality assurance that can be done through use of BEAM.

Strategy 5.2.1. The chief of rehabilitation field services, with consultation of supervisors, will develop an up-to- date Quality Assurance Manual outline identifying areas requiring specific methods of quality assurance based on outcome measures with consideration of BEAM. The manual will be completed and in place with staff during FFY2016.

Strategy 5.2.2. DSB quality assurance team (chief of rehabilitation field services, program specialists, and office supervisors) will use Quality Assurance methods to achieve holistic, consistent, and accurate measures of case reviews.

Strategy 5.2.3. DSB will provide feedback and training to counseling staff using the results of the quality assurance reviews to improve best practices in providing services to individuals. Tracking will be done by a meeting with counselor staff in each office at least annually to review the quality assurance review by the chief of rehabilitation field services or by the office supervisor with report to the chief.

B. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES; AND

Innovation and expansion funds will be utilized during PY 2018-19 to purchase demonstration devices for use with the North Carolina Assistive Technology Program to expand their device loan and assistive technology assessment capabilities using more current employment-related assistive technologies. As this pertains to NC DSB, the resulting expansion helps to make assistive technology available to more individuals locally while also expanding the inventory of current devices that are critical to the employment of the target populations they serve.

Beginning October, 2015 and on an ongoing basis, innovation and expansion funds are being utilized through a financial assistance contract with the Statewide Independent Living Council to further their progress in achieving goals and strategies within the current State Plan for Independent Living.These funds will also help facilitate collaboration between the Division and the Centers for Independent Living in the development of pre-employment transition services such as self-advocacy, peer mentoring, and financial skills counseling.

Through NC DSB's participation in the RSA- funded Technical Assistance Project "E3TC" Empower Educate Employ Targeted Communities, the need for an expansion of the certified Work Incentive and Planning Assistance

(WIPA) counselors network was identified as an area where NC DSB and NC DVRS will plan to utilize innovation and expansion funds to help accomplish this during the 2018 and 2019 program years.

Finally, a portion of innovation and expansion funding is used in support of activities of the DSB 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.

Pursuant to an analysis of the results of the most current Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment, DSB and its state rehabilitation council jointly established the priorities below. The following strategies address each these priorities and their associated goals and objectives as identified in Section (n) of the VR portion of the unified state plan.

Goal 4.1. DSB's services will be provided to individuals, families, minority populations and those experiencing health disparities through targeted outreach activities. Data for the objectives will be captured and managed the program specialist for AT/Deaf Blind.

Strategy 4.1.1. Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served who are Hispanics/Latinos by 1% during the period October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015. (The baseline for FFY 2013 was 159.)

Strategy 4.1.2. Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served who are African American by 1% from October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015. (The baseline for FFY 2013 was a total of1614 individuals who are African-American.)

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Strategy 4.1.5. Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served who have diabetes by 1% during the period October 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015. (The baseline for FFY 2013 was.1857, with 109 of these being consumers with cases initiated in FFY2013.)

Goal 4.2. DSB will develop marketing opportunities to targeted populations regarding specific agency programs.

Strategy 4.2.1. DSB will develop individualized program/service brochures (Vocational Rehabilitation Program, Independent Living Rehabilitation, Independent Living Services, Deaf-Blind, Rehab Center, Business Enterprise, Assistive Technology and Assistive Technology Instructors, Evaluation Unit and for individuals with Diabetes, medical providers and Veterans) to be placed on the agency's website and be used at outreach events. The program specialist for AT/Deaf Blind services will coordinate the development of these brochures that will be done by the individual programs. Due to funding issues, it is anticipated this strategy will be completed accomplished in FFY2016.

Strategy 4.2.1. DSB staff will develop presentations to other state agencies and to organizations who work with individuals within the targeted populations regarding opportunities for persons with blindness and visual impairments and about services available through DSB. Tracking will occur by reports to the chief of rehabilitation field services regarding presentations made and the targeted population.

Goal 4.3. DSB will identify ways by which DSB can assist veterans with disabilities to become able to obtain, maintain or regain employment.

Strategy 4.3.1. DSB will meet with officials working with veterans who are visually impaired, blind or deaf blind to educate them regarding services that are available to veterans with disabilities through DSB.

Goal 4.4. DSB will continually seek and identify ways in which to reach the growing minority populations across North Carolina.

Strategy 4.4.1. DSB will increase the number of DSB employees who are of an ethnic or racial minority by 1.5 percent for FFY 2015 (baseline - FFY2013 is 85).

Strategy 4.4.2. DSB will encourage staff to participate in local training programs, either on-line or in community college system, in other languages. The program specialist for staff development will track and report the number of individuals who request and acquire this type of training.

Goal 1.3. DSB will increase the use of supported employment services to facilitate successful employment outcomes for persons with the most significant disabilities. Goal will be measured by availability of vendors in areas where there are none at this time, increased authorizations for supported employment services, and increased number of individuals closed in successful employment after receiving supported employment services.

Strategy 1.3.1. DSB will provide training to all DSB VR counselors regarding the definition of most significant disabling conditions that present impediments to employment and regarding supported employment services. Each office will be provided success stories of individuals in supported employment and will have a representative that meets with the program specialist for Job Development and Placement to promote SE services in their local offices. These will be coordinated by the program specialist for

supported employment services, program specialist for Job Development and Placement and the area or district supervisor in each office. The occurrence and outcome of these meetings will be reported to the chief of rehabilitation field services on a quarterly basis.

Strategy 1.3.2. Each district office will identify the availability of supported employment vendors for their coverage area and report this information to the program specialist for supported employment by December, 2014. The program specialist will identify potential vendors for areas not covered, and will contact them regarding the provision of services. This will be measured by number of new vendors contacted with a goal of 7 new vendors contacted during FFY 2013.

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.

A summary of evaluation of progress toward the jointly established VR program goals. A progress evaluation summary is provided sequentially below each respective goal/objective.

Priority 1: Increase the average wages and benefits of individuals closed with successful wage-earning employment outcomes

Goal 1.1. Individuals who are blind or visually impaired in North Carolina will have access to employment opportunities that provide good wages and level of benefits.

Objective 1.1 DSB VR staff will receive specialized training to assist them with targeting in demand job fields that will bring higher salaries and more stable positions.

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

In 2017, DSB reported 99.2% of successful case closures were closed in competitive integrated employment. This remains consistent since 2015 and is considered a stellar achievement. The median hourly wage for SOC competitive integrated employment outcomes for 2017 was $10.40/hour overall for this group which is up from $9.50/hour in 2015. This data shows a marked increase and that our efforts are working. DSB staff have undergone extensive training since 2014 and the enactment of WIOA which has included specific training regarding competitive integrated employment

and business engagement. With WIOA, we have also increased the focus on STEM careers, training and increased our work with youth and students with disabilities. At this time, DSB is involved with the NRTC via Mississippi State University to provide training for staff on business engagement. Our efforts will continue in this area as we strive to continue to help our clients succeed in the career of their choice.

Objective 1.1.2. Division staff will have resources of community-based work adjustment services through community rehabilitation programs for eligible individuals who require this service for successful employment. It is a resource for individuals who need short-term job coaching to be successful on the job, but do not require long-term support services afforded by supported employment services. The goal for FFY2020 will be five successful employment closures with use of this program.

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

Staff have received extensive training in various training support services to better equip those we serve with most significant disabilities to achieve their employment goal. This training has included training in both supported employment and work adjustment services. We have also worked diligently to increase the number of vendors that we are in contract with to provide these services adding 14 over the past 2 years. Lastly, DSB has reached out to various providers to provide disability sensitivity training at our Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and in person in various county locations throughout the state to better equip them to work successfully with our consumers. We are seeing the use of these services rise gradually as a result of these efforts and feel that we are on target to reach the goal as set for 2020.

Goal 1.2. Increase staff knowledge about careers and employment opportunities in the State and the requirements of these positions.

Objective 1.2.1. Provide ongoing training experiences for all Division VR counselors, business representatives and community employment specialists about career opportunities in North Carolina's changing economy to include a segment on job analysis and use of assistive technology.

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

DSB VR counselors were provided ongoing information and training about career opportunities and specific position requirements consistent with employer needs in NC. Many of these opportunities were the result of business relationships developed through CSAVR's National Employment Team. Some of these business relationships were developed through referrals from OFCCP to Vocational Rehabilitation, and it is anticipated that both sources of business referrals and subsequent knowledge of employer needs will grow in importance for educating VR counselors on NC career opportunities.

Meeting the assistive technology needs of consumers was addressed through training VR counselors to both utilize referrals to the Division's Assistive Technology Consultants and to use the Job Accommodation Network to identify AT accommodations as a means to educate themselves and employers. During job development and placement trainings, assistive technology solutions used by consumers to achieve successful employment were shared between VR counselors to advance knowledge of AT solutions. The emphasis on assistive technology as a vital component for successful employment is a practice supported by the Division's management, and information on new AT products and solutions is routinely shared across the agency with all VR counselors.

Objective 1.2.2. Expand the use of the office plan in each seven district offices for contacting businesses in the locations that targets employers offering higher wages and career advancement.

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

Each office did complete an office plan for targeting employers that offered higher wages and advancement opportunities. This objective will be continued into next year with more supervision by the Chief of Rehabilitation Field Services and technical assistance from the program specialist for job development and placement. This effort is also supported through the agencies work with the NRTC on business engagement which began in 2017.

Objective 1.2.3. Provide targeted one-on-one training by the Program Specialist for Job Development and Placement to each rehabilitation counselor and business representative that will consist of job coaching through an employer interview. In those areas and for those staff with lower numbers of business contacts and successful placements, a follow-up session will be held.

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

All VR job development staff area undergoing some one on one training in the field with the practice of approaching employers as a part of their onboarding process. They are also involved in annual training specific to the needs of the Business Service Representatives and Community Employment Specialists. At DSB, the BSR and CES staff were also included in the effort through the NRTC to improve business engagement skills. All such staff are also very active in required and optional trainings through the NCWorks on job development and placement.

Goal 1.3. Increase community rehabilitation counselor awareness of opportunities for internships and other work experiences for transition age students, especially in areas where specialized transition programs are not available.

Objective 1.3.1. Maintain a section on the agency's web page that will include information about opportunities for transition-age and college age

students for job internship opportunities, work experiences, conferences and ideas, to be maintained by the Program Specialist for Transition with contributions made by the specialized transition programs staff.

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

In 2017, the agency received prior approval to have what was called Unwrapping Opportunities Training Event. This event targeted all VRC staff, the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and various vendors that provided opportunities that aligned with the required pre-employment transition services as outlined by WIOA. There was specific training provided to all parties on WIOA, the required PETS services and examples of ways to provide them that included reflection on opportunities already in policy such as work experiences and internships. This event was extremely beneficial to our staff and business partners as it increased awareness and gave some detailed instruction regarding documentation, delivery and evaluation of such services.

The agency's website has been under some level of construction and re-design for some time now secondary to accessibility issues and changing departmental focus. However, in 2016, DSB was able to do some redesign to our portion of the site highlighting transition and youth services and how to contact staff to apply for services. We were also able to add information regarding opportunities at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind for students in transition and various other services and activities of interest to youth. Also in 2016, we were able to launch the DSB intranet. This is an internal site that allows DSB staff to communicate among each other and we were able to load information regarding WIOA and upcoming trainings.

Objective 1.3.2. Provide training workshops for all ty new rehabilitation counselors on transition services that needs to be provided to students attending schools where the Division does not have a formal Transition Program.

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

All DSB VR Counselors and VR staff have received extensive training on WIOA and services to youth and pre-employment transition services as described by WIOA. There has been numerous internal and external trainings provided to staff annually since 2015 and they continue. DSB has also chosen to create 7 long term temporary PETS Associate positions across the state that focus only on the delivery of pre-employment services and target areas of the state that do not have transition counselors.

Priority 2. Eligible individuals will have access to assistive technology (at) required for employment

Goal 2.1. Provide accessible technology for all eligible individuals who require specific equipment and software in order to obtain maintain and regain employment.

Objective 2.1.1. The DSB AT policy will be re-examined and research conducted to allow for additional and more appropriate AT support of clients seeking employment to increase employability and success in career positions.

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

DSB provides various assistive technology to all eligible individuals who require specific equipment and software in order to obtain maintain and regain employment. We also anticipate to go live with the Accessible Job Search Center in 2018 which will give every DSB office an accessible computer station for client use in the job search/application process. Also, DSB has made considerable revisions to the AT policy finalized in 2018 to improve services offered in this area. Such research and policy revision will continue as needed to make sure DSB VR clients are able to access the job world as needed in today's market.

Goal 2.2. Assistive technology staff in all seven District Offices will receive training on latest software and hardware to enhance placement opportunities.

Objective 2.2.1. Provide training for the Rehabilitation Engineer, Assistive Technology Consultants, and Assistive Technology teachers and instructors about new and innovative products

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

DSB assistive technology staff statewide have received numerous internal and external trainings to make sure that they remain up to date on assistive technology solutions. This training has consisted of updated JAWS and ZoomText training, as well as training received regarding specific hardware and software. This training has been received by outside vendors coming to DSB locations either in-person or through live online learning modes, vendor fairs orchestrated by staff, DSB internal trainings or AT specific training conferences.

Objective 2.2.2. Partner with the NC Assistive Technology Project and the NC Rehabilitation Association to sponsor the annual "GREAT" (Global Rehabilitation Enhanced by Assistive Technology) (formerly the NC Assistive Technology Expo) and identify at least two presentations about access technology for individuals who are blind or who have visual impairments.

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

DSB partnered with other sponsors of this event in 2017 by submitting a contribution in excess of $2,500 to each conference and by providing presenters for three concurrent sessions. Participation in this program reach numerous individuals outside DSB that reach persons from a variety of targeted populations, as it is attended by other VR agencies, private non-profit organizations and private individuals. To further support this

conference and assure attendance, DSB held it's annual DSB AT Staff Training at the same location just before the GREAT Conference as a pre-conference. This provided a good segue for staff and helped to minimize costs.

Priority 3: Transition services will be available in all counties of North Carolina for students who are blind or visually impaired.

Goal 3.1. The Division will continue to provide transition services to students who are blind or visually impaired attending schools in all 115 Local Education Agencies (LEA's) of North Carolina. The goal will be to increase the number of individuals, ages 14-21, served by more than 2% (baseline for FFY2011: 290)

Objective 3.1.1. Current Cooperative Agreements with fifteen LEAs' will be maintained, as economic instability continues and projected budget shortfalls are projected to increase in the next fiscal year.

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

DSB has maintained 14 cooperative agreements with the area school systems. DSB serves all eligible individuals including youth and students with disabilities through our various staff including transition counselors, community employment specialists, and vocational rehabilitation counselors. Since 2017, DSB has also established 7 PETS Associates positions throughout the state that area delivering the required pre-employment transition services and they are targeting the areas that do not have cooperative agreements.

Objective 3.1.2. Transition services to students attending schools without Division cooperative agreements will be served by Division VR counselors in the counties where the schools are located.

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

Since 2017, DSB has also established 7 PETS Associates positions throughout the state that area delivering the required pre-employment transition services and they are targeting the areas that do not have cooperative agreements.

Goal 3.2: The Division will provide continuing education training for transition program staff.

Objective 3.2.1. Transition Staff that have enrolled in Certificate in Transition with Winston-Salem State University will complete the program.

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

DSB continues to provide annual training on pre-employment transition services and services to youth for all VR staff and community partners. We have provided numerous trainings in response to WIOA and will continue to do so as we develop new services and strategies for serving these young

people. Objective 3.2.1 is discontinued secondary to issues within the university.

Objective 3.2.2. All Transition Staff will complete training in the Discovery Process provided Southeast Regional TACE program, so they can begin to use the process with the students in their programs during this Fiscal Year.

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

Objective 3.2.2 has been accomplished.

Objective 3.2.3. The Program Specialist for Transition Services will continue to have transition staff meetings and/or provide ongoing trainings quarterly to increase staff awareness and knowledge about transition issues and policy.

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

A new Program Specialist for Transition and Supported Employment was hired in 2016 and is doing an excellent job working with our transition staff one on one and as a team to train them and all VR staff regarding WIOA emphasis on youth and students with disabilities. She has also worked closely with the Chief of Rehabilitation Field Services to develop and revise policies accordingly. This work continues with the help of the WINTAC-PETS.

Goal 3.3. Each Rehabilitation Counselor in areas where specialized transition programs are not available will increase awareness of opportunities for internships and work experiences for transition age students.

Objective 3.3.1. Provide current information about opportunities for transition age individuals on the agency's web-page or other media

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

In 2017, the agency received prior approval to have what was called Unwrapping Opportunities Training Event. This event targeted all VRC staff, the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and various vendors that provided opportunities that aligned with the required pre-employment transition services as outlined by WIOA. There was specific training provided to all parties on WIOA, the required PETS services and examples of ways to provide them that included reflection on opportunities already in policy such as work experiences and internships. This event was extremely beneficial to our staff and business partners as it increased awareness and gave some detailed instruction regarding documentation, delivery and evaluation of such services.

The agency's website has been under some level of construction and re-design for some time now secondary to accessibility issues and changing departmental focus. However, in 2016, DSB was able to do some redesign to our portion of the site highlighting transition and youth services and how to

contact staff to apply for services. We were also able to add information regarding opportunities at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind for students in transition and various other services and activities of interest to youth. Also in 2016, we were able to launch the DSB intranet. This is an internal site that allows DSB staff to communicate among each other and we were able to load information regarding WIOA and upcoming trainings.

Objective 3.3.2. Provide training to new Rehabilitation Counselors on Transition Services available to eligible students on their caseloads

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

All new DSB VR Counselor are required to participate in Best Practices Training. This training covers all aspects of the VR process with a special emphasis on youth and students with disabilities as well as other topics emphasized by WIOA. All DSB VR Counselors and VR staff have received extensive training on WIOA and services to youth and pre-employment transition services as described by WIOA. There have been numerous internal and external trainings provided to staff annually since 2015 and they continue. DSB has also chosen to create 7 long term temporary PETS Associate positions across the state that focus only on the delivery of pre-employment services and target areas of the state that do not have transition counselors.

Objective 3.3.3. Program Specialist for Transition Services and the Transition Counselor in each area will continue to be available for consultation regarding transition services

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

The Program Specialist for Transition hired in 2017 serves as a consult on all youth and students with disabilities and consults with staff and managers as needed. She also provides case review annually and training. Prior to this hire, the chief of rehabilitation field services served in this capacity.

Priority 4: Quality and knowledgeable outreach to individuals with disabilities, family members, and individuals who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities will be provided by the division.

Goal 4.1: The Division's services will be provided to individuals, families, and minority populations through targeted outreach activities.

Objective 4.1.1. Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served who are Hispanics/Latinos by more than 2% during the period October 1, 2012 to September 30, 2013. (The baseline for FFY 2011 was 140). During FFY2013, DSB provided services to 159 individuals who stated they are of Hispanic ethnicity. This represents a 13% increase over the number served during FFY2011.

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

DSB staff participated in 100 outreach events across the state that specifically targeted the Hispanic/Latino population during the SFY 2016-2017. We are increasing these efforts and still working toward this goal. This goal has been surpassed by more than 10%, but we hope it will continue to grow by these efforts.

Objective 4.1.2. Outreach activities will result in the increase of total consumers served from the African American, Native Americans and other minority groups by more than 2% from October 1, 2012 to September 30, 2013. (The baseline for FFY 2011 was a total of 1526, 1446 African-American, 80 Native American)

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

DSB staff participated in 476 total outreach events across the state that specifically targeted the various minority groups during the SFY 2016-2017.

Group	Count
Black/African-American	139
Hispanic/Latino	100
American Indian	84
Asian	80
Minority - Other	73

For the period of July 1, 2017 through March30, 2017, there were a total of 2469 IPEs completed signifying the active client total for DSB. There were 1328 that were from someone who self-identified as being a part of a racial or ethnic minority group. This identifies over 50% of our client population identifies as being a part of a minority group. Therefore, we will adjust this goal with plans to continue a focus on outreach to all minority and under-represented groups.

Goal 4.2. The Division will develop marketing opportunities to targeted audiences.

Objective 4.2.1. The Division will utilize social media as a method for Division VR Counselors to communicate with employers with the goal of establishing relationships with five new employers through this network.

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

The division is presently working with marketing staff to create materials to better market DSB services although there has been some delay secondary to logo changes. This work will continue. Due to state and department

policies and procedures, involvement and use of social media is not allowed at this time. Therefore objective 4.2.1 is discontinued.

Objective 4.2.2. The Division will use the available employer portal in BEAM, the new case management system, to establish contact with employers who would like to post job opportunities, with the goal of having ten job opportunities posted after the initiation of the system in October, 2012.

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

Objective 4.2.2 is discontinued. Due to complications in the development of this system, BEAM's employer portal is not operational at this point, and the Division will need to pursue another solution. This strategy will be continued until BEAM is replaced.

Goal 4.3: The Division will identify ways by which the Division can assist veterans with disabilities to become able to obtain, maintain or regain employment.

Objective 4.3.1. Through contacts with the Veterans Administration, Disabled Veterans of America, and the American Legion, the Division will educate these organizations on ways the Division can assist veterans through a continuum of independent living and employment services.

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

During the past two years, DSB has been engaged in 78 outreach efforts that targeted veterans. These efforts were to make veterans more aware of what services are available to them through DSB and how to access those services. It is our hope to continue to support this population as best we can, therefore work on this goal, including educating and reaching out to our partners, will continue.

Goal 4.4. The Division will continually seek and identify ways in which to reach the growing minority populations across North Carolina.

Objective 4.4.1. Increase the number of The Division employees who are of an ethnic or racial minority by more than 2.5 percent for FFY 2018.

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

At this time, DSB has the following diverse employee make-up:

Ethnic Origin	**Sum of Number of Employees**
Did not Answer	4
American Indian or Alaskan Native (N-H/L	1
Asian (Non-Hispanic/Latino)	2

Black or African American (N-H/L)	96
Hispanic/Latino	2
White (Non-Hispanic/Latino)	135
Grand Total	**240**

This represents an overall increase in minority representation (101 employees, 49.5% minority representation). This reflects close to 8% increase over figures in 2013 (85 employees, 41.7% minority representation.

This goal will continue and DSB will also research proportion of staff with disabilities to assure that we are also diverse in that area as well.

Objective 4.4.2. During FFY 2013, eight Division staff will utilize the Spanish training modules to acquire some level of proficiency in speaking and/or understanding Spanish.

PROGRESS EVALUATION: Objective 4.4.2 is discontinued as efforts to do this were found to be ineffective and not optimal for consumers. Instead, DSB has worked diligently to establish a listing of approved vendors for interpreting and translation services and has focused on outreach to this population as a better way of serving them.

Goal 5.1. To provide consistent and accurate data for use for assessing program performance.

Objective 5.1.1. The agency will provide refresher training, support, and problem-solving upon the scheduled "go-live" of October 1, 2012, for the agency's new case management system, BEAM. All issues regarding BEAM used by staff using assistive technology will be resolved during the first year of its use.

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

BEAM, the electronic case management system, has provided a way of accessing data for us that we did not have with the legacy system. However, the company that established BEAM, Libera, has decided to no longer support this system and we are in search of a new case management system. Therefore, we consider Goal 5.1 still applicable.

Objective 5.1.2. Monthly reviews of outcome data by rehabilitation program chiefs and managers was completed with supervisors and other program staff.

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

With the initiation of BEAM case management system, we are now able to pull some data regarding outcomes and other program targets for review. This is being pulled and shared monthly. Also, there is now a lot of information that supervisors and program staff and see independently in

BEAM and they have been trained on how to do so. However, this goal continues as we continue to learn new requirements regarding WIOA reporting.

Goal 5.2. To provide holistic, consistent, and accurate methods of quality assurance and program evaluation.

Objective 5.2.1. Develop an up-to- date Quality Assurance Manual outline identifying areas requiring specific methods of quality assurance based on outcome measures with consideration of BEAM. The manual will be written, edited and approved by FFY2020.

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

Secondary to other priorities within the state, this goal is still under development. This goal remains essential to agency growth and continues to be pursued with a an expected completion date of 2020.

Objective 5.2.2. To obtain reviews and input from all program managers to develop draft methods to achieve holistic, consistent, and accurate measures.

PROGRESS EVALUATION:

WIOA has directed us a VR state agency to pursue particular measures. We are training staff and working with our WIOA partners to embrace those measures and discover ways to track them and document them. Therefore, objective 5.2.2 is removed.

Due to multiple personnel changes, mostly initiated by retirements, reviews are done and input regarding implications for change is recorded. This will continue throughout FFY2015, as a new Chief of Field Services who is responsible for quality assurance will be in place and can initiate input into measures and methodology.

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

During the period to which the goals applied, most recently FFY 2015, the primary factors impeding the achievement of the goals and priorities has been the staff turnover and hiring delays that have occurred. Much institutional knowledge has been lost due to recent retirements, and transitions between replacing positions causes the agency to progress less steadily toward achieving the stated goals as expected. Delays in hiring a key program specialist positions, positions which focus on driving the agency forward, have slowed the progress more than anticipated.

Another factor that did not facilitate the fullest achievement of goals has been the resources required to implement an entirely new case management system during this phase. A major shift from a largely paper-based case management system to a more modernized electronic system has required

considerable attention and time that has been an investment toward improving results going forward.

Also, much of the effort and resources among leadership has been redirected toward implementing changes required as a result of the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

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.

Strategies that contributed toward achieving progress toward the following supported employment goals:

Supported Employment Goals:

In all 100 counties, DSB plans to identify individuals with disabilities that have traditionally been underserved and not served, who will require Supported Employment services in order to achieve a successful employment outcome by using the following objectives:

1. Provide training to new rehabilitation counselors that will assist in their ability to identify and to refer individuals with the most significant disabilities for supported employment services.

Progress Evaluation and Strategies Employed: DSB has provided Best Practices Training to all new rehabilitation counselors to instruct them on issues regarding blind rehabilitation, policy and appropriate rendering of VR services. This training is required for all new staff and has included an emphasis on Supported Employment (SE) Services. In addition, DSB held a VR Counselor Training to specifically address (among other things) SE client services, vendors, and documentation. During this time, SE case scenarios and policy application were reviewed and questions were answered.

2. DSB's program specialist for supported employment will provide training to community rehabilitation program staff, as requested, on information about working with individuals who are blind or visually impaired to assist in job development and placement.

Progress Evaluation and Strategies Employed: DSB was successful in both identifying new vendors to provide SE Services to clients and in providing additional training to these vendors to assist them in best working with blind, visually impaired and deaf-blind clients. More than twice as many new vendors have been identified through the recent establishment of the new BEAM case management system. Through this system, we have combined the DSB vendor listing with that of our sister agency, DVR. This has given both agencies access to the other's vendors which has opened

many doors for the DSB SE Program. The DSB SE Program Specialist has also met with several new and existing vendors one on one and through meeting demonstrations to make sure that they were aware of the DSB Supported Employment Program, its requirements, etc. DSB has also invited Community Rehabilitation Program Staff to come to the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind to attend the same training new DSB staff receive entitled NEST or New Employee Sensitivity Training. This is a one week intensive training program where staff experience hands on training, often under the blindfold, in several aspect of blind awareness, vocational rehabilitation for the blind and blind specific skill training. Thus far, one new vendor has taken advantage of this opportunity and have had 3 staff attend the training. These staff have reported a much greater understanding and willingness to work with blind, visually impaired and deaf-blind clients and are having great success in working with DSB clients as a result. This is a service that we will continue to promote statewide and we expect continued success.

3. Community rehabilitation programs will identify individuals with the most significant disabilities who want to work, and refer them to DSB for VR services, which may include supported employment services.

Progress Evaluation and Strategies Employed: DSB has made an effort through direct education of vendors and through offering Community Rehabilitation Program agency staff the NEST program to educate community rehabilitation programs in what we do as an agency and the qualifications for eligibility. This will allow them to see that they might have clients they presently work with that may benefit from DSB Supported Employment (SE) Services. This will allow them to make appropriate referrals when needed and to contribute valuable feedback during the SE process.

4. During Fiscal Year 2016, DSB plans to close three (3) individuals indicating successful employment outcomes after receiving supported employment services.

Progress Evaluation and Strategies Employed: In 2017, DSB closed 5 persons in successful competitive integrated employment that received supported employment services and presently have over 30 individuals that plan to receive supported employment services as a part of the pursuit of their vocational goal. Although these numbers have been very low in past years, DSB is striving to improve them. DSB has provided training for VR staff and field supervisors to make sure that they fully understood the definitions of SD and MSD status and the qualifications for the Supported Employment (SE) Program. They were reminded of all the benefits clients receive as a part of the SE Program and how to help them access these services. Also reviewed were the vendors that can be used and what to do should a vendor has some apprehension. The new DSB SE Program Specialist for has also planned additional training for 2016 and plans to visit field offices to increase awareness and knowledge about the program. In

2015, DSB increased the number of clients receiving Supported Employment services by 50% while the number of those closed successfully has remained basically the same. This shows that DSB efforts to increase the Supported Employment Program are working, but we need to continue our efforts. DSB will continue to strive to help the program grow as we do realize that it has great potential and it is a vital employment service provided to those we serve.

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

The factors identified that have impeded the achievement of DSBs supported employment goals and priorities are the following:

- Vacancy of the Transition and Supported Employment VR Program Specialist for over 2 years.
- Need for additional training in assessing what clients are appropriate for supported employment services, how to access services and how clients might benefit.
- Lack of vendors that can provide appropriate job development and coaching services for MSD clients that are blind, deaf-blind or visually impaired in addition to secondary impairments.

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

For the first three measures, the VR program, with both DVRS and DSB combined, estimates 35% employment the second quarter after exit; 32% employment, fourth quarter after exit; and median earnings of $2,800 for the second quarter after exit. The programs are awaiting regulations on the remaining three performance measures.

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

Innovation and expansion funds were utilized during FFY 2014-15 to purchase demonstration devices for use with the North Carolina Assistive Technology Program to expand their device loan and assistive technology assessment capabilities using more current employment-related assistive technologies.

Beginning October, 2015, innovation and expansion funds are being utilized through a financial assistance contract with the Statewide Independent Living Council to further their progress in achieving goals and strategies within the current State Plan for Independent Living.These funds will also help facilitate collaboration between the Division and the Centers for Independent Living in the development of pre-employment transition services such as self-advocacy, peer mentoring, and financial skills counseling.

Also, a portion of the innovation and expansion fund is used in support of activities of the DSB state rehabilitation council.

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.

DSBs supported employment services program is more cost effective since it was converted to performance-based outcomes, and eligible individuals are able to achieve their employment goals more quickly.DSB's supported employment services program through policy changes, purchase of supported employment services from private nonprofit Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP's), good practice guidelines, updated training and technical assistance to DSB staff, and training to private nonprofit CRP staff, employers, eligible individuals, families and advocates, has moved the program towards an improved quality of services.Quality outcomes emphasize achievement of a successful stable employment outcome as determined by the individual, DSB's VR counselor, the CRP job coach, and the employer. Stable employment is achieved when all four parties agree that stabilization has occurred. The individual is encouraged to exercise informed choice in determining if a quality outcome has been achieved. DSB's objective is for the individual to make employment choices consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and interests in the most integrated setting possible.DSB ensures that the extended long term support services identified on the Individualized Plan for Employment are provided by the contracted private nonprofit organization to begin when stabilization has been determined and to continue for as long as the individual requires the service.

Scope

The scope of supported employment services includes all of DSB's services provided under Title I, and in addition, the coordination of extended long term support services and the development of natural supports. The expanded scope of supported employment long term supports requires a continuation of DSB's involvement in the coordination and collaboration with the private nonprofit CRP's, employers and families. Post-employment services are provided when supports and services needed by the individual exceed the responsibility of the extended long term support services provider.

Extent

DSB purchases supported employment services from private nonprofit CRP's in the individual's locality, and offers supported employment services to eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities in all 100 counties of the state. In addition, supported employment services are available to high school students participating in the DSB's transition programs in all 100 counties if required for successful employment outcomes.DSB continues to identify more private nonprofit CRP's for the development of contracts to provide supported employment services. This will allow eligible individuals to have more choices available to them for supported employment services that can assist them in reaching their employment goals.

2. THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES.

DSB's extended long term services are provided in three phases to allow the individual choices in the level of service desired and required to achieve longevity of employment. The individual makes the final decision about their movement through the phases of extended services. The phases of extended long term services are:

Phase 1: The CRP providing the extended services meets with the individual twice monthly at the place of employment for at least 6 months. When the six month period ends, the CRP, the individual, and the employer review the individual's progress. If all parties agree that the individual is performing the job without any difficulties and no other problems are present with the placement, the individual can move to the next phase. This action requires the individual's signature on a waiver for this change in level of service. If the individual feels that they are not ready to move to the next phase, then they remain in Phase1. An individual can remain in any phase indefinitely.

Phase 2: The CRP meets with the individual at the place of employment at least once every six months for at least 2 years to review progress of placement. The meetings can take place more often if necessary to resolve any minor problems. After 2 years, another review is conducted with the individual, the CRP, and the employer. If all agree that the individual remains stable in the placement, they can move to the last phase. The movement requires the signature of the individual on a waiver agreeing to the move.

Phase 3: The individual and employer understand that if a problem occurs, the CRP will be contacted to meet and to complete an assessment of the problem. If the problem can be resolved quickly with short- term intervention such as a few visits, the individual will remain in this phase. If the problem is new or difficult to resolve without DSB's intervention, the individual will be referred back to the DSB for further assistance. The goal of this action is to allow the individual to either retain the job or to begin the process for obtaining new employment in the quickest and most effective manner as to minimize the interruption of employment. DSB will, at the time of the referral, make a determination whether the problem can be resolved

in Status 32 Post Employment Services or whether a new case will be required.

DSB is continually striving towards improving its supported employment program to provide the best service possible to the individual. Therefore, DSB uses the following strategies to work towards this objective: (a) identify additional private nonprofit CRP's with supported employment service programs to expand its supported employment program and to provide eligible individuals with more choices of service providers available to them; (b) provide training to new CRP vendors with DSB's supported employment program to assist them in working with individuals who are blind or visually impaired; (c) provide ongoing training to CRP staff already working with DSB's supported employment program; and(d) develop natural supports for its individuals to assist them in becoming more independent in their communities, to include self-pay, co-workers, employers, and family/friends.

CERTIFICATIONS

Name of designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate **Division of Services for the Blind Vocational Rehabilitation Program**

Name of designated State agency **North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Mandy Cohen, M.D.**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Secretary**

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 I 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 **North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Division of Services for the Blind Vocational Rehabilitation Program**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Mandy Cohen, M.D.**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Secretary**

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.

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 **North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Division of Services for the Blind Supported Employment Program**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Mandy Cohen, M.D.**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Secretary**

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,

HAS DEVELOPED AND WILL IMPLEMENT,

✌☞ STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS IDENTIFIED IN THE ASSESSMENTS; AND

☜☞ 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

👍✠👍✋☞ 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:

- 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
- 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.

APPENDIX 1. 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 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 two years of the plan. States will only have one year of data available under the performance accountability system in Section 116 of the WIOA; therefore, the Departments will continue to use the transition authority under WIOA sec. 503(a) to designate certain primary indicators of performance as "baseline" indicators in the first plan submission. A "baseline" indicator is one for which States will not propose an expected level of performance in the plan submission and will not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance. "Baseline" indicators will not be used in the end of the year performance calculations and will not be used to determine failure to achieve adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The selection of primary indicators for the designation as a baseline indicator is made based on the likelihood of a state having adequate data on which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance and such a designation will vary across core programs.

States are expected to collect and report on all indicators, including those that that have been designated as "baseline". The actual performance data reported by States for indicators designated as "baseline" in the first two years of the Unified or Combined Plan will serve as baseline data in future years.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for each indicator, except for those indicators that are listed as "baseline" indicators below.

For this Plan, the Departments will work with States during the negotiation process to establish the negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs.

Baseline Indicators for the First Two Years of the Plan

Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Workers, and Youth):

- Measurable Skill Gains
- Effectiveness in Serving Employers

Title II programs (Adult Education):

- Employment in the 2nd quarter
- Employment in the 4th quarter

- Median Earnings
- Credential Attainment
- Effectiveness in Serving Employers

Title III programs (Wagner-Peyser):

- Effectiveness in Serving Employers

Title IV programs (Vocational Rehabilitation):

- Employment in the 2nd quarter
- Employment in the 4th quarter
- Median Earnings
- Credential Attainment
- Measurable Skill Gains
- Effectiveness in Serving Employers

States may identify additional indicators in the State plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the State indicators. Please identify any such State indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

TABLE 1. EMPLOYMENT (SECOND QUARTER AFTER EXIT)

Program	PY 2018 Expected Level	PY 2018 Negotiated Level	PY 2019 Expected Level	PY 2019 Negotiated Level
Adults	70.00	70.00	72.00	72.00
Dislocated Workers	74.00	75.50	77.00	77.00
Youth	70.00	70.00	73.00	73.00
Adult Education	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

Program	PY 2018 Expected Level	PY 2018 Negotiated Level	PY 2019 Expected Level	PY 2019 Negotiated Level
Wagner-Peyser	70.00	70.00	72.00	72.00
Vocational Rehabilitation	35.00	Baseline	35.00	Baseline

User remarks on Table 1

TABLE 2. EMPLOYMENT (FOURTH QUARTER AFTER EXIT)

Program	PY 2018 Expected Level	PY 2018 Negotiated Level	PY 2019 Expected Level	PY 2019 Negotiated Level
Adults	68.00	70.00	70.00	71.00
Dislocated Workers	71.00	73.00	74.00	74.50
Youth	69.00	69.00	72.00	72.00
Adult Education	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Wagner-Peyser	68.00	69.00	70.00	71.00
Vocational Rehabilitation	32.00	Baseline	32.00	Baseline

User remarks on Table 2

TABLE 3. MEDIAN EARNINGS (SECOND QUARTER AFTER EXIT)

Program	PY 2018 Expected Level	PY 2018 Negotiated Level	PY 2019 Expected Level	PY 2019 Negotiated Level
Adults	4,800.00	4,800.00	5,000.00	5,000.00
Dislocated Workers	6,800.00	6,200.00	7,100.00	6,500.00
Youth	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Adult Education	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Wagner-Peyser	4,800.00	4,800.00	5,000.00	5,000.00
Vocational Rehabilitation	2,800.00	Baseline	2,800.00	Baseline

User remarks on Table 3

For Youth and Adult Education, columns should read "baseline"

TABLE 4. CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT RATE

Program	PY 2018 Expected Level	PY 2018 Negotiated Level	PY 2019 Expected Level	PY 2019 Negotiated Level
Adults	57.00	51.00	59.00	53.00

Program	PY 2018 Expected Level	PY 2018 Negotiated Level	PY 2019 Expected Level	PY 2019 Negotiated Level
Dislocated Workers	70.00	58.00	72.00	60.00
Youth	52.00	51.00	54.00	53.00
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 2018 Expected Level	PY 2018 Negotiated Level	PY 2019 Expected Level	PY 2019 Negotiated Level
Adults	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Dislocated Workers	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Youth	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

Program	PY 2018 Expected Level	PY 2018 Negotiated Level	PY 2019 Expected Level	PY 2019 Negotiated Level
Adult Education	39.00	39.00	42.00	42.00
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

Measure	PY 2018 Expected Level	PY 2018 Negotiated Level	PY 2019 Expected Level	PY 2019 Negotiated Level
Line 1 (enter the measure information in the comments below)	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Line 2	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Line 3	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Line 4	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Line 5	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

Measure	PY 2018 Expected Level	PY 2018 Negotiated Level	PY 2019 Expected Level	PY 2019 Negotiated Level
Line 6	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

User remarks on Table 6

TABLE 7. ADDITIONAL INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE

Measure	PY 2018 Expected Level	PY 2018 Negotiated Level	PY 2019 Expected Level	PY 2019 Negotiated Level

User remarks on Table 7

APPENDIX 2. OTHER STATE ATTACHMENTS (OPTIONAL)

Appendix 2B

Core Programs		
Agency	**Program**	**Program and Activities with Target Population**
North Carolina Department of Commerce	Adult Program	The Adult program through the Department of Commerce prepares individuals for participation in the labor force by providing access to employment planning, career counseling, job training, and workforce services ranging from skill assessment, labor market information, consumer reports on training programs, job search, placement assistance, literacy activities, and support services. Education and training activities may include: occupational skills training; on-the-job training; incumbent worker workplace training; skill upgrading; customized training; and job readiness training. The program is designed to serve the general public and unemployed or underemployed jobseekers.
North Carolina Department of Commerce	Dislocated Worker Program	The Dislocated Worker program through the Department of Commerce prepares those dislocated from employment for participation in the labor force by providing access to employment planning, career counseling, job training, and workforce services ranging from skill assessment, labor market information, consumer reports on training programs, job search, placement assistance, literacy activities, and support services. Education and training activities may include: occupational skills training; on-the-job training; incumbent worker workplace training; skill upgrading; customized training; and job readiness training. The program is designed to serve individuals dislocated from employment or those who received notification of pending dislocation.
North Carolina Department of Commerce	Youth Program	The Youth program through the Department of Commerce prepares youth with barriers to employment for academic and employment success. The program serves out-of-school youth aged 16-24 and low-income in-school youth aged 14-21. The youth program provides youth a variety of options for improving educational and skill competencies, supportive services and effective connections to employers. Youth services shall provide assessments of the individual's academic level, basic skills, occupational skills, prior work experience, employability, interests, aptitudes, and support service needs for the purpose of identifying career pathways for the individual. In addition, these assessments will yield the individual's service strategies linked to their career pathway's education and employment goals and establish the necessary activities required to complete postsecondary education, occupational education and preparation for employment. In order to achieve the individuals chosen career path and career readiness, youth have access to fourteen defined program elements to include comprehensive counseling and mentoring. Available education and training activities may include: tutoring and study skills leading to the completion of secondary school, or dropout prevention; alternative secondary school services; summer employment opportunities; work experience (paid and unpaid), including internships and job shadowing; occupational skills training; and leadership development opportunities. The program is designed to serve out-of-school youth aged 16-24 and low-income in-school youth aged 14-21 with identified barriers to employment.

Core Programs		
Agency	**Program**	**Program and Activities with Target Population**
North Carolina Community College System	Basic Skills	The Basic Skills program through the North Carolina Community College System provides adult education and literacy services to assist adults to complete a secondary school education and/or become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency. North Carolina's 58 community colleges offer classes in Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Education and English as a Second Language. Instruction is offered in reading, writing, mathematics and English. Participants who do not have a high school diploma may work towards a high school equivalency or Adult High School diploma. In addition, the program assists adults who are parents to obtain the educational skills necessary to become full partners in the educational development of their children. The program is designed to serve individuals lacking basic literacy skills.
North Carolina Department of Commerce	Wagner-Peyser Act Program	The Wagner-Peyser program through the Department of Commerce provides all job seekers access to self-service or staff-assisted job search preparation, job referral, and placement assistance. Employers may receive general or specialized recruitment services through self-service or staff assisted job referral and placement. Depending on the needs of the labor market, other services may be available through the Wagner-Peyser program, such as job seeker skills assessments, career guidance, workshops, and referral to training. Other services offered to employers include assistance in the development of job order requirements and skills, arranging job fairs, and assisting with job restructuring. The program is designed to serve the general public, unemployed or underemployed job seekers, and business owners.
North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services	Vocational Rehabilitation Program	The Vocational Rehabilitation, Employment and Training program through the Department of Health and Human Services provides an array of activities designed to help individuals with disabilities prepare for, and engage in, gainful employment consistent with their strengths, interests and abilities. Services include skill assessments, counseling, training, education, transportation, job placement, assistive technology and other support services for people with physical, psychiatric, or intellectual disabilities as well as those who are deaf or hard of hearing or have other communicative disorders to assist them with living independently and with finding and maintaining employment. The program is designed to serve job seekers with disabilities.
North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services	Services for the Blind, Employment and Training	The Services for the Blind, Employment and Training program through the Department of Health and Human Services provides counseling, training, education, transportation, job placement, assistive technology, and other support services for blind and visually impaired people as well as people with vision and hearing loss to assist them with living independently and with

Mandatory One-stop Delivery System Partners

Core Programs

Agency	Program	Program and Activities with Target Population
North Carolina Department of Public Instructions	Career and Technical Education (Perkins)	The Department of Public Instruction is the primary agent for Perkins funds. The Career and Technical Education program through the Department of Public Instruction provides middle and high school students the opportunity to take Career and Technical Education courses that are aligned with the 16 National Career Clusters and 79 related career pathways. The 16 Career Clusters include Manufacturing, Transportation, Health Science, Education, and Information Technology, among others. In addition to classroom and lab instruction, students participate in work-based learning experiences and in student organization activities. The program is designed to serve students in grades 6th through 12th, many of whom have a barrier to employment.
North Carolina Community College System	Post-Secondary Career, Technical, and Vocational Education (Perkins)	The Post-Secondary Career, Technical, and Vocational Education program through the North Carolina Community College System provides individuals the opportunity to expand their education in one of the 260 programs aligned with diverse industries across North Carolina. Currently included are Agricultural & Natural Resources, Biological & Chemical Technologies, Business Technologies, Commercial & Artistic Production, Construction Technologies, Engineering Technologies, Health Sciences, Industrial Technologies, Public Services Technologies, and Transportation System Technologies. Other program activities include: building rigorous programs of study by integrating academic and technical skills; linking high school and community college technical programs; improving the use of technology in instruction; and providing professional development for faculty, administrators and counselors.
North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services	Community Services Block Grant	The Community Services Block Grant program through the Department of Health and Human Services provides support to individuals who are currently at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. The program provides funding to Community Action Agencies and Limited Purpose Agencies to carry out activities that enable low-income families to move out of poverty and to become self-sufficient. Low-income participants are assisted with employment, education, housing, emergency assistance, community involvement, and more effective use of resources. The program is designed to serve low-income families and individuals.
North Carolina Department of Administration	American Indian Workforce Development Program	The American Indian Workforce Development program through the North Carolina Department of Administration provides comprehensive employment and training activities for Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian individuals in order to develop academic, occupational and literacy skills to achieve self-sufficiency. Services may include: classroom training, work experiences, job search and

Mandatory One-stop Delivery System Partners		
Core Programs		
Agency	**Program**	**Program and Activities with Target Population**
North Carolina Department of Public Instructions	Career and Technical Education (Perkins)	The Department of Public Instruction is the primary agent for Perkins funds. The Career and Technical Education program through the Department of Public Instruction provides middle and high school students the opportunity to take Career and Technical Education courses that are aligned with the 16 National Career Clusters and 79 related career pathways. The 16 Career Clusters include Manufacturing, Transportation, Health Science, Education, and Information Technology, among others. In addition to classroom and lab instruction, students participate in work-based learning experiences and in student organization activities. The program is designed to serve students in grades 6th through 12th, many of whom have a barrier to employment.
North Carolina Community College System	Post-Secondary Career, Technical, and Vocational Education (Perkins)	The Post-Secondary Career, Technical, and Vocational Education program through the North Carolina Community College System provides individuals the opportunity to expand their education in one of the 260 programs aligned with diverse industries across North Carolina. Currently included are Agricultural & Natural Resources, Biological & Chemical Technologies, Business Technologies, Commercial & Artistic Production, Construction Technologies, Engineering Technologies, Health Sciences, Industrial Technologies, Public Services Technologies, and Transportation System Technologies. Other program activities include: building rigorous programs of study by integrating academic and technical skills; linking high school and community college technical programs; improving the use of technology in instruction; and providing professional development for faculty, administrators and counselors.
North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services	Community Services Block Grant	The Community Services Block Grant program through the Department of Health and Human Services provides support to individuals who are currently at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. The program provides funding to Community Action Agencies and Limited Purpose Agencies to carry out activities that enable low-income families to move out of poverty and to become self-sufficient. Low-income participants are assisted with employment, education, housing, emergency assistance, community involvement, and more effective use of resources. The program is designed to serve low-income families and individuals.
North Carolina Department of Administration	American Indian Workforce Development Program	The American Indian Workforce Development program through the North Carolina Department of Administration provides comprehensive employment and training activities for Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian individuals in order to develop academic, occupational and literacy skills to achieve self-sufficiency. Services may include: classroom training, work experiences, job search and placement assistance, and supportive services. The program is designed to serve unemployed, underemployed and low-income American Indian job seekers.
U.S. Department of Labor	Job Corps Program	The Job Corps program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor and delivered by local Job Corps centers is a no-cost education and vocational training program that helps young people ages 16 through 24 improve the quality of their lives through vocational and academic training. North Carolina's four Job Corps centers may provide the following activities: academic training, including basic reading and math; courses in independent living, employability skills, and social skills to help students transition into the workplace; career technical training in several vocational trades including Advanced Manufacturing, Automotive Construction, Business Technology and Health; GED/high school programs; and support services. The program is designed to serve young people ages 16 through 24

Core Programs		
Agency	**Program**	**Program and Activities with Target Population**
North Carolina Department of Commerce	Veterans Services Program	The Veterans Services program through the Department of Commerce provides specialized services to assist veterans and eligible persons with employment services, including case management of veterans with significant barriers to employment and extensive employer outreach conducted on behalf of veterans. Eligible participants are served by Wagner-Peyser and WIOA integrated staff in the state's network of NCWorks Career Centers. Disabled Veterans Outreach Specialists (DVOPS) offer intensive services designed to assist veterans in overcoming barriers and becoming employed. Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVER) conduct employer outreach on behalf of veterans, conduct staff training on veteran services and educate employers and other groups on the benefits and requirements associated with hiring veterans. The program is designed to serve veterans and eligible persons with barriers to employment.
U.S. Department of Labor	National Farmworker Jobs Program	The National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP), directed by the U.S. Department of Labor and delivered in North Carolina by a local nonprofit, provides eligible farmworkers and their dependents with the means to reach self-sufficiency through better employment. The NFJP provides access to education services and job training, support, and additional services suited to the customer's career goals. Activities may include job search assistance, skills assessments, career counseling, classroom training, customized training programs, emergency service assistance, English as a Second Language, job placements, on the job training, work experiences, pre-employment training, remedial education and GED preparation. The program is designed to serve eligible farmworker or a dependent of an eligible farmworker.
North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services	Senior Community Service Employment Program	The Senior Community Service Employment Program through the Department of Health and Human Services provides individuals 55 and older who are economically disadvantaged with part-time community service assignments while helping them transition into unsubsidized employment. The program empowers low-income older workers to achieve economic independence while training in community service activities that assist in gaining marketable skills to re-enter the workforce. The program is designed to serve low-income job seekers age 55 and older.
North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services/Division of Social Services	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	The WorkFirst, Employment and Training program through the Department of Health and Human Services provides work experience opportunities for recipients to gain skills for employment, become employed, keep a job and become self-sufficient. The program is designed to serve low-income job seekers.
North Carolina Department of Commerce	Trade Adjustment Assistance Program	The Trade Adjustment Assistance program through the Department of Commerce provides re-employment assistance to workers who have been negatively impacted by foreign trade. Through job referrals, training, and income support, this program is designed to help workers find new jobs. Services may include: skills assessments

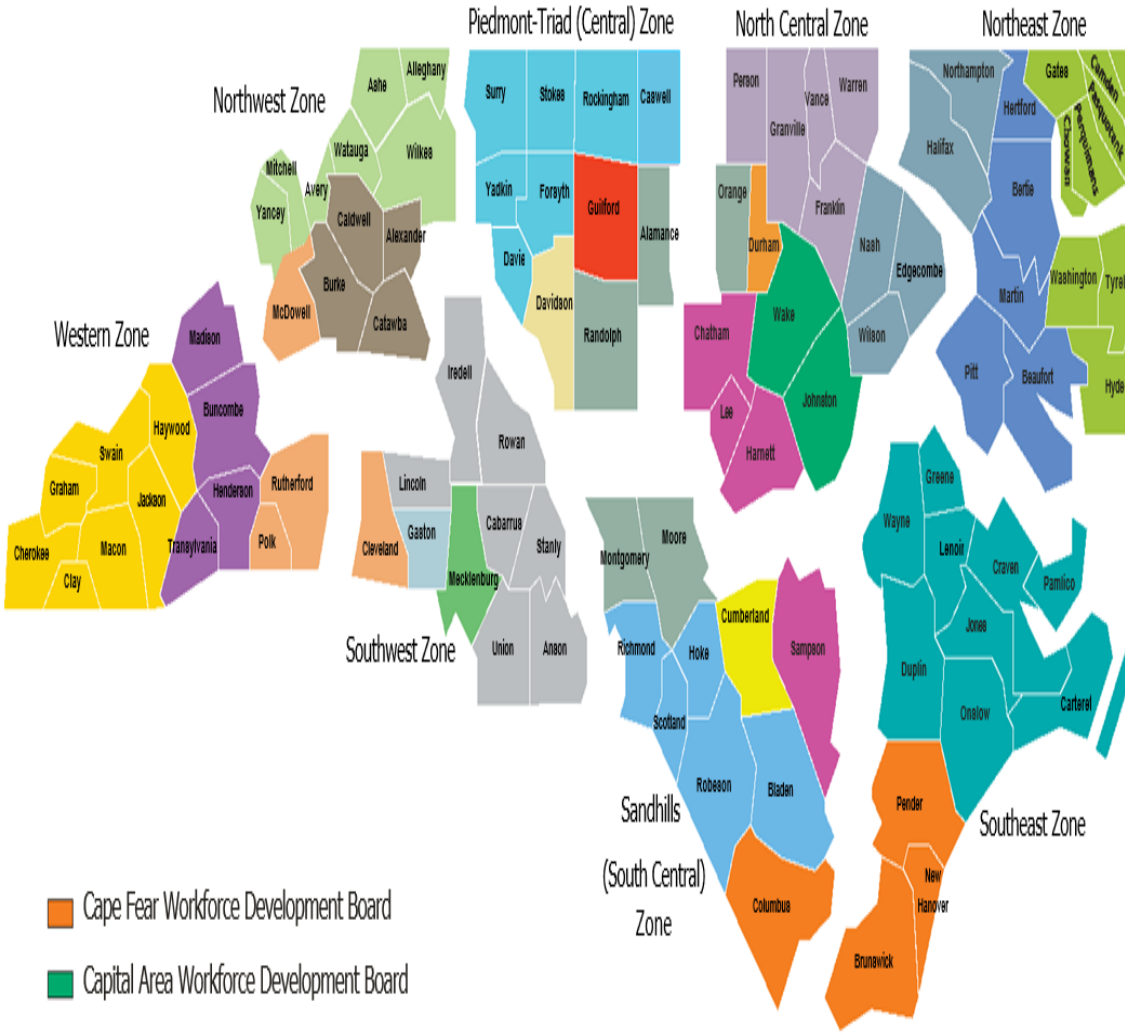
Core Programs		
Agency	**Program**	**Program and Activities with Target Population**
North Carolina Department of Commerce	Unemployment Insurance Benefits	Unemployment Benefits through the Department of Commerce, Division of Employment Security provides unemployment insurance payments to eligible participants who are unemployed due to no fault of their own. Recipients are required to be able, available and actively seeking work. Work search activities must include: registration in NCWorks Online, the internet based job search and referral system provided by the North Carolina Department of Commerce; proof of job search activities; and participation in an employability assessment interview (EAI) at an NCWorks Career Center. The program is designed to serve eligible individuals who have become unemployed.
U.S. Department of Labor	YouthBuild	YouthBuild, overseen by the U.S. Department of Labor and operated by local community organizations, serves low-income young people, aged 16 to 24, to work full-time toward their GED or high school diploma while learning job skills by building affordable housing in their neighborhoods. Emphasis is placed on leadership development, community service, and the creation of a positive mini-community of adults and youth committed to each other's success. At exit, they are placed in college, jobs, or both. The program is designed to serve low-income, high school dropouts between the ages of 16 and 24.

Additional State Workforce Partners		
Agency	**Program**	**Program and Activities with Target Population**
North Carolina Community College System	Apprenticeship	The Apprenticeship program through the North Carolina Community College System provides on-the- job learning with job related education experience. Working with the community colleges, technical institutions, universities, and individual employers, registered apprentices are provided a structured training that enhances their skills on the job. The program is designed to serve incumbent workers and business owners.
North Carolina Community College System	BioNetwork Program	The BioNetwork through the North Carolina Community College System provides education and training resources for the biotechnology and life science industry sector and for community college credit and non-credit programming through the customized training program, laboratory resources, course development and delivery, e-learning tools, workshops, and collaborative projects. BioNetwork also provides teacher training, STEM outreach, and career guidance to K-14. The program is designed to serve individuals, students, teachers, and employers.

Additional State Workforce Partners		
Agency	**Program**	**Program and Activities with Target Population**
North Carolina Community College System	Customized Training Program	The Customized Training program through the North Carolina Community College System supports the economic development efforts of the State by providing education and training opportunities for individuals at eligible businesses and industries. The program is designed to react quickly to the needs of businesses to ensure the presence of a well-trained workforce. Services may include pre-employment training and post-employment training. The program is designed to serve incumbent workers and new, expanding and existing businesses.
North Carolina Community College System	Human Resources Development	The Human Resource Development program through the North Carolina Community College System provides skill assessment services, employability skills training, and career development counseling to unemployed and underemployed adults based on six core components of assessment, positive self-concept, employability skills, communication skills, problem-solving skills, and awareness of the impact of information technology in the workplace. The program is designed to serve unemployed or underemployed job seekers.
North Carolina Community College System	Small Business Center Network	The Small Business Center Network program through the North Carolina Community College System provides education and training, counseling, referral, and information to prospective and existing North Carolina small business owners. With one location at each community college, the 58 Small Business Centers are community-based providers of entrepreneurship training, business counseling, referral and information. The program is designed to serve individuals interested in starting a business and current business owners.
North Carolina Community College System	Workforce Continuing Education	The Workforce Continuing Education program through the North Carolina Community College System provides post-secondary students the opportunity to attain education and training through participation in one of 800+ short-term training courses. These programs provide instruction around skill competencies that lead to a recognized credential (licensure, certification, renewal, registry listing) and/or meets local workforce labor needs. The program is designed to serve the general population, unemployed or underemployed job seekers, and incumbent workers.
North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services	Food and Nutrition Services, Employment and Training	The Food and Nutrition Services, Employment and Training program through the Department of Health and Human Services prepares adult Food and Nutrition Services recipients' for employment through assistance with job searches and other work activities as well as short-term training opportunities. The program is designed to serve low-income job seekers.

Appendix 2C

North Carolina Workforce Development Boards and Prosperity Zone



- Cape Fear Workforce Development Board
- Capital Area Workforce Development Board
- Centralina Workforce Development Board
- Charlotte/Mecklenburg Workforce Development Board
- Cumberland County Workforce Development Board
- DavidsonWorks Workforce Development Board
- Durham Workforce Development Board
- Eastern Carolina Workforce Development Board
- Gaston County Workforce Development Board
- Guilford County Workforce Development Board
- High Country Workforce Development Board
- Mountain Area Workforce Development Board
- Northeastern Workforce Development Board
- Northwest Piedmont Workforce Development Board
- Region C Workforce Development Board
- Region Q Workforce Development Board
- Regional Partnership Workforce Development Board
- Southwestern Workforce Development Board
- Triangle South Workforce Development Board